

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE LIFE OF CHRIST AS THE PRINCIPLE OF OUR LIVES

A. The need for redemption

5 By sin humankind makes itself be what it ought not to be: a group of created persons separated from God's friendship, divided among themselves, acting in ways untrue to themselves and destructive of their own true good, moved by wayward inclinations, mired in ignorance and error, unable to meet their own standards of excellence, and doomed to sickness, debility, pain, and death. Something is needed, desperately needed, to remedy
10 this situation. But the dynamics of sin are such that men and women are caught in a vicious circle; left to themselves, things tend to get worse rather than better. What humankind needs is some action of God, some renewal of creation. What they need is redemption.

15 But why should God help fallen humankind? He created them good and provided sufficiently for their well-being. He gave them the power to share in His own life, promised them freedom from the horror of death, and supplied guidance for living a humanly good life in this world. The human situation was not God's fault. It was the product of man's abuse of the power of free choice--a power given so that in freedom and dignity men and women could accept God's friendship. Man foolishly abused this power in a sin-
20 ful act of arbitrary self-limitation and disobedience.

As Trent teaches, Man sinned and "through the offense of this sin, he incurred the wrath and the indignation of God, and consequently incurred the death with which God had previously threatened him and, together with death, bondage in the power of him who from that time had the empire of death (cf. Heb 2.14), that is, of the devil" (DS 1511/788).

25 This language is of a sort we do not often hear today. It sounds strange and repulsive. But it is part of the solemn and definitive teaching of the Catholic Church. It expresses truths we either must believe or give up the pretense of being faithful Catholics. Of course, one must correctly understand the language and so grasp the truths it expresses. Before trying to do this, it is worth noticing that in other times
30 Christians have found such language quite natural and pleasing. Why does it strike us so differently today?

As I explained in chapter five, section A, the privation account of evil, which faith teaches, is opposed by two rival accounts: a radical dualism which gives evil the same sort of reality as good and a radical monism which makes all evil relative and ultimately only apparent. According to faith, evil is real, though not real as the things
35 God creates are real, but only real as a privation of goodness. Sin and its consequences are deprivations--imposed upon sinners by their own freedom--of the fulfillment which they could and should have enjoyed.

40 Even among believers, this privation account of evil often is lost to clear view. In the Reformation and the period since then, many Christians have verged toward a dualistic theory of evil. While talking of sin, they also have talked of human corruption which even God's grace does not repair, but only covers over. At times the devil has been regarded not only as a power hostile to God but as an autonomous reality able to contend with the Creator as a serious rival for control of humankind. A great many
45 Christians who did not go so far as to think and say such things nevertheless in practice tended to divide the world into two groups: we friends of God and those enemies hopelessly lost because they do not belong to our ecclesial community.

While this attitude existed among Christians, secular humanists more and more rejected free choice and ultimate moral responsibility. They developed optimistic world-views according to which evil is only relative, a mere passing phase. If religion and
50 supersition would be forgotten, if knowledge and technology would be unleashed, if the present stage of evolution or dialectical unfolding would be hastened toward its goal, if neurotic feelings of guilt and hostility would be dissolved, if defects in the social structure would be put right--if some, or all, or some similar things were done, then
55 there would be no more evil.

The history of the development of modern culture during the past few centuries can be understood as a struggle between these two competing conceptions of the human condition. Secular humanism built up its power, like a boiler building pressure toward the point of explosion. However, the Protestant ethic seemed firmly in control throughout
60 the nineteenth century. Secular humanism seemed about to explode into cultural dominance in the period just prior to World War I, but the war set optimism back; again secular humanism seemed about to come into its own during the Twenties, but the depression set it back.

In World War II, the Western democratic nations adopted an almost Manichean attitude. The totalitarian countries were the very embodiment of evil. Hitler was a devil, superhumanly bad, too bad to be merely immoral or insane. The Japanese were subhuman, malicious apes. These attitudes fostered self-righteous assumptions upon which the United States and Britain, with the full moral support of the "enslaved" nations of Europe, carried on a brutal and unjust war: with a demand for unconditional surrender
70 (which prolonged the war unnecessarily) and with the indiscriminate destruction of lives and property in a program of terroristic strategic bombing. The development and use of atomic weapons uniquely embodied and crowned these wrong attitudes.

The dualism by which evil is attributed to one's enemies also neatly separates evil from oneself. If Hitler is a devil, Allied terrorism is only an apparent evil,
75 really a good. In this way, the optimistic view of secular humanism became deeply settled in the minds of almost everyone in the West: when Hitler and Tojo would be destroyed, then perfect goodness would obtain in the world.

The period after World War II until the early 1960s had an ambiguous character. Many persons in power in the West, including virtually all its intellectual and cultural
80 leadership, did not regard Communism as a true evil. Many sympathized with it; many more felt that it simply is another form of pragmatic politics which needs to acquire a little mature self-restraint. At the same time, to carry on opposition to Communism, the leadership of the West purposely transferred to it the role which the totalitarian devils had played in World War II. Thus the Cold War was born. In Western Europe and

America as a whole, the Protestant ethic still had its anchor: Evil is real and moral distinctions must be taken seriously, for there is the important difference between our freedom and their inhuman oppression.

5 During this period the nuclear deterrent was developed. This strategy embodies the choice, under conditions not in one's own power, to destroy in a useless gesture of retaliation millions of innocent people and a vast part of the world's wealth. Conditioned by the self-righteousness of World War II, this deeply immoral policy was adopted and accepted by almost everyone, not only in the United States and in the Soviet Union, but also in their various allies and clients. Finally, early in the 1960s the world
10 experienced terror: the Cuban missile crisis. This crisis was a moral turning point for Western culture.

On the one hand, the will to kill embodied in acceptance of deterrence came to consciousness and generally was endorsed: If there is going to be a war, we'd better get them before they get us. On the other hand, the symbol of absolute division upon which
15 people in the West had come to model their whole consciousness of moral good and evil was put to a severe test. If the division really is absolute, then eventual disaster is certain, whether in this crisis or in some later one.

The Cuban crisis ended. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Now, all at once, the unacceptability of the absolute opposition between the "free" West and Communism was
20 clear. Rhetoric about the Soviet Union changed radically: The Russians became nationalistic rivals, with whom the West had to compete peacefully. Soviet leadership might be stupid and inept, but surely not malicious. Their hearts surely are as good as ours, and our hearts are pure.

With this, the Protestant ethic came to an abrupt end. Secular humanist optimism--
25 the belief that all evil is illness, immaturity, mistakes, undevelopment, ineptitude, outdated ideas and ways of doing things, and so on--suddenly prevailed. When sin in others is too horrible to contemplate and sin in oneself is buried under many layers of rationalization, true moral evil is dismissed as an unfortunate illusion of the past. No one freely commits sins; no one is morally responsible for his or her acts; no one
30 need fear ultimate punishment. With breath-taking suddenness, the cultural residue of Christian morality was set aside along with its dualistic perversion. The powerful and appealing ideology of secular humanist optimism, which has been building for centuries, is suddenly loose in the West.

Even religious persons who still hold their faith in God and confess their true
35 guilt before Him are deeply affected by this sudden cultural transformation. For Catholics, its timing coincided precisely with Vatican II. John XXIII opened the Council to renew the Church so that it might better carry on its mission in a world pervaded both by sin and by redemptive grace. By the end of the Council, sin had vanished like the clouds when a high comes in. Most Catholics suddenly imagined themselves to be facing
40 a good world made even better by the warmth of God's love--a love no longer experienced as redeeming--a love which knew no wrath, no indignation, no threats of punishment, no horror of death, and no bondage to the devil.

Liturgy tended to become celebration of the comfort one has in the home of permissive parents, who indulgently allow their children endless resources to squander,
45 never expect them to admit they have been prodigal, and always stand ready to bail them out of jail, to pay their bills, to obtain counseling for them, and to admit that all of their troubles are inevitable or are someone else's fault--even the parents' own fault--certainly not the fault of the children. Children can do no wrong. No one can hold them responsible for what they do. Before the Father, sin is impossible. Suddenly,
50 most Catholics stopped going to confession or went with much less frequency. Communion's increased.

The preceding cultural analysis could be developed at great length and filled out in much detail. It explains many things about the present situation of Catholic moral life and theological reflection upon it. Students of moral theology must comprehend
55 this situation, since otherwise they will be unable to grasp the real seriousness of sin, the real need for redemption, the important work of Christian life as responsible cooperation in redemption, and the great importance of accurate Christian moral knowledge to guide this work.

60 B. How God satisfies our need for redemption

God is a loving Father, and His redemptive work is a work of love, as I explained in chapter six, section G. But He is not an indulgent parent. He never pretends that
65 sins are anything else than the evil they are. All who read the Liturgy of the Hours regularly and who pay attention to what they read should realize that God hates evildoers (cf. Ps 5.6), He hates those who worship idols (cf. Ps 31.7), He loves justice and hates wickedness (cf. Ps 45.8), and He loves those who hate evil (cf. Ps 97.10). Passages in the Old Testament concerning the wrath of God are too numerous to need mention; in the New Testament, as well, we are warned of God's wrath from the first preaching of John
70 the Baptist (cf. Mt 3.7) to nearly the last pages of the Christian apocalypse (cf. Rev 14.10).

To suppose that God does not hate and that He is not angry entails either one of two wholly unacceptable positions. On the one hand, one can suppose that He does not
75 love and that He is not pleased with the gifts of those who love Him. This position would destroy any possible personal relationship with God. On the other hand, one can suppose that God loves indiscriminately good and evil, that He is pleased indiscriminately by the gifts of those who love Him and by the sins of those who do not. This position would maintain a personal relationship with God at the cost of destroying the significance of human life, for in the end what we do would make no important difference
80 whatsoever.

In chapter seven, sections E and F, I explained briefly how sin is possible and how it is related to punishment. In chapter five, section A, I explained how one can reconcile the reality of sin, as a privation, with the fundamental truth that God creates everything good, that He loves all that He creates, and that in its positive reality

there is no evil whatsoever. With these things presupposed, one easily can see that God truly hates evil, is angry with sinners, and punishes them, yet also loves sinners, is pleased when they acknowledge their guilt, and mercifully redeems them.

God hates evildoers with precision: He precisely hates the evil which deprives
 5 them of the good He wishes them to have. He does not hate anything He has made (cf. Wis 11.24), and so He hates nothing of the reality which the sinner still enjoys, nothing of the fulfillment of which even the sinner still is capable. For this very reason, God spares all things, for they are His; He works to separate sinners from their sins
 10 cf. Wis 11.26-12.2). God is angry with sinners, because He loves them; He is jealous in His love and angry when His children become alienated (cf. Ex 20.5; 1 Cor 10.22).

The indulgent human father, by denying the reality of evil and constantly intervening to assume responsibility for the actions of his children, takes from his children their own responsibility, prevents them from learning by experience that life is serious, and so deprives his children of the dignity of living as mature men and women. God does
 15 not do this. Rather, like the broken-hearted father who can hardly restrain himself from trying to help, but who holds back so that his children will be able to live their own lives, God punishes. This punishment is not the creation and arbitrary imposition of evils. It is the natural and inevitable unfolding of sin. Death is not something
 20 God created to get even with Man for sin; death, which includes and completes all of the evils from which humankind suffers, is the natural destiny of the children of Man who has chosen not to be a child of God.

As I explained in chapter five, section B, a good which suffers evil is not in its residual, positive, good reality what it would be if evil were not in it. But all the
 25 positive reality of human persons and their world, to the extent that it remains, is good, even in its distorted condition. God cannot simply demolish this good. The will of the sinner and even the act of sin, insofar as it is an expression of intelligence and freedom, are goods. God cannot simply eliminate them without annihilating what He made, without hating something which shares in His own spirit and life. This is impossible. And so God cannot make a fresh start, as if sin never existed. Once Man sinned,
 30 things never could be the same again.

Sinful Man is locked into his own, arbitrarily limited world of misery and death. Man cannot break out of this prison, cannot escape the vicious circle. In this sense, only God can redeem. Only a fresh act of His omnipotent love can fashion fulfillment
 35 out of disaster with a gentleness which salvages all the good of creation, even that distorted by sin, and leaves behind only the privation of evil and those who resolutely cling to it even as the new heavens and the new earth are created (cf. Rv 21.1-8).

God created Man in His own image, able to act freely and responsibly, to be like
 40 God not only in being, but also in causing, and not only in causing other things, but even in causing Man himself to be and be fulfilled. God wished Man to live richly in this world and then to come to share even more richly in a heavenly communion, in which the Trinity and created persons would dwell together in intimate friendship, to share forever their goods with one another (as I explained in part two, especially chapters four, sections M and N; five, section I; and six, sections H-0).

Once sin entered the world, this splendid plan could be fulfilled only if fallen
 45 Man was enabled somehow to live in this world a humanly good life. But now a humanly good life would have to be lived in an environment wounded by sin. To the extent that the life would be humanly good, it would be truly fulfilling, but it would not be like the life which good human persons would have enjoyed had sin not been committed. Once sin has entered the world, a good human life can only be a life which is good despite
 50 the reality of sin. It must be a life which acknowledges the reality of sin, which wills to avoid it, which accepts the consequences of sin as well-deserved punishment, and which struggles to make good the wounds of sin and straighten the crookedness of everything good which sin has distorted.

Only God can redeem, but He can most fittingly effect redemption only by making
 55 sinners cooperators in their own redemption. To redeem us without our cooperation would be to deprive us of our human existence, to impose upon us arbitrarily a fulfillment which is not ours and which would crush our dignity and kill us with kindness. Therefore, God redeems sinful Man by continuing to do good to him, by making known His continuing love, by recalling sinful humans to friendship, by providing the means to re-
 60 spond to this call, and by enabling men and women individually and in community to live good, redemptive lives.

C. The first stages of the redemptive work of God

65 Man no sooner sinned than God held out the promise of redemption (cf. Gn 3.15; DV 3). "From that time on He ceaselessly kept the human race in His care, in order to give eternal life to those who perseveringly do good in search of salvation (cf. Rom 2.6-7). Then, at the time He had appointed, He called Abraham" (DV 3). Of Man, the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer says:

70 Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship
 you did not abandon him to the power of death,
 but helped all men to seek and find you.
 Again and again you offered a covenant to man,
 and through the prophets taught him to hope for salvation.

75 These early sketches of God's magnificent redemptive work include both essential features, which also are found in the perfect redemption God works in Christ, and certain limitations which are now transcended.

Abram hears God's call and listens; he receives God's commands and follows them
 80 (cf. Gn 12). Thus the relationship of friendship with God, shattered by the sin of Man, is reestablished; Abraham's response to God is credited to him as saving faith (cf. Rom 4.1-9). The relationship thus established is sealed by a covenant, a treaty in which permanent friendship is pledged and promises made to fulfill mutual responsibilities (cf. Gn 15; 17.1-14). Abraham is now an ally of God, in a position to cooperate in redeeming others. Sodom and Gomorrah are filled with sin, and God is about to wipe them

out. Abraham intercedes, bargaining with God like a near-Eastern rug merchant with a fellow trader (cf. Gn 18.16-32). The wicked are not saved, but Abraham's intercession at least saves his kinsman, Lot (cf. Gn 19.29).

5 The divine initiative, the genuineness of the relationship, the forming of a covenant community, the element of intercession--these are constants in God's redeeming work. He must take the initiative, since Man is in sin; the relationship must be real, for those called must share in redemption; a community in friendship with God must be formed, with permanent responsibilities, since humankind lives in community and is called to heavenly communion; and those in friendship with God always help save others, for they
10 share in God's saving cause and can deal rightly with the sinful others only by helping to save them.

The conception of redemption is that of reclaiming something, as one reclaims a pawned article or buys the liberty of a slave. If one sold oneself into slavery and someone else purchased one's freedom, one would be redeemed and would have a redeemer.
15 Man sold himself into slavery by sin; God redeems by freeing people from sin so that they no longer are slaves, but adopted members of God's family. The redemption of the Israelites from Egypt shows an important limit on the concept of redemption. God's redeeming is not a commercial transaction. When the Israelites are redeemed from Egypt, the price is paid by the Egyptians: plague and disaster (cf. Ex 5-14).

20 The same thing holds throughout the history of redemption. God is not paid by another who redeems; God is the redeemer (cf. Rom 8.32; Jn 3.16-17). Others who do redemptive work are not rewarded with any price or ransom (cf. Is 45.13). Above all is this true in Christian redemption: "Thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15.57). God gives us the victory; He gives it through
25 Christ; and it truly is ours.

For the Jews, the covenant made with Moses after their liberation from Egypt was the very glory of the nation. God proposed the terms of the covenant; the people voluntarily accepted God's law and committed themselves to live up to it. Preparations were made for sacrifice. The covenant was sealed with blood of bulls, sprinkled partly upon
30 the people and partly on the altar. This blood is life, the very principle of vitality (cf. Gn 9.4). Thus it brought the covenant to life, put it in force, and bound God and His people in a common life. After this, Moses and the other leaders "beheld the God of Israel" and had a meal in His sight--an expression of living together in the community which had been formed (cf. Ex 24.1-9). The structure of our Mass is evident here: the
35 reading of God's word, the Credo, the offering of gifts, consecration, and communion.

Nevertheless, the promise made to Abraham was not fulfilled through the law of Moses. The Law was not lived up to; it was repeatedly broken. The history of Israel is a history of infidelity (cf. Gal 3.1-18; Rom 2-3). The Law does nothing but give Jews an awareness of sin; an acute sense of their desperate need for redemption; it does not
40 give them the power to live good lives (cf. Rom 3.20; Gal 3.21-22). (The grace of God and faith nevertheless saves those subject to the Law.) Israel was God's vineyard, built by Him to provide Him with the fruit of human fulfillment. Instead of doing so, it repeatedly destroyed His agents, the prophets and holy men, whom He sent to tend to His interests (cf. Mk 12.1-12; Mt 21.33-46; Lk 20.9-19).

45 What is defective in redemption before Christ? I think the answer is: Its very restrictedness. The Jews were a chosen people, freed from Egypt and helped to triumph over their enemies. Their history is a history of trying to live as God's people in a world filled with enemies. The very sign of their friendship with God--circumcision and the other requirements of life according to the Law--sets them apart from others. During
50 most of their history, the hope of the Jewish people was fixed upon this-worldly prosperity and continuation in descendants.

Even within the context of a true relationship with God, this redemptive community accepts much of the narrowness which results from sin. The demand is not to love
55 all human goods, but to love the well-being of one's own, and to hate one's enemies with an effectively destructive hatred. One's enemies also, of course, are the enemies of God, and so they deserve destruction. But in consequence, one's view of God almost combines the attributes of the God of creation and a vengeful lord of destruction.

If God hates what is not His, and if one can identify that which is alien with the followers of other gods, one necessarily sets oneself against many human goods in carrying
60 out one's commitment to God. Friendship with God is at the cost of complete openness to all human goods. Morality as obedience to God and human fulfillment are set at odds. One must choose between God and the human good.

Anyone who wishes to be faithful to God in this situation can hardly hold fast to
65 all the demands of human fulfillment. In consequence, the inevitable self-limitation involved in any choice and the arbitrary self-limitation involved in immoral choices become indistinguishable. Sin is reduced to disobedience; those subject to the law are like children under the control of a stern master (cf. Gal 3.19-25). Children who feel themselves sternly--and, as they see it, arbitrarily--limited are rebellious and disobedient (cf. Rom 7.7-12).

70 The prophets longed for a better age, one in which friendship with God and complete human fulfillment would coincide. In such an age, all the earth would know God (cf. Is 11.9). His pardon would be effective and would give everyone power to live rightly (cf. Jer 31.34). Everlasting justice will be inaugurated (cf. Dn 9.24). The nations will come together at the Lord's holy mountain (cf. Mi 4.1-3).

75 A better type of redemptive community than that established by the old, restrictive covenants is needed. It must be a covenant open to all men and women. The covenant community must deal with evil as a reality, yet not try to set aside some part of the good things God has made as if evil were peculiarly resident in them, and not treat those involved in sin as enemies to be destroyed. Only in such a new covenant could faithfulness
80 to God and love of all human fulfillment coincide. But in a world marked by the reality of sin and all its consequences, the lives of truly good persons would be at the mercy of those who persisted in evil. How could anyone live without resorting to the necessary evils involved in coping with a broken world?

There is only one possibility: Members of the new redemptive community will need

solid assurance that faithfulness to God and to their own human fulfillment will really lead to this fulfillment. If this happy outcome could not be realized in a world broken by sin, it could be realized completely in another world. In other words, the solution to the problem is for God to establish His perfect communion of friendship--His kingdom--as a reality not of this sinful world. Men and women still living in this sinful world will be invited to live also, and for the sake of, fulfillment in the invisible kingdom. A real bridge between this world and the invisible community will be needed, and sufficient grounds for confidence that the invisible is not a mere myth will have to be provided.

D. The Incarnation of the Son as a means of redemption

The Word, eternally with God and a co-principle of creation, "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1.14). God and His permanent love became visible; a common life of divine and human persons, far more intimate than that conducted under the Law of Moses, began (cf. Jn 1.14-17). He is the bridge between this broken world of human experience and the new creation, free of sin, which is being built up with Him as its head.

By the Incarnation, God communicates Himself to us as completely as He can. Previous revelation was fragmentary; in Jesus the medium of divine self-communication becomes the very reality to be communicated (cf. Heb 1.1-2). God had proposed intimate friendship with humankind, but the proposal was received with some fear. In the Incarnation, the ground for fear--God's awesome otherness--is greatly mitigated. The proposal is made in as irresistible form as possible. The God who loves us is now one of us, and He is as human as anyone perfectly good could be.

How could Man at the beginning have conceived of sharing in divine life in a way which would have made clear that such sharing really is worthwhile, and that it cannot in any way infringe upon human interests? How could sinful Man conceive of it? The Incarnation provides a demonstration (one needed even by Christians, which I articulated in chapter seven, section A). In Jesus, God becomes humanly credible and accessible (cf. Rom 5.12).

Man at the beginning must have stood in awe of God; fallen men and women in guilty fear hide from Him. If God seems friendly, might His friendship not be withdrawn? The Incarnation removes this difficulty. The water of life comes not only sporadically and from without, as an unpredictable rain from heaven, but from a permanent distribution system planted in our own earth.

Even the best of men chosen by God, an Abraham or a Moses, was himself enmeshed in sin. A community of friendship with God established on such a person always remained unstable. With the Incarnation of the Word, divine life becomes part of creation and can no longer be expelled. In a new and personal way, the Spirit of God becomes present in creation, for the Word Incarnate becomes the door through which the Spirit permanently moves into the created world.

A true man, yet free of sin, the Incarnate Word shows what human life in a sinful world ought to be. No one who believes in Him can suspect His motives; they are entirely pure. He adds immeasurably to creation--the glory of God--by manifesting God's goodness and love in an unprecedented fashion. He carries on God's redeeming work, not only by an almighty fiat from above, but also by human actions. By proceeding in this way, the Word Incarnate provides all other men and women with a potential friend. We can love and trust Him as no one else. We can ally ourselves to Him. And insofar as we do this, our sinful existence can be gently reformed in our personal relationship with Him, and our good acts can contribute to a worthwhile cause: His redeeming work.

As I will make clear in due course, it is almost impossible that a truly good human life conducted in this sinful world can appear to be fulfilling. The life of Jesus, considered as objectively as possible, hardly seems so. But if we believe in Him, we look beyond His earthly life. We see that while He lived a very restricted existence and died a miserable death, He was at the very same time bringing into reality the human dimension of the heavenly fulfillment of which He is the first principle (cf. Col 1.15-22). As I explained in chapter four, sections H and I, fulfillment in Christ is the glory of God, the purpose of all creation.

By His Incarnation and life among us, the Word of God provided us with the model of a Son of Man sharing gloriously in divinity. Looking up to Him, we are confident that with Him our own lives, whatever at times the contrary appearances might be, are not wasted when good efforts fail, not defeated when evil prevails, and not ended when death comes. So we can choose rightly, confident that doing so is not vain, because the inevitable self-limitation we accept in choosing and the evil we accept in choosing rightly in a sinful world are not going to last. Fulfillment in a communion of love already is ours, really although invisibly. We rejoice in hope.

E. Current theological debates on Christology

At present many theologians are discussing and some are attempting to revise radically Catholic belief in Christ. Our faith is that the Son of God, eternally in communion with the Father and the Spirit, became man in Jesus of Nazareth. We believe that this Jesus is one divine Person, but twofold in nature--God from the Father, man from Mary, His human mother (cf. DS 301-302/148). Some of the efforts of radical revision would make of Jesus a man who receives a share in divine life. These theories would eliminate the difference between Jesus and us, at least according to the view of our own status I explained in chapter six, section I. They also would remove Jesus from His unique role as the first principle of our redemption and of heavenly completion.

To some extent, attempts to revise radically our belief in the Incarnate Word probably express the opinions of persons who have rejected faith; they set it aside as a presupposition of theology to engage in arbitrary revision which goes beyond all possible boundaries of legitimate interpretation. This type of illegitimate procedure was discussed in chapter two, sections I and J. But to some extent, it seems to me, these

attempts manifest confused but legitimate concerns.

The Council of Chalcedon, which provided the most important formulation of Christian faith in the Word Incarnate, used the words "person" and "nature" to set aside certain errors. The Council did not define what a "nature" is; it took for granted that when two subjects can be said to be the same kind of something, then they are of one nature. The Council insisted with respect to the two natures in Christ that He is in them "without any commingling or change or division or separation; that the distinction between the natures is in no way removed by their union but rather the specific character of each nature is preserved and they are united in one person and one hypostasis" (DS 302/148). The Second Council of Constantinople later made clear that the two natures are united in the hypostasis (the Person) and that the Person is the divine Word (cf. DS 424-430/216-220).

I do not think these definitions say anything not clearly implied in St. John's Gospel. Indeed, although they use the words "nature" and "person" in a technical way, the two councils say rather less about the Incarnate Word than St. John does, for John talks about our Lord Jesus in action, while the councils speak only of His ultimate make-up.

Now, subsequent theological speculation sought to explain the mystery of the Incarnation, and in doing so began drawing consequences, which seemed warranted by sound philosophy, from the concepts of person and nature. As philosophical fashions change, other theologians continue this effort and think they can draw different consequences--some perhaps even requiring that the defined doctrine be set aside. It seems to me that such theological speculation is quite useless, if it does not contribute to a more loving and prayerful appreciation of our Lord Jesus, for it is irrelevant to the living of the Christian life.

Great difficulties arise if one forgets that language used with respect to God is relational language. I discussed this point in chapter one, sections C-E. "Nature" said of the divinity of Jesus cannot be used in the same sense as "nature" said of His humanity. For His human nature is the same as ours, and our nature has as one of its essential characteristics that it excludes our being anything of another nature--"nature" said again in the same sense. For example, one could not be human and a horse, since to be either excludes being the other and likewise excludes being any other kind of thing we understand. Clearly, whatever divinity is, the same does not hold true of "nature" said of God. Consequently, intricate discussions about how the two natures of Christ are united in Him get nowhere, and only seem to proceed--but always arrive at a dead end--to the extent that "nature" said of God is given some imported, philosophical sense which the teaching of faith neither requires nor authorizes.

Similarly with "person." There is a vast literature about the consciousness of Christ, with much serious discussion about how His human "I" and His divine "I" are related. This literature usually takes for granted a remarkable familiarity with God, as if we knew what divine knowing is and as if God were a conscious self much like ourselves. In sober fact, we do not know what the inner life of God is like and have absolutely no reason to make the assumptions required for these arguments to get underway.

As for the concept of person, even with respect to ourselves this idea has much that is mysterious about it. Our person includes not only our conscious subjectivity, but our bodiliness as well. "Me" serves better than "I" to indicate what belongs to our person, for someone who is careless bumps me, thoughts occur to me, my conscience bothers me, and people who disapprove what I write criticize me. "Me" somehow unites all of these. I do not see any particular difficulty in supposing that for Jesus, insofar as He is man, His own person has the same general character of mysterious inclusiveness, with the difference that He also knows: The Father begets Me.[1]

A great deal of theological argument has ranged around the question whether the Word would have become Incarnate had Man not sinned, with St. Thomas Aquinas taking the negative view and Duns Scotus the affirmative.[2] Today probably the greater number of theologians, reflecting upon the primacy of Christ in the ultimate end, take the affirmative view. It seems to me that both views are likely and neither provable, since revelation is of saving truth. God communicates with us on the basis of actualities.

If speculation of this sort does not pretend to be science and if it fosters wonder at God's goodness and leads to more intense love of Him, it is all to the good. However, for the purposes of moral theology, such speculation can be pernicious. For as things are, the Incarnation is redemptive, as the Creed makes clear. Of our Lord Jesus, God's only Son, we say in the Creed: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man." For serious practical purposes, the Incarnation ought to be considered in no other way. Otherwise, Christian life is likely to be directed in a manner inappropriate in our sinful world, although suited to a world as it would have been had Man never sinned.

F. The unity and complexity of the actions of our Lord Jesus

In chapter seven, section O, I pointed out that our Lord Jesus does many things which cannot be attributed to Him only as God or only as man, but must be said to be done by Him who is God and man precisely insofar as He is one Person in both natures. Just as one must not say Jesus lacks either a human or a divine nature, and one must not say that these natures are commingled or homogenized into one (nor may one say either nature is changed or that they are divided or separated), so one must not say that Jesus lacks either a human or a divine will or willing, and one must not say that these capacities and operations are commingled or collapsed into one (nor may one say either power or actuation is changed by their unity in Him, or that they are divided or separated) (cf. DS 556-557/291-292). The problem therefore is: How can we understand acts of Jesus--for example, the raising of Lazarus from the dead (cf. Jn 11.1-44)--which clearly must be said to be done by Him insofar as He is one Person in two natures?

Some Greek-speaking Christians of the seventh century tried to answer this question by saying that the actions of Christ are divine-human actions, not actions which are both

divine and human. This attempt would merge the two natures at the level of operation, and so it was condemned:

5 If anyone, following the wicked heretics, absurdly takes the human-divine operation, which the Greeks call theandric, as one operation and does not profess in accord with the holy Fathers that it is twofold, that is, divine and human; or if he professes that the very neologism divine-human which has been established designates one operation but does not indicate the wonderful and glorious union of both operations: let such a one be condemned (DS 515/268).

10 A generation later, the Third Council of Constantinople enlarged on the matter. They insisted that Christ has two wills and actuations of will, not divided, changed, separated, or commingled. The two wills are not opposed, but His human will is compliant and obedient to His divine will.

15 For it was necessary for the human will to move itself, but in obedience to the divine will, as the great wisdom of Athanasius has taught; because just as His human nature is said to be and is the human nature of God the Word, so too the natural will of his human nature is said to be and is God the Word's very own, as he himself says: "I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me" (cf. Jn 6.38).

20 The humanity of Christ as a whole is not annulled by being divinized, so neither is His will. It follows that there are in Him two actuations of will, since each nature does what is proper to itself. The position is necessary since otherwise what is created would be misplaced into the divine or the divine degraded to the level of creatures. Both miracles and sufferings belong to the same Person, according to His different natures.

25 In every way possible, therefore, we uphold our denial both of commingling and of division and in this concise utterance we may express the entire matter: We believe that one of the Holy Trinity who, after the Incarnation, is our Lord Jesus Christ, is our true God; and we assert that both his natures appear in his one hypostasis. In it throughout the whole ordered conduct of his life he gave evidence of both his miracles and his sufferings, not just in appearance, but in actuality. The difference of natures within the same person is recognized by the fact that each nature, in conjunction with the other nature, wills and carries out what is proper to itself. Accordingly, we hold that there are two natural wills and operations concurring in harmony for the salvation of the human race (DS 557-558/292).

35 Thus, while the Council rejects a unity of actuations, it also rejects separation, and maintains evidence of both human and divine natures and actuations in the whole ordered conduct of the life of Christ.

40 As I stated in chapter seven, section O, it seems to me that one ought to maintain that the actions of Jesus, such as raising Lazarus, are unified as actions. The work and its effect are both human and divine, although the twofold willing remains dual. This position I now wish to explain.

45 To begin with, it seems to me that the distinct actuation of both the divine and human natures in Christ--which the Church's teaching insists upon--necessarily follows if the Incarnate Word really lives a life. Nature is only a principle of actuation; a nature without its appropriate actuation would be null. At the same time, the real unity of the Lord Jesus, in "the whole ordered conduct of His life," also must be maintained, for otherwise one would have to suppose that the Incarnation is incomplete, as if it only occurred here and there in Him and His life. Therefore, I think one ought not to suppose that certain acts of the Incarnate Word are human and others divine. All He does is both.

50 In subsequent sections I will clarify the human aspect of the life of Jesus. As a man, He makes a commitment to the human good of friendship with God, discerns His unique human vocation with respect to this good, and lives out this vocation. His whole life is a well-integrated system of human acts. But the divine will of the Incarnate Word can hardly have remained inoperative in respect to anything He did humanly, whether performance of miracles or acceptance of sufferings. Thus, the whole life of the Lord Jesus was both divine and human at the same time. How, then, are these distinguished, as the teaching of faith demands?

60 I think the situation can be stated as follows. Insofar as He is God, Jesus reveals the Father in the medium of the human nature and life which is His as man. Insofar as He is man, the Incarnate Word responds to the Father in a manner appropriate for a man in perfect communion with God. In other words, the life of Jesus has the character of revelatory sign because it proceeds from the Incarnate Word, and it has the character of human response to God revealing because it proceeds from the Word Incarnate.

65 These two distinct aspects are not separated. Included in the revelation of God in Christ is the appropriate human response to God revealing; part of what God wishes to communicate to us is how we ought to relate to Him. (This fact is simply an aspect of the general situation of our relationship to God: Everything, including our merit, is His grace.) At the same time, as will become clearer, Jesus as man knew His life to be a medium of revelation and intentionally conducted it so that it would be so. Part of what Jesus wished to accomplish in His human response to God is to make Himself a transparent medium of God's revelation, so to join His human brothers and sisters with Him in His response.

75 With respect to the life of Jesus as a medium of revelation, Vatican II teaches very clearly:

80 Then, after speaking in many places and varied ways through the prophets, God "last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1.1-2). For He sent His Son, the eternal Word, who enlightens all men, so that He might dwell among men and tell them the innermost realities about God (cf. Jn 1.1-18). Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, sent as "a man to men," "speaks the words of God" (Jn 3.34), and completes the work of salvation which his Father gave Him to do (cf. Jn 5.36; 17.4). To see Jesus is to see His Father (Jn 14.9). For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through His whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself: through His words and deeds, His signs and

wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover, He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed: that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal (DV 4).

5 The Word revealing pervades and can be humanly grasped in the totality of the life of Jesus.

In chapter one, section F, I explained that revelation, which includes the communication of propositional truths, extends far beyond such communication. Revelation is total personal communication. As we, so God--and above all God revealing in Christ--communicates Himself by listening as well as by speaking, by undergoing as well as by doing. Therefore, God is revealed in the medium of the total humanity of Jesus, in its every actuation and expression and undergoing. At the same time, precisely because the divine aspect of the life of Jesus is revelation by the medium of His human life, nothing appears in Jesus which is not part of His human life, although His human work often does
15 manifest more than human power and bring about supernatural effects, as when He performs miracles, forgives sins, institutes the Eucharist, and so on.

G. How the actions of Jesus as God are personal acts of the Word

20 This section deals with a puzzle of considerable theological importance. However, students who understand the preceding section and who do not grasp this one will not miss too much of practical importance.

The puzzle is this. The humanity and human life of Jesus is a creature among creatures. As such, like every creature it is referred to God the creator, who is a single
25 principle of created realities. In other words, in one respect the humanity and human life of Jesus no more belongs to the Word than to the Father and the Holy Spirit (cf. DS 535/284; 801/429). At the same time, only the Word is Incarnate. Clearly, the revelatory life of Jesus somehow must be the personal work of the Word if the Incarnation is to make the slightest difference to us as it really is--that is, not just as the Incarnation of one of the divine Persons, but as the Incarnation of this Person, the Word who is the eternal Son of the Father.

It will not do to try to escape from the puzzle by denying that as creature the humanity and life of Jesus is the work of the Trinity-creator. Scripture makes clear that the Incarnation, including the whole life and destiny of Jesus, is the work of the
35 Holy Spirit. Jesus is conceived by the power of the Spirit (cf. Lk 1.35); he acts by the power of the Spirit (cf. Mt 12.28); he is raised by the power of the Spirit (cf. Rom 1.4; 8.11). Jesus is Christ (the anointed) because He has the Spirit (cf. Lk 4.21). At the same time, Jesus makes clear that His work is not separable from His Father's work as creator (cf. Jn 5.17). The Trinity is undivided in Its work, which is attributed now
40 to one Person and now to another.[3]

Still, the Gospels make clear that Jesus regards Himself as Son not only insofar as He is man, but also insofar as He is God, and thus make clear that in a special sense He reveals as Son and primarily reveals the Father, while concomitantly revealing Himself as Son and the Spirit as Their common Gift. One needs only examine a few passages
45 closely to see this point (cf. Mt 11.25-27; Lk 10.21-22; Jn 5.16-30; 7.14-18; 8.28-30; 8.54-55; 12.20-50; 14.1-14; and so on).[4]

I think that this puzzle can be resolved to some extent if one bears in mind the distinction between creation and revelation. Everything depends upon God the creator. But among the things which are created, certain ones serve as the given component of a
50 sign by which personal communication is carried out. I explained this point to some extent in chapter one, section D. Now, the life of Jesus as creature must be distinguished from this same life as revealing sign. As creature, it proceeds from the Trinity, and in a way immediately from the Holy Spirit who, as it were, as the end of God's inner life is nearest the beginning of His outward manifestation in creation. But as revealing
55 sign, the life of Jesus communicates God personally. And so in this respect, the life of Jesus as revealing sign is the Personal life of the Word who is Incarnate, revealing the Father (and so the Son and Spirit) as distinct Persons.

If this were not so, then as a human agent responding to God--a response, as I have said, included within revelation--Jesus would respond personally to the undivided
60 Trinity, and so to Himself as well as to the Father. But in this case, the unity of the Person of the Incarnate Word would be denied, for as man He would personally relate to the Word as to another. In saying "Father," Jesus also would refer to the Word, and since "Father" very clearly refers to a Person other than Jesus, the Word also would be a Person other than Jesus. This last conclusion is altogether contrary to faith. Therefore, the life of Jesus as revealing sign properly is the life of the Word, not the life
65 of the Father and the Spirit.

If one puts matters the way I have just done, many questions are likely to be raised concerning the relationship between the creative causality of the Trinity, the revelatory work of the Word, and the human life of Jesus as man. I do not think there
70 is much point in trying to speculate about these relationships. They are simply aspects of the action-dimensions of the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation, and we can no more understand the mysterious unity and complexity at the level of action than at the level of being. Just as "nature" cannot be said in the same sense of the divine and human natures, neither can "will" and "operation" have one sense said of principles of the
75 life of Jesus considered as divine revelation and as human response. We cannot speculate about divine realities in themselves, for we know God only insofar as we are related to Him in creaturely dependence and in the relationship which He establishes with us by revelation.

St. Thomas, holding with the belief of the Church that in Christ there is both a
80 divine and a human operation, tries to explain the unity of Christ's action by saying that "the divine nature uses the operation of the human nature as its own instrument in operation, and likewise the human nature shares in the operation of the divine nature, as an instrument shares in the operation of the principal actor." [5] This formulation seems somewhat appropriate for expressing the aspect in which the human life of Christ

ought to be attributed to the Word as the medium in and by which He reveals. But even here the formula can be misleading, and it is quite misleading if it is taken as a complete account of the situation. I will consider the latter of these two points first.

5 It is telling that Thomas says "the divine nature uses" rather than "the Word uses." Natures are principles by which actions are done; persons act. In all strictness, the divine nature does not do anything; to say that it does is to use the word "nature" in a way which removes the only sense it has in its use in reference to God. (This is not to deny that the Persons are identical with Their divinity; the formal distinction must be respected too.)

10 If Thomas had focused more sharply on the fact that the human life of Jesus is lived by the Person who is the Word, according to the human nature which really is the humanity of the Word, then I think he would have realized that the human life of Jesus not only must be considered as an expression of His divinity but also as a noninstrumental human response to God's love. Toward the Father, the Incarnate Son lives the human life of Jesus as the Son of Man, who forms the children of Man into a redeeming community, the Church.

15 Even insofar as the Incarnate Word reveals the Father in the human life which is His as man, the human willing of Jesus is not in any ordinary sense a mere instrument of His divine willing. Thomas surely realized that "instrument" here is said in a special sense. For if the idea of instrument is pressed too far, two implications follow. First, the unity of the Person of the Word would be denied. Since one's own willing is not something one uses but something one does, if the human willing of Jesus is used by the Word, then it is not done by Him, but by someone else--which faith forbids. Second, the full truth of the humanity of Jesus would be denied, since He would lack the freedom and responsibility of one who lives a morally significant human life as His own, not as someone else's life.

20 Apart from these technical arguments, I think it is important to set aside an idea about instrumental causality which Thomas probably never entertained, but which I suspect is in the minds of some who use this language today. People often imagine that a human person, you or I, is really a thinking and choosing subject hidden somewhere inside the head. The person tends to be identified with consciousness, and consciousness is imagined to be hidden within. This picture is part of modern mind-body dualism. According to this view, one's bodily performances already are instrumental to one's real inner self. The body is imagined to be a tool.

30 In this modern context, to talk of the humanity of Christ and its operations as instrumental to His divinity suggests that the Word is once more removed from the outward behavior of Jesus. One almost imagines that the Word is not Incarnate, but is only sending messages to the human self which proceeds somewhat like a hypnotized subject to execute them. Obviously, this view of the situation altogether deprives Jesus of His human life, and makes the Incarnation meaningless.

35 How ought we to think of the relationship? No image can begin to convey it. I think the words which best express it are these:

40 This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched--we speak of the word of life. (This life became visible; we have seen and bear witness to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was present to the Father and became visible to us.) (1 Jn 1.1-2).

45 John's clear and realistic language totally negates the very image I also wish to reject. For him who had touched Jesus, the Word is given us in His sensible body and outward behavior, which is no less completely human in being divine.

H. How Jesus lives His human life -- His basic commitment

55 In His Incarnation, the Word as man accepts the conditions of human coming to be and human life. The Incarnation does not take place all at once, not that at any moment the Word is incompletely united with His humanity, but in the sense that this humanity, like our own, comes to be only gradually, and so cannot be assumed, as it were, faster than it becomes. Moreover, the Word becomes flesh not in an ideal humanity, in which His divinity would at once demand His human fulfillment, but in flesh like our own sinful flesh (cf. Rom 8.3). In this sense, in becoming man, Christ "emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2.7).

60 It is difficult for us, who firmly believe in the divinity of Christ, to accept without qualification all the implications of His humanity. In one of the outlines of this work, I made the statement that Christ, insofar as He is man, is a creature among creatures. This statement obviously is correct, for if it were not, then nothing in creation would be the Word--the Incarnation would not have occurred. St. Thomas also endorses the correctness of this manner of speaking.[6] Nevertheless, and quite to my surprise, many who read and commented on the outline urged that this statement be modified.

70 Some suggested that I might say that Christ has a created humanity. This is no doubt true. But it is necessary to keep in mind that his humanity is a concrete and actualized one, not anything less than the totality of Our Lord Jesus save only His eternal reality as Word. There is a heresy, Docetism, according to which Christ truly is God, but only apparently Incarnate. Walter Kasper, after discussing theological versions of this heresy, remarks:

75 It would be wrong however, to see the temptation to Docetism merely in theology and to overlook its much more dangerous subliminal influence on faith and the life of the Church. In the history of Christian piety the figure of Jesus had often been so idealized and divinized that the average churchgoer tended to see him as a God walking on the earth, hidden behind the façade and costume of a human figure but with his divinity continually "blazing out", while features which are part of the "banality" of the human were suppressed. In principle we can scarcely say that the doctrine of the true humanity of Jesus and its meaning for salvation have been clearly marked in the consciousness of the average Christian.

What is found there often amounts to a largely mythological and Docetist view of Jesus Christ.[7]

I think Kasper is right, and that the tendency he is talking about explains the reluctance of many to accept the simple statement that Jesus as man is a creature among creatures.

Our Lord Jesus made a fundamental commitment by free choice. If He did not, He would not truly have lived a human life and could not really have constituted Himself as our human mediator. But Jesus did obediently accept death (cf. Phil 2.8). "Son though He was, He learned obedience from what he suffered" (Heb 5.8). Jesus is the one mediator between God and humankind, for He gave Himself for us (cf. 1 Tm 2.5-6).

It follows that Jesus experienced the conditions under which a free choice is required. He faced open alternatives, each having human appeal. He did not know before choosing which alternative He would choose, since such knowledge would have precluded choice. He did know what choice was right and He made that choice. These simple statements raise two difficult questions. First, since Jesus is God, He could not sin (because sin is separation from God). How then could He have had a real choice, unless it was between options neither of which was sinful? Second, what did Jesus as man know and what did He not know, and how did He know what He knew, when He made His choices, especially His basic commitment?

In answer to the first question, Scripture testifies to the fact that Jesus was tempted although He did not sin. Apart from the temptations described in the Gospels, which I will discuss below, we have the emphatic, general statement: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned" (Heb 4.15). This statement would be misleading, to say the least, if Jesus never made a choice between options such that one of them was morally evil. At the same time, Jesus not only never in fact committed a sin, but also could not possibly have done so (cf. DS 290, 554/ --, 290).

It seems to me that the reconciliation of these truths of faith simply is that the sinlessness of the Incarnate Word is based entirely upon the unity of His divine Person. Had Jesus as man chosen wrongly, the act would have been that of the Word, and this is impossible. But insofar as He is man, Jesus did not deliberate and choose otherwise than humanly. As man, He could choose what is wrong, but as God He could not; always being both God and man, He could not sin. Nevertheless, He could humanly consider possibilities which it would have been sinful to choose, recognize them as such, and reject them for this reason. Although not precisely the same situation, this one is no more mysterious than that of any good person who is caused by God's grace to make a good free choice, and who freely makes it.

In answer to the second question, we ought to hold that the knowledge of Jesus as man which is relevant to His human choices and actions was not radically different from the knowledge of the great prophets and holy men, for Jesus is a man like us in all things save sin (cf. DS 554/290). Many have attributed semi-divine knowledge to Jesus as man, for they wished to insist upon His divinity and to give Him the honor which is due to Him. But one must take care to avoid the commingling of divine and human knowing which faith forbids. Moreover, Jesus as man is more honored and the very point of the Incarnation better recognized if we attribute to Him no more in the way of special gifts than faith requires. For then Jesus' action is more perfectly human, and He is more fulfilled and God more glorified in it.

The view that Jesus as man enjoyed the Beatific Vision makes it very difficult to see how His practical knowledge could have been essentially human. But, as I suggested in chapter five, section J, this difficulty might perhaps be avoided if one can hold that no one as human enjoys the Beatific Vision. If this solution is excluded, one still must bear in mind that whatever the Beatific Vision is, it is very different from any human knowing we have experienced, and so the effects we are inclined to suppose it would have for the moral life of Jesus need not follow.

The testimony of Scripture is that the basic commitment of Jesus was a religious one: "Doing the will of him who sent me and bringing his work to completion is my food" (Jn 4.34; cf. Jn 5.30). Our Lord Jesus is represented as understanding His own commitment to be absolute obedience to God: "I have come to do your will" (Heb 10.9; cf. Ps 40.7-9). A commitment to do God's will is a commitment to the good of religion--that is, to that human fulfillment which consists in harmony between humankind and God. It also is a commitment to the persons involved: to humankind and to God. Only in those involved is any sort of peace or harmony realized. One's religious commitment thus depends upon one's concept of God, what or who one thinks Him to be.

The New Testament teaches that in some way Jesus was aware of God as His own Father. Jesus was "fully aware that he had come from God and was going to God, the Father" (Jn 13.3). How did He know this? Luke indicates that Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, knew she was doing so, and was told that the child "to be born will be called the Son of God" (Lk 1.35). Luke also indicates that even as a child of twelve Jesus regarded Yahweh, who is worshipped in the Jerusalem temple, as His Father, and that Jesus already was committed to doing His Father's work (cf. Lk 2.49). The synoptic Gospels all indicate that at the very beginning of His career Jesus accepted baptism from John, and received heavenly confirmation of His status (cf. Mt 3.17; Mk 1.11; Lk 3.22). It also is possible that Jesus received nonverbal communication from God. That Jesus received divine information in such ways is in line with what the Old Testament tells us about the modes of divine revelation. (If such incidents are regarded as incredible, revelation as such is excluded.)

With information received in the ways indicated, perhaps on many occasions throughout His earthly life, Jesus was in a position to be adequately aware of who He is and what He was to do. The whole of the Gospel narratives bears witness that Jesus knew the Scriptures thoroughly and used them constantly. His awareness, guided by basic information received by direct revelation, must have been enriched by this study.

If one accepts this view, one need not assume that in His practical thinking Jesus proceeded otherwise than in the normal human manner. Prophets and holy men also received special and direct messages from God. In this respect, the human knowledge of Jesus had

a more than natural dimension. However, it need not have involved any kind of operation or mode of human awareness not in principle possible for any human person who receives the appropriate gifts. No nonconceptual or extrapropositional knowledge need be assumed. Since such assumptions are unnecessary, it is unreasonable to make them.

I. The use of the Gospels in theological reflection about Jesus

Modern Scripture study makes abundantly clear that one cannot obtain a biography of Jesus from the New Testament. The materials in it were derived from various sources and handed down orally and in writing for some time, being developed for use in the early Church, primarily in its work of preaching and teaching. I have just now made use of Luke and other writers in a way which many scholars would consider fundamentalistic. Therefore, it is appropriate to indicate briefly the extent to which and the grounds on which I will rely upon the historical accuracy of the Gospel narratives.

Vatican II makes a clear statement on this matter. Although this teaching is not definitive, it is recent and balanced. Moreover, expressing the mind of the Church, it ought to be accepted with religious assent by all Catholics (cf. LG 25). The Council says:

Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute confidence held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven (see Acts 1.1-2). Indeed, after the ascension of the Lord the apostles handed on to their hearers what He had said and done. This they did with that clearer understanding they enjoyed after they had been instructed by the events of Christ's risen life and taught by the light of the Spirit of truth. The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explicating some things in view of the situation of their churches, and preserving the form of proclamation but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus. For their intention in writing was that either from their own memory and recollections, or from the witness of those who themselves "from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" we might know "the truth" concerning those matters about which we have been instructed (cf. Lk 1.2-4) (DV 19).

Here the Church affirms both the substantial accuracy of the Gospels and their complex literary development and character.

For my purposes, no chronology is necessary. When Jesus made various choices and carried them out is of little importance for understanding His life as a structure of human acts. The important matter is what His fundamental choices and intentions were and how His various actions, including acceptance of suffering and death, carried out His basic commitment.

Even in regard to the basic commitment of Jesus and His other basic choices, it is not essential that we be able to articulate them precisely as He could and would have done at various stages in His earthly life. Our own experience is that fundamental commitments deepen in meaning and unfold in richness as one attempts to live them out. No doubt the same thing was true with Jesus. Hence, Jesus perhaps did not at first or all at once articulate His own basic commitment in the precise concepts I used in the preceding section. Still, this articulation can be an accurate description of the basis of His life, one adequate to enable us to understand the rest of it. In a way, the adequacy of what one takes to be any person's basic commitment to explain his or her life is the best test of the interpretation one makes. This case is one in which the inductive method of hypothesis, commonly used in many areas of science, is applicable.

The Church teaches that all Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is provided us for our instruction (cf. DV 11). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus offers Himself as a model for others--a point on which I will enlarge in chapter twelve. His life can provide no principle for our own lives unless we can understand it as a structure of human acts centering in His basic commitment. It follows that we must be able to obtain what we need for the purposes of moral theology from the Gospels. Of course, this fact does not mean a particular interpretation might not be mistaken--an abuse, rather than a proper use, of the text. For this reason one cannot ignore the work of Scripture scholars.

At the same time, one must be careful in selecting the scholars one will believe, as I explained in chapter one, section I. Many brilliant scholars do not accept divine revelation as a real fact; their understanding of Scripture is drastically affected by this position. Many others share genuine Christian faith but also hold certain heretical positions; their interpretations are shaped in many ways by these sincerely held views. Anyone who works systematically at a complex scholarly task develops methods of proceeding and norms of reasoning, judging, questioning, and so on. These norms usually are not explicitly stated. They are bound to be more or less distorted if one proceeds from some basic assumptions which are false. Consequently, works on Scripture by nonbelieving scholars and even by faithful Protestant scholars must be considered by Catholics with great caution. Not only their express opinions, but their whole manner of working at Scripture, will diverge more or less radically from the ways of proceeding which can be accepted by one who holds Catholic faith.

Catholic Scripture scholars need to critically examine the assumptions, the methods, and especially the implicit norms of other scholars. Only after such an examination and in the light of its results will it be possible to sort what is sound from what is unsound in the vast product of modern Scripture work. So far as I know, no systematic and extensive critical examination of the sort needed has yet been done. Until it is done, even Catholic scholars run the risk of accepting as well-established conclusions of "Scripture scholarship" opinions which could not be supported by using norms of reasoning, questioning, judging, and so on wholly in accord with Catholic faith.

The situation being as it is, one must attend to the guidance of Scripture scholars

and respect their expertise. At the same time, one must read the New Testament and continue to use it, with a presumption in favor of the text. It is better to err at times by taking the text at face-value, since the text as it is has been provided by the Spirit for our use. Although my procedure in using Scripture will appear fundamentalistic, it is not so. The assumptions I make are not those of a fundamentalist.[9] Moreover, I am quite ready to accept and use the results of critical Scripture scholarship, provided that these results clearly follow from facts considered in the light of assumptions and by means of methods and norms of scholarship which are consonant with Catholic faith.

10 J. The fundamental commitment of Jesus and His temptations

If the account in section H of the knowledge and basic commitment of Jesus is correct, then as a small child of four or five His willing of the good of religion and other human goods was very much like that of a baptized Christian child who is being brought up in the faith. There is as yet no choice; the good of friendship with God our Father is willed by spontaneous willing, described in chapter nine, section F. The only difference in the case of Jesus would have been that He would have grown up knowing the Father not as our Father but as, in a special way, "my heavenly Daddy"--a way of thinking and speaking of God to which Jesus quite naturally reverted in times of stress (cf. Mk 14.36).

Reaching the age at which choices are made, Jesus, like children raised in faith, made many good choices about many things, all of these choices in line with His spontaneous willing of friendship with the Father. At some point, generally around the time of puberty, many children experience a more or less conscious crisis of faith. Either explicitly or implicitly they have a choice to make as to whether they will keep their faith and live it. Whenever this point arrived for Jesus, perhaps when He had to choose whether to remain in the temple or to start out for home as His parents expected Him to do (cf. Lk 2.49), Jesus made a commitment similar to yet not exactly the same as a Christian child's first free choice to live in faith.

The basic commitment of Jesus cannot have been to accept the relationship with God in which He lives, since this relationship for Jesus is a matter of fact about which He, unlike us, has no choice at all (cf. Lk 10.21-22; Mt 11.25-27). For this reason, the basic commitment which shapes the life of Jesus is not an act of faith. However, the life to be lived by Jesus was not a given. His human heart was not humanly predetermined to live it. Self-determination by Him was needed to make Himself be what He was called to be. Therefore, Jesus had to choose and did choose freely to live His human life in fulfillment of the unbreakable communion which exists between Him and the Father. This choice was and is the basic commitment already described in section H: to do the will of the Father come what might. Insofar as a Christian child's act of living faith serves as an integrating commitment which organizes the child's Christian life, this act is very similar to the basic commitment of Jesus.

The Gospels describe temptations which Jesus experienced (cf. Mk 1.12-13; Mt 4.1-11; Lk 4.1-13). Whether these descriptions are accurate in detail is unimportant. They clearly are intended to help us understand the existential identity which Jesus established by His basic commitment. They do help in this way, and it is for this, not for the details, that I am interested in the temptations.

According to the accounts, Jesus is led into the desert by the Spirit, where He fasts for some time. The devil appears and suggests first that Jesus, if the Son of God, turn stones into bread. Jesus replies that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. The choice here is between satisfying a natural appetite, hunger, which anyone fasting normally experiences and thinks of satisfying, and carrying out the fast which had been chosen out of religious motives. There is nothing inherently wrong in eating, but it would be wrong to break one's fast out of mere hunger once one committed oneself to it in one's effort to do God's will. Therefore, Jesus refuses to break His fast (perhaps waiting to return to town to eat, as He had intended to do). The reason for not breaking the fast is that He lives by the word of God--He considers what He is doing to be the Father's will for Him at this moment.

The agony in the garden (cf. Mk 14.33-36; Mt 21.37-39; Lk 22.42) has a very similar structure. Jesus faces death. He naturally fears it and the thought of avoiding it occurs to Him. He sees the considerable human value in survival and would like very much to live, if it were only God's will. But He chooses firmly to accept death, rather than to try to escape or otherwise avoid it. The reason He accepts death is not that He wishes for some reason to die and adopts the option of bringing about His own death for this reason. Rather, He chooses to abide by God's will, realizing that others are going to kill Him; He accepts the foreseen and unwanted (in itself) consequences of His own death for the sake of abiding by His Father's will and for the human goods which will follow from His death. He freely accepts, not chooses, death as a service to others, and also with a view to the glory He will gain from God (cf. Mk 10.41-45; Mt 20.24-28; Lk 22.24-27; Heb 12.2).

The devil also tempts Jesus by suggesting that He throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, with the expectation that God will send angels to protect His Son. Jesus answers that one ought not to tempt God. What precisely is the issue here? Everyone who is committed to doing God's will knows that in doing it he or she can count on God's power. The consequence of this confidence is that as soon as any act seems to be what God wills, one undertakes to do it even if it seems absurd, useless, or impossible. God's ways, however, are mysterious; often it is very difficult to see how His providence is at work in one's life and difficult to wait for the moment when He sees fit to exercise His power to make one's effort fruitful. It quite naturally occurs to anyone at times that one might ask God for some hard evidence of His loving care and support. The temptation to jump off a high place with the expectation that God will protect one is a rather spectacular instance of such an idea occurring. Jesus thinks of asking the Father for some sign of His reliability, but promptly rejects this possibility. The reason is that one ought not to tempt God--that is, to put His faithfulness to the test.

The nature of this temptation and why one ought not to give into it is evident in other interpersonal relationships. As a friendship develops, one would like evidence

and reassurance of friendship. For instance, it occurs to one person to ask another to do something which would be quite gratuitous simply to see whether the other person is willing to do it. The trouble is that nothing anyone does can demonstrate friendship; the personal relationship absolutely requires trust. Thus the demand for a proof of friendship is self-defeating, for if the act is done, it has been extorted, as it were, and so it loses the value of a sign of faithfulness. As in other relationships, so in one's relation to God, one must wait patiently for Him to show His love and faithfulness. This patience does not preclude asking Him for what one needs; it does preclude asking Him for anything as evidence of His attitude.

The same temptation is expressed at the time of the crucifixion when some suggest that Jesus save Himself by invoking the divine power in which He trusts or which He enjoys as Son, and so win the faith of those who do not accept Him (cf. Mk 15.29-32; Mt 27.39-44; Lk 23.35-37). Why not take a short cut to glory? The choice is to endure and wait for God to act in His good time.

It is worth noticing that the trust in God which Jesus shows in His own basic commitment by rejecting any such temptation is very like Christian hope which waits for Jesus Himself to come--and waits without any anxiety whatsoever (if it is true and perfect hope).

Finally, the devil claims dominion over the world. He offers to turn it over to Jesus if Jesus will worship him. Jesus refuses, saying that worship is due God alone. According to the New Testament, the devil does have some power in the world; he is called its "prince" (cf. Jn 14.30). What is at stake here is not a matter of rights, but a de facto situation. Sinful humankind is in the devil's bondage, for Man in sinning abdicated human dominion and allowed the devil to usurp the role of lord of creation which had been given Man under God. To do anything wrong for the sake of one's end, however good, is to submit to the devil's dominion.

The temptation, as presented, is to do something wrong--that is, to worship the devil--in exchange for which the devil will surrender dominion, thus to accomplish the good end of liberation which Jesus has in view. Jesus refuses. It is not in accord with God's will that the Son of Man gain the whole world for God by doing anything wrong, since anything wrong is a violation of one's own human good, which God loves, and so contrary to God's will.

Throughout the Gospels, the most intimate and loyal followers of Jesus hope and expect that He will establish some sort of earthly kingdom, destroy all His and God's enemies, and so accomplish redemption. Jesus constantly refuses to do so (cf. Lk 9.56; Acts 1.6). One week Jesus enters Jerusalem triumphantly, because the people expect Him to bring about redemption in the manner to which the history of Israel had accustomed them: by power (cf. Lk 19.29-44; Mk 11.1-11; Mt 21.1-11; Jn 12.12-19). The next week Jesus is overwhelmingly rejected because He wants to be and is the wrong sort of king (cf. Mk 15.6-14; Mt 27.15-23; Lk 23.13-23; Jn 18.39-40).

In sum, by His fundamental commitment Jesus is determined to live His human life in absolute obedience to the Father, to do and undergo everything with confidence in the Father's loving power, and to do absolutely nothing which would involve the slightest compromise with evil. These aspects of the fundamental commitment which shapes the life of Jesus correspond to the faith, hope, and uncompromising love of God which ought to mark the lives of the followers of Jesus.

K. The personalization of the fundamental commitment of Jesus

For analytic purposes, I have up to this point discussed the fundamental commitment of Jesus without mentioning the personal form the commitment has in His making of it. Just as we not only make an act of faith in God but also accept our own unique life as His personal vocation, so the fundamental commitment of Jesus shapes His unique personal life. His role in God's plan is special, His vocation personal, although with the greatest relevance to the whole of humankind. How Jesus conceived His personal vocation is important for understanding His life, and for seeing how our lives should be both like and unlike His.

Faithful Jews at the time of Christ were looking forward to the coming of a great leader, a king anointed by God Himself, who would gather together and completely liberate the Jewish people, the people of God. The anointed one ("Messiah" means anointed) would have the Spirit or power of God to set up God's kingdom and to overcome all of God's enemies. The Messiah also at times was expected to have the office of a priest--that is, of one who would mediate between God and His people, offer sacrifice on their behalf, and direct their religious life.[10]

"Son of Man" sometimes is used in the Old Testament simply to refer to any human individual or to human individuals collectively: the children of Adam (Man). In the book of Daniel, chapter seven, the expression becomes a kind of name or title of office. To some extent the reference seems to be to an individual, to some extent to the whole of God's people. This Son of Man is an otherworldly figure, given power of kingship by the eternal Father. The Son of Man judges the world, overcomes the wicked, and reigns in exaltation with the just.

"Servant of God" is used broadly to refer to persons who have a special mission to the chosen people. This general concept also serves as a basis for a prophetic development, especially in Isaiah, chapters 49-55, toward a special role. A prophet, a spokesperson for God, reassembles and teaches Israel, with which he also is mysteriously identified. By enduring suffering patiently and humbly, this special Servant carries out God's will, not only saving the Jews, but justifying all of sinful humankind.

All three of these roles have the characteristics of corporate personality, which I discussed in chapter eight, section O. The Messiah, the Son of Man, and the suffering Servant of Yahweh all act on behalf of the entire people with whom they are truly identified. All three roles have mysterious aspects, but they are generally concerned with the execution of God's will and the liberation of His people. The three roles as they emerge from the Old Testament (and from some extra-Scriptural writing up to the time of Jesus) hardly seem compatible with each other. To role them into one, an individual

would have to be absolutely otherworldly and very much down to earth, perfectly regal and miserably humiliated, a free-wheeling prophet and a law-fulfilling priest.

In reading the Scriptures, which He surely approached with sufficient knowledge of His own status in relation to God (the Father), Jesus as man recognized His special vocation: to fulfill the Scriptures, to carry out God's saving will in a life which would meld all three of these apparently incompatible roles into one.

By preference, Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man. In doing so He hinted at His mysterious origin and destiny, and at the same time related Himself emphatically to Man and identified Himself with sinful humankind. The Son of Man will come in glory and will judge (cf. Mt 19.28; 24.30). The Son of Man does miracles and forgives sins; He has authority over the Sabbath, the day God set aside (cf. Mt 9.6; 12.8). At the same time, the Son of Man comes eating and drinking (cf. Lk 7.34); He will be delivered into the hands of men, and meanwhile He has nowhere to lay His head (cf. Lk 9.44, 58).

Jesus implicitly identifies Himself as Messiah and bearer of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 4.18-19; Is 61.1-2). John has Jesus explicitly accept the title in His conversation with the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4.25-26). Peter's confession of faith in Jesus identifies the Son of Man as the Messiah (cf. Mk 8.27-30; Mt 16.13-20; Lk 9.18-21). Yet "Messiah" is an ambiguous title, since it raises expectations which Jesus has no intention of trying to satisfy. And so He is not anxious to claim this title (cf. Mk 1.34; 4.12; Jn 10.24). In the end, recognition of Jesus as Messiah-King is intimately connected with His murder. Pilate takes up the idea that Jesus is Messiah (cf. Mt 27.17, 22), and the misunderstood kingship of Jesus is ironically proclaimed on the cross (cf. Mk 15.26; Jn 19.19). Jesus had meant to be Messiah only by making known God's truth--that is, the faithfulness of God and the reality of communion with Him (cf. Jn 18.36-37).

The commitment of Jesus is to serve others and to give His life for them (cf. Mk 10.45; Mt 20.28; Lk 22.24-27). If He is a shepherd of His people, as kings are, He is one who lays down His life for His sheep (cf. Jn 10.18). His methods are like those of the servant in Isaiah (cf. Mt 12.15-21). The self-dedication of Jesus at the Last Supper and the washing of feet convey the same concept of using oneself for others (cf. Jn 13.1-20; Mk 14.22-24; Mt 26.26-28; Lk 22.19-20; 1 Cor 11.23-25).

In accepting baptism from John, Jesus accepts identification with sinful humankind despite His sinless status as God's beloved (cf. Mk 1.9-11; Mt 3.13-17; Lk 3.21-22). Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and He accepts death to accomplish this purpose (cf. 1 Cor 15.3-5; Rom 6.10; Gal 1.4; 1 Tm 1.15). The rescue ought not to be understood exclusively or even primarily negatively--as salvation from evil. This aspect is real and very important in understanding why Jesus does what He does in the way He does it. But the mission is aimed at fulfillment in life (cf. Jn 10.10-17). Jesus seeks to lose nothing of what has been given to His care, to raise the whole up on the last day (Jn 6.37-40). His intent is to make the Spirit available to all humankind (cf. Jn 7.38-39; 16.7; 19.30-35; 1 Jn 5.6-8; Lk 11.13).

In determining His personal vocation, Jesus fulfills all of God's demands (cf. Mt 3.15; 5.17; 26.54). He also seeks the fulfillment of all human persons. For Himself, in this earthly life, He seeks nothing whatsoever. By working wholly for others, Jesus reveals the love of God, which always expresses itself in giving, never in self-seeking.

L. Categories of acts Jesus does to fulfill His mission

Being both God and man, Jesus in Himself is the kingdom of God, the communion of God with created persons. Being in Himself all goodness and life, Jesus as man is potentially the absolute negation of the sin-death complex which afflicts humankind. Jesus makes the basic commitment to obey God; God's will is that humankind be freed of evil and fulfilled in human and divine goodness; Jesus sets about doing what a man can to accomplish this purpose. Ultimately, the purpose is accomplished primarily by Jesus in His willing acceptance of death. But He lives before He dies, and it is worth noticing, even if only briefly, what He does to serve His mission prior to the bitter end of it.

He has a hidden life, during which He no doubt gets Himself ready in many ways for His public activity. The Gospels, Luke's in particular, indicate that even during His busy active life Jesus often slipped away by Himself to pray (cf. Lk 3.21; 5.16; 9.29; 10.21; 11.1). It was important to Him to commune with the Father (cf. Jn 8.29; 11.41), and no doubt it was in such prayer that Jesus discerned clearly what steps He should take (cf. Lk 4.1; Mt 14.23; Mk 1.35-38).

In His public activity, Jesus does three main sorts of things. First, He announces the presence of the kingdom of God; life is now available for the asking. Second, He makes a frontal attack upon the sin-death complex by driving out devils, curing illnesses, raising the dead, and forgiving sins. Third, He begins to build a human community which will be able to carry on His life's work.

Jesus proclaims the good news that the kingdom is here (cf. Mk 1.14; Mt 4.23; Lk 10.9-11; 11.20). At the same time, one must pray for the kingdom to come (cf. Mt 6.10; Lk 11.2). The parables of the kingdom show that it is a reality which grows--a fact which can hardly be reconciled with a one-sided emphasis upon the kingdom as God's saving action toward humankind. "Reign" is adopted in the translation of these parables (cf. Mt 13.24, 31, 33, 44, 47). One needs to remember that the reign is someone's--God's--and that God either has people or has no reign. One also needs to remember that God's people are not slaves but friends and sharers in His life and work (Jn 15.15).

If these things are borne in mind, one will understand "kingdom" for "reign," and also will realize that the call for repentance in view of the kingdom's presence is less a demand--"Get ready to meet your Maker"--than it is good news: "God has come and the situation is well in hand." Jesus announces the good news of peace (cf. Eph 2.17). He finds the people in need of such news; they are like sheep without a shepherd and He feels sorry for them (cf. Mt 9.36).

The good news of the availability of God's renewed friendship and communion does have a catch: One must be prepared to let go of one's sins. If one does not bring oneself to do this, one must reject the Gospel; children of God leave darkness behind (cf. Jn 1.5-12). If one does accept the Gospel, it requires one to live in a new way, with

new values, which Jesus both teaches and exemplifies (cf. Mt 5-7). (The content of this moral teaching and example will be the subject of part five.)

Jesus does not teach like the typical rabbi. He teaches with authority (cf. Mt 7.28-29; Mk 1.22; Lk 4.32; 7.1). The explanation for this is that Jesus is not simply expressing His own views; He teaches what God wishes taught. The teaching primarily is practical; it explicates the basic commitment of Jesus Himself. Hence:

Any man who chooses to do His [the Father's] will will know about this doctrine-- namely, whether it comes from God or is simply spoken on my own. Whoever speaks on his own is bent on self-glorification. The man who seeks glory for him who sent him is truthful; there is no dishonesty in his heart (Jn 7.17-18).

Anyone willing to do God's will should have no trouble recognizing the teaching of Jesus as a guide for doing it.

Jesus is friendly toward sinners (cf. Mt 9.10; 11.19; Lk 7.34; 15.1-2; 19.7). He protects the sinner, not to condone the sin, but to save the sinner for life (cf. Jn 8.1-11). Forgiveness comes even without being sought, and it is followed by the healing which is sought; the visible healing demonstrates the divine reality of forgiveness (cf. Lk 5.17-26; Mt 9.1-8; Mk 2.1-12). Jesus also shows that the sin-death complex is broken by driving out demons (cf. Mk 1.23-28; Lk 4.33-37). His critics say He does this by the power of the devil (cf. Mt 9.34; Lk 11.14-26). Jesus takes pains to point out the illogic of the position: Evil does not destroy itself.

Typically, Jesus works in response to faith. He forgives sins on this basis (cf. Lk 7.50). Typically, His cures are performed on this basis (cf. Mk 9.13-28; Mt 9.28-29; and so on). In Nazareth, He cannot do many miracles because of lack of faith (cf. Mk 6.1-6; Mt 13.53-58). Gentiles also are cured because of their faith in Jesus (cf. Mt 8.10-13; 15.28). Persons with faith are cured by Jesus even prior to His knowing about it; the miraculous healing power is drawn out of him by faith (cf. Lk 8.45-48). The faith in Jesus of those who cannot see Him leads Him to cure their blindness, so that they come to see (cf. Mk 10.46-52; Mt 20.29-34; Lk 18.35-43).

Many of the miracles of Jesus, like that of opening blind eyes, signify the total redemption which they partially cause. For example, the cleansing of lepers is an act of healing and compassion; it involves associating with those who are cast out and it returns them to the community of the healthy (cf. Mk 1.40-45). The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, which is the only miracle described in all four Gospels, in many ways shows how the Son of Man undoes what Man has done. Jesus is a spirit of truth, not deceit; he offers life-giving food, not the food of death. He draws people together, not separates them (cf. especially Jn 6).

The account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11.1-44) is an especially rich miracle story. John describes the engagement of all of the human powers of Jesus, and at the same time makes clear that He is acting to manifest God's love. The miracle is a response to the faith of Martha and Mary; it arouses faith in the disciples. The miracle shows that God's friendship is given; it also promises the coming resurrection.

Sometimes, especially in John, the miracles of Jesus are regarded as signs carried out to elicit belief (cf. Jn 2.11; 10.38; 11.41-42). Jesus wishes to show that faith brings salvation (cf. Mk 6.5). He refuses to produce signs to satisfy the sceptical (cf. Mt 16.1-4). The signs done to elicit belief presuppose a certain disposition of openness; the enemies of Jesus merely take greater offense (cf. Jn 11.45-54). This disposition is a kind of faith, a willingness to take Jesus honestly for what He is; for those having this disposition, He provides signs which transform it into an acceptance of God's love present in Him. The culmination of such signs is the very death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus also calls others to join in His own redeeming work. Calling the first four, He tells them that instead of catching fish, they will be fishers of men, who will gather humankind into the kingdom (cf. Mt 4.19). The twelve were called by Jesus to be His companions, to preach as He did, to cure and cast out demons as He did (cf. Mk 3.14). They were to be sent to carry the mission of Christ throughout the world (cf. Mt 28.18-20). They also were to be formed by the communication of divine love into a community which would begin in this world and last forever (cf. Jn 17.8, 20-24). Their lives, like that of Jesus, would be given in service (cf. Jn 13.17-20). In this life, they would overpower evil, and for their work gain eternal life (cf. Lk 10.18-20).

Of all the miracles which Jesus does, He gets Himself into special difficulty by the cures He does on the sabbath (cf. Mk 3.1-6; Mt 12.9-14; Lk 6.6-11). The Pharisees are outraged, for Jesus is breaking through one of the boundary lines which they consider to separate the good (which is God's) from evil (which is the devil's, and includes sick people as well as their illnesses). Jesus is operating out of a very different fundamental conception of good and evil (cf. Mt 15.1-20; Mk 7.1-23). For Him, evil is privation, and human fulfillment (such as the curing of the sick) belongs to God. So He cures and the Pharisees begin to figure out how to kill him.

As I explained in section C, there is an inherent tension in the Mosaic Law. It establishes a genuine community in friendship with God, but it also is an exclusivistic community, based upon the opposition between God's chosen people and other nations with their false Gods. The prophets had begun to try to resolve this tension in favor of an openness to all humankind and all human goods. Isaiah announces that the Lord's house will be open to all nations:

Them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer;

Their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar,

For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples (Is 56.7).

The story of Jonah makes clear that God's saving love extends beyond His chosen people to embrace their historic enemies, and the story of Ruth makes clear that a foreigner can be a better child of Yahweh than a Jew.

Unfortunately, many Jews did not resolve the inherent tension in the Law in the direction indicated by the prophets. Instead, they regarded much of God's creation as irredeemable. Hatred for irredeemable evil is justified. And so, although there is no such statement anywhere in the Scripture, Jesus was not misdescribing the Law as it actually was lived when He said: "You have heard the commandment, 'You shall love your

countryman but hate your enemy." My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors" (Mt 5.43-44). To those who defined good and evil by the difference between us and them, Jesus' approach to evil was scandalous, almost blasphemous, for it mixed what is God's with what is the devil's.

In effect, the Pharisees, with their approach of segregating things to avoid evil and their identification of themselves with goodness (being on God's side), had consigned to the devil a great part of creation (cf. Mt 9.9-13; Lk 5.17-24). God wished to redeem the whole; His love was too indiscriminate to suit the Pharisees. Therefore, God's love had to be resisted (cf. Jn 9.40). This resistance was what moved Jesus to fury (cf. Mt 23.2-33). The Pharisees were moved to destructive power: pressure against those who would have believed Jesus and the plotting of His death (cf. Jn 11.45-50; 12.19, 42-43).

M. The question: How did the death of Jesus complete His earthly life?

St. John, after describing the crucifixion of Jesus and telling how Jesus entrusted His mother, Mary, and His friend, John himself, to one another, tells of the death of Jesus:

... Jesus, realizing that everything was now finished, said to fulfill the Scripture, "I am thirsty." There was a jar there, full of common wine. They stuck a sponge soaked in this wine on some hyssop and raised it to his lips. When Jesus took the wine, he said, "Now it is finished." Then he bowed his head, and delivered over his spirit (Jn 19.28-30).

It would be impossible to say more clearly that the death of Jesus completed His earthly life, not just ended it. The life of Jesus was not cut short by death. His freely accepted death, just insofar as it was freely accepted, was a human act, the main human act of His whole life. It best expressed and carried out His basic commitment. To the extent that it was possible for one man, this act accomplished what Jesus had committed Himself to.

The synoptic Gospels tell us that Jesus considered giving His life for others an essential part of His mission: "The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve--to give his life in ransom for the many" (Mk 10.45; cf. Mt 20.28). Jesus repeatedly predicts His passion and death (cf. Mt 16.21-23; 17.21-22; 20.17-19; 26.1-5; Mk 8.31-33; 9.29-31; 10.32-34; Lk 9.22; 9.44-45; 18.31-34). According to most of these texts, He also predicts His resurrection. When Peter tries to persuade Jesus to avoid His passion and death, Jesus scolds Him for presenting a temptation; Peter is "not judging by God's standards but by man's" (Mt 16.23). In the course of His public life, Jesus made a remark which in retrospect obviously referred to His death: "'I have a baptism to receive. What anguish I feel till it is over!'" (Lk 12.50). The narrative of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper also makes clear that Jesus meant to shed His blood to establish a new and lasting covenant between God and humankind, so that the alienation which is sin would be overcome and communion made perfect (cf. Mk 14.22-24; Mt 26.26-28; Lk 22.19-20).

John has Jesus allude repeatedly to His death. The Son of Man must be "lifted up" (Jn 3.14). A time is coming when the dead will hear the Son of Man (cf. Jn 5.25-28). Jesus will not be around for long (cf. Jn 7.33-34). When He is lifted up, His divinity will be revealed (cf. Jn 8.28).

The Father loves me for this: that I lay down my life to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down freely. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This command I received from my Father (Jn 10.17-18). The moment of death is the great hour of the life of Jesus; when it comes, He is glorified. Dying like a seed planted in the earth, He rises to a fruitful new life (cf. Jn 12.23-24). Finally, the whole discourse in chapters fourteen through seventeen of John's Gospel must be read meditatively, to see how John understood the life of Jesus as a unified whole completed by His death.

In earlier sections I have explained that the basic commitment of Jesus is to do the Father's will, to be guided by what the Father says, to have absolute confidence in the Father's love, and to avoid doing even the slightest evil. This commitment takes shape in the personal vocation to overcome sin and to unite humankind with God. As one aspect of His human vocation, Jesus works to reveal God's love--to personally communicate God--in His human life. Another aspect of His human vocation is to do all that He as a man can do to respond to God's love as one living in this sinful world ought to respond to it.

The Scripture passages already set out make clear that the suffering and death of Jesus somehow carried out His basic commitment and completed the mission which constituted His personal vocation. The Creed affirms: "For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried." The Church solemnly teaches that by His passion and death Jesus merited salvation for us, and reconciled us to God in His blood (cf. DS 1347/711; 1513/790). The Church also teaches that the passion and death of Christ made satisfaction to the Father--that is, that it somehow made up for sin (cf. DS 1529/799; 1689-1690/904). This teaching is solidly based upon the New Testament, especially on the epistles of St. Paul.

Nevertheless, the death of Jesus remains puzzling for us. Why did He have to die like this? Why should the Father have willed such a thing? From the perspective of the moral analysis, one wonders precisely how dying as Jesus did was humanly fulfilling for Him. It is comparatively easy to understand how other things He did, which I discussed in section K, fit into His personal vocation. But how did accepting death make human good sense in terms of the self-identity Jesus had established by His basic commitment and defined into His personal mission in life? Was He simply obeying the Father blindly?

Because of the manner in which the Gospels were developed and written, the question cannot be answered as a matter of historical fact. But certitude about our Lord's state of mind before His passion is not important for our purposes. What we need is to understand the Father's command in retrospect so that we can see why it made human good sense for Jesus to freely accept death.

It is vital that we understand this, because--as will be explained in chapter twelve--the basic commitment of Jesus is a social act in which our Christian lives also must be lived. We must take up our own cross and follow in the footsteps of Jesus if we wish to live a Christian life (cf. Mt 16.24). If one sees the point of doing this, it will be easier (in a certain sense) to do it. Moreover, if one sees the point, one will understand more accurately what one is doing, and so one will be in a position to do it better.

In trying to understand the human meaning for Jesus--the point in terms of His own humanly constituted self--of His accepting of death, one seeks to understand a mystery. Doubtless, Jesus had some idea of what He was doing; to some extent He humanly understood the human point of dying for us. At the same time, His commitment which makes His whole life meaningful is to the good of religion--that is, to overcoming sin and fostering friendship with God--and to the Father and humankind. No one ever fully understands the meaning of what he or she does in serving and fulfilling any commitment. This is so a fortiori in the case of religious commitment, since the very relationship extends into the hiddenness of God.

For this reason, the attempt at explanation which follows may be helpful, but it will not remove the mysteriousness of the death of Jesus, and so will not remove the mysteriousness of our own taking up of our own cross. Furthermore, contemplative systematic theology examines the mystery of the redemption in a different perspective than the one I am taking here. One must not take what follows to be an adequate theological reflection on the redemption. I am mainly concerned with the redemptive work of Jesus as a human act.

25 N. Some wrong answers to this question

There are certain mistaken ideas about redemption which ought to be firmly set aside. Probably most people do not consciously hold these ideas in a straightforward way, but remnants of them survive in almost everyone's mind, and one should try to exclude these remnants from all of one's thinking about the redemption.[11]

One false idea is that Jesus had to die to pay the devil a ransom, so that the devil would release fallen humankind from captivity to evil. This idea attributes too much in the way of power and rights to the devil, and erroneously suggests that he gains something from the act of Jesus. If the devil acquires anything at all in this situation, it is only the sins of the enemies of Jesus, not Jesus' human act of freely accepting death. The act of Jesus does release us from the bondage of the devil, but the devil gains nothing from God or from Jesus. The redemption is more like the commando raid by which Israel snatched the prisoners from the airport in Uganda than like the payments by which the United States bought the release of prisoners from Cuba.

Another false idea is that God's anger at sinful humankind had to be appeased. The picture is that of a vengeful tyrant, who has been greatly offended and who would like to kill somebody. The trouble is, he cannot find anyone worth killing: The people who offend him are such scum, such vermin that it is beneath his dignity to bother wiping them out. But then appears a real man among the offending group. So the tyrant delightedly kills him, getting the revenge he has been wanting. This act calms the tyrant's anger and puts him in a better frame of mind. (He always feels much better after committing a murder or two!) This idea, when it is clearly spelled out, is so obviously anthropomorphic that any reasonable person would see it is absurd to apply it to God. Moreover, it is totally at odds with revelation. Still, it clings.

Another false idea is that the death of Jesus pays God a debt, a price He demands for accepting fallen humankind back into His friendship. This idea in some ways is an improvement on the two preceding ones, and it developed historically as a replacement for them. Also, it is true that by dying Jesus somehow makes up for our sins and merits God's love for us. However, the idea still is mistaken to the extent that it suggests that God needs to be reconciled to humankind rather than humankind to God. It also errs in suggesting, too anthropomorphically, that the death of Jesus is a payment to God. What we believe about making up for sin (satisfaction for sin) and merit must be understood, if it is to be understood correctly, in light of the saying of Jesus: "Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life" (Jn 3.16).

Finally, there is the idea that Jesus died as a scapegoat. The notion is that humankind deserved punishment for sin, and Jesus took the place of sinners, received their punishment, and so relieved them of the necessity of taking it themselves. Up to this point, there is just enough right about the idea that it can be supported by certain passages in Scripture and can be understood in accord with faith as a whole. But the scapegoat idea often is developed in a way that is altogether false. The development separates the death of Jesus from our lives. Punishment is viewed legalistically, as something arbitrarily imposed. Our redemption, then, would not make any real change in us or demand any real change in our lives.[12] This view is incompatible with Catholic faith, which teaches that sin in us really is taken away by baptism, that we are adopted children of God, and that we are called to cooperate with Jesus in living redemptively.

O. The central human significance of Jesus' free acceptance of death

In chapter nine, sections G-J, I explained how choosing one's own death is distinct from foreseeing and accepting one's own death. Jesus was not a suicide; He did not adopt a proposal to bring about His own death. He freely accepted death. Foreseeing that He would be killed, He continued with His work and did nothing to avoid the consequence He foresaw. Hence, the human act which needs an explanation is not a choice by Jesus to kill Himself; it is His free acceptance of death.

Some of the texts quoted in section M, especially that from John (10.17-18) in which Jesus insists that He lays down His life freely, might suggest that Jesus is choosing death. I think the explanation of these and other texts is that they emphasize the fact that Jesus voluntarily relinquished His life in a sense that no one else does.

Being sinless and filled with divine life, the humanity of Christ by rights ought to have enjoyed all the gifts which Man was given in the beginning. As I explained in chapter ten, section L, it follows that Jesus could not have died had He not voluntarily accepted death.

5 Why did He accept death at all? Why did the Word not become Incarnate as a nonmortal individual? The answer to this question is that such a condition, so different from that of sinful humankind, would have negated the very purpose of the Incarnation, already discussed in section D. By the Incarnation, God redeems sinful humankind with a maximum of human cooperation. The race of Man is not simply lifted out of sin willy-nilly, but in Jesus redeems itself in cooperation with God. To reunite sinful humankind with God, the Word accepts the human condition fully, as it is, to the extent that He can accept it--in everything but sin. This means He accepts all the effects of sin which are not in themselves aspects of alienation from God. In short, the Word becomes mortal flesh in order really to be one of us (cf. Phil 2.6-8).

15 Why does Jesus accept a violent death rather than a natural one? I have explained in section K that Jesus understood His personal vocation to be that of a public man, a religious leader and community-former, a combination Messiah, Son of Man, and suffering Servant. From this personal vocation His public life followed, as I explained in section L. Given His public life, He was bound to make enemies, because He did not deal with evil by segregation (as the Pharisees did), but by healing and forgiving and forming a community of love.

As I explained in section C, the Law of Moses contains an inherent tension, because it makes one aware of evil but does not create a community which really is redemptive. The establishment by the time of Jesus had resolved this tension in a false and wrong way. His new way threatened the status quo. The establishment had to get rid of this threat. Killing Him seemed to be the only solution. Also, given His mission, Jesus had to present Himself more and more openly as the redeemer for whom the people were hoping. But even His own apostles did not understand and did not like the kind of redeemer He meant to be: not one who destroys the enemy, but one who engulfs the enemy in love.

30 Therefore, Jesus lost all popular support.

Jesus went to Jerusalem the last time knowing He would be killed. He was not choosing to be killed, but to continue His work to the end. He could have stayed away or slipped away. But sooner or later, He would either have had to give up His work and go into hiding or protect Himself by miraculous acts or accept being killed. The first would have betrayed His vocation. The second would have nullified the point of the Incarnation; a redemption carried out by continual miracles would not be a human work as is one which in general accepts the human condition and its consequences.

To accept this foreseen consequence as Jesus did--with a free acceptance framed by His commitment and personal vocation--supremely expressed this basic commitment and carried out the mission Jesus had to carry out. He most fully expressed His love for the Father, by accepting the tragic situation as His will.

Moreover, in dying Jesus fully expressed His love for His fellows (cf. Jn 15.13). For Jesus is not the only one who lives in a sinful world and who will reap a bitter harvest by living a good life and refusing evasions: to try to escape evil by retiring into a ghetto, or to try to destroy it (and so share in it), or to pretend it is not there.

Anyone who truly lives a good life in this sinful world will be hated (cf. Jn 15.18-19; Wis 2.12-20). As I pointed out in chapter ten, section J, one of the most serious effects of original sin is it takes away the moral motivation of genuine human community and makes moral goodness costly. Jesus is forming a community in friendship with God. Sin must be excluded. Life in this community is going to be humanly difficult--to say the least. In dying, Jesus provides the best expression of the commitment in which He offers all of us a share.

55 The form in which Jesus offers His commitment is at once repulsive and attractive. The cross is a scandal to the religious Jews and foolishness to Greek humanists (1 Cor 1.18-25). At the same time, in being crucified, Jesus draws all humankind to Himself (cf. Jn 12.32). This drawing is not coercion; it is the appeal of totally unselfish love. We all experience this appeal when we meditate upon the sacred heart of Jesus, when we gaze at the crucifix as we pray.

60 Jesus crucified puts in an especially cogent way the choice all human persons must make between moral good and evil. One must either sympathize with and ally oneself with Him, or accept one's place in His opposition. The situation is illustrated in Luke's Gospel by the two thieves crucified with Jesus (Lk 23.39-43). One admits his guilt and the innocence of Jesus, and thus accepts the love of God in Jesus; the other persists in guilt and takes part with those who torment the dying Jesus. By dying as He did, Jesus puts this choice to all of us.

The community of friendship between humankind and God, the kingdom which Jesus forms, is not of this world. The kingdom is invisible. During His earthly life, Jesus did everything possible, including His acceptance of death, to form this community. Ultimately, however, while humankind can cooperate in the work of redemption, it does require a new creation, which essentially is God's act. I explained this point in section C.

75 By dying as He did, Jesus presents us with a horrible example, probably the worst possible example, of the situation of a good person in the sinful world. By dying obediently, He leaves no doubt that He loves God (cf. Jn 14.31). The case is an experimentum crucis--the acid test of God's love. What will happen to this innocent man? The answer, of course, is that God's love is revealed gloriously (cf. Jn 13.31-35). Jesus is lifted up upon the cross only as a moment in His being lifted up in glory to the Father's right hand (cf. Jn 3.14; 8.28; 12.32-34; Acts 2.33; 5.31; Mk 8.31; 9.31; 10.33-34; and so on).

80 So it becomes clear that when one does what one can to remain in friendship with God, one's life, although a disaster in this world, is not pointless. To live the truth in love in this sinful world is both necessary and by God's recreating love sufficient to reach and enjoy fulfillment. Since this is so, a Christian can make morally good choices in hope which one without hope hardly would make. Moreover, considering

themselves members of the invisible communion of love, Christians can see clearly the tremendous difference between the arbitrary self-limitation of sin and the inevitable self-limitation of any choice. The latter is compensated by membership in the one body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12-13).

5 When we bear in mind that Jesus is the Word, that the human life of Jesus is the life of the Word revealing the Father, then the death of Jesus most clearly manifests God's love (cf. Rom 5.6-8; Jn 3.16-17). In the dying of Jesus, God reveals that He is trying to give Himself to us, not acquire us as slaves for Himself. The suspicion which perhaps led to original sin is resolved once and for all: God is not an exploiter.

10 P. Other important aspects of the significance of the death of Jesus

If the account just given begins to render intelligible the human significance of Jesus' free acceptance of death, it also provides a basis for clarifying some of the other aspects of the work of redemption.

15 First, the death of Jesus is a sacrifice offered to the Father (cf. Heb 8.1-6; 9.20-28; 10.8-22; Rom 3.25; 1 Cor 5.7; 1 Jn 4.10; and so on). The basic idea of religious sacrifice is not loss and destruction, but gift and consecration to God. God gives us everything; in sacrifice we give Him back something of what He has given us. The sacrifice is best when it is the offering of one's whole self, since sacrifice, like all gift-giving, symbolizes the giving of oneself in love. Death abstracted from its human meaning is of no value; it hardly could be a gift. But with its full human meaning, the death of Jesus is a great good accepted out of love of God, and so is a wonderful sacrifice. [13]

20 The sacrifice of Jesus is not simply a personal act, but an act He does to establish the new community of God's people. Hence, Jesus dies as a priest who offers Himself. Because His dying does overcome the alienation of humankind from God, it forms a new and lasting covenant. The blood of Jesus unites the divine and human parties to this covenant and puts it in force, since blood is life (cf. Ex 24.1-9).

25 Second, Jesus accepts death because of sin and on behalf of sinners; He offers Himself as sacrifice in obedience to the Father (cf. Jn 1.29; 10.18; 14.31; Rom 4.26; 5.6-21; 1 Cor 15.3; 2 Cor 5.15; Eph 5.2; Col 2.13-14). Given the human meaning of the death of Jesus, it is understandable why God is pleased with this sacrifice. It is not that the death as such pleases Him. But the love expressed by the gift is wholly acceptable and pleasing. Moreover, as a great gift freely given, it deserves an appropriate response from God. In this sense, the death of Jesus merits His glorification and our own as well.

30 Third, Jesus satisfies for our sins; His redemptive act pays the price and ransoms us (cf. Mk 10.45; 1 Cor 6.20; 7.23; 1 Tm 2.6; Ti 2.14; 1 Pt 1.18-19; Rev 5.9). Without Jesus and what He does, the human situation is quite hopeless. He comes into the world, lives and dies, and transforms the hopeless situation. This real transformation of our situation, which is somewhat understandable in terms of the human significance of Jesus' acceptance of death, is the making up for our sins. Just this real effect of what Jesus does is the paying of the price. One need not suppose that God collects a payment; rather, He does the work and in His Son pays the price. The privation of sin really is healed and filled in by love. Like a healed wound, forgiven sin is transformed. In Jesus the wounds become glorious; in us, forgiven sins become new capacities for love and fulfillment.

35 Fourth, by freely accepting death for us, Jesus wins victory over the devil (cf. Jn 14.30; Col 1.13; 1 Jn 3.8), and also over sin and death (cf. Rom 5.21; 6.6-23; 8.3; 1 Cor 15.20-58). All of this follows from the fact that what Jesus does makes a real contribution to undoing the situation into which original sin put humankind. By reestablishing communion with God in a real human community, Jesus in principle overcomes everything involved in and consequent upon sin.

40 Fifth, redemption can be attributed not only to the death of Christ but also, and especially, to His resurrection (cf. Rom 1.4; 4.45; 1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 5.15; Eph 2.1-10). The resurrection is the divine response to the human act of Jesus. The whole of Jesus' living and dying is cooperation in this divine act. It begins the new creation, which is the only ultimate answer to sin. It also puts Jesus in a position to continue, although now invisibly, human activity which is effective in liberating us from sin and making us grow in God's love. For in heaven Jesus intercedes for us (cf. Heb 7.25). He sends us the Spirit and communicates divine life to us by the Spirit (cf. Jn 7.37-44; 17.24). He exists as the principle of ultimate fulfillment and unites our present lives in a real, although mysterious and invisible, way in Himself (cf. 2 Cor 5.15-18; Eph 2.15-18). Thus by dying--with its whole human meaning and its subordination to divine action--Jesus puts us in the situation which we considered at length in part two.

45 Much more can be said about the various aspects of the mystery of the redemption. As I said, the point of view here is only that of moral theology: human acts. In chapter twelve, I will explain how Christian life is sharing in the life of Christ, and the present chapter is the basis for this explanation. Moreover, part four will consider the redemption as proclamation and part five as sacrifice; part seven will consider the carrying out of redemption in the life of the Christian.

50 Q. The human life and the death of Jesus considered without faith

55 If one looks without faith at the life and death of Jesus, the whole thing makes little sense. To begin with, one cannot make any sense of the fundamental commitment of Jesus, and His personal vocation seems like a confused mixture of conflicting myths. At best, one might abstract certain segments from the Gospels and consider Jesus as a good man who had good intentions, but was too gentle for His contemporaries. The abstraction will have to leave out a good deal. By many human standards, Jesus is not a very good man. If He lived today, He would strike most people as too radical, too single-minded, too uncompromising, and at times too harsh. He also would seem too idealistic, too childlike, and too emotionally tender.

He begins His mission with apparent enthusiasm and high hopes. But His neighbors in Nazareth do not take Him seriously (cf. Mt 13.53-58; Mk 6.1-6). At times His own family think He is going crazy (cf. Mk 3.20-21; 31-35). His teaching very often is badly misunderstood. It leads to polarization (cf. Jn 11.9-11). When He insists upon essential points, many of His followers begin to leave (cf. Jn 6.67-72).

His primary interest is in gathering together the Jewish people to form them into the nucleus of the new kingdom (cf. Mk 7.24-30; Mt 15.21-28). But the people whom He wishes to gather up are like stubborn children, who are not willing to play any game (cf. Lk 7.31-35; Mt 11.16-19). At the very time of His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus must observe that the real significance of His presence among the Jews has been ignored (cf. Lk 19.41-44). He wanted to gather up the people as a mother hen gathers her chicks, but His love has been rebuffed (cf. Mt 23.37-39; Lk 13.34-35).

Jesus has all the skills in arguing that any rabbi could ask for. He regularly comes out on top in any argument. His opponents are finally reduced to silence (cf. Lk 20.40; Mk 12.34; Mt 22.46). However, they do not concede anything. Rather, they appeal to a different kind of ratio: They set out to have Him killed.

The heartbreaking story of how His closest associates behave is familiar. One of them collaborates in having Him killed. Most of them flee when danger becomes too great. Peter, who always seemed so sturdy, proves a weak supporter and disappears from the scene. Near the cross are John, Mary, and a few other women.

The life of Jesus is that of a martyr, but apart from faith it is not even a very good martyr story. Compare Jesus with Socrates. Socrates largely succeeds and obviously succeeds in what he is trying to do. When he is condemned to death, he still has many supporters. His close followers stand by him. The prospect of death does not phase him, for he believes he will be better off dead. The actual death of Socrates is easy and dignified. Although he had his oddities and died a martyr's death, Socrates obviously was a well-rounded and a fulfilled human being. Jesus was not.

Jesus knows His own great gifts. He has absolute purity of feeling and insight. How utterly frustrating His life must have been. Of course, He foresees that glory awaits. But He does not have the concrete experience beforehand. He is like the first man to rocket into space, knowing in theory that all will be well, but lacking the reassurance of the example of someone else's success in such an adventure.

It is important to consider very clearly what the life of Jesus looks like when it is considered without faith, for our lives are to be like His.

Notes to chapter eleven

1. For a theological development in line with this view, see Walter Kasper, Jesus the Christ (London, New York: Burns & Oates, Paulist Press, 1976), pp. 163-196. For a philosophical treatment of person, see Germain Grisez, Beyond the New Theism: A Philosophy of Religion (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), pp. 343-353 and 365-369.

2. St. Thomas, Summa theologiae, 3, qu. 1, art. 3; see Louis Bouyer, The Eternal Son: A Theology of the Word and Christology (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978), pp. 364-365.

3. See Kasper, op. cit., pp. 252-253.

4. See Bouyer, op. cit., pp. 414-419.

5. St. Thomas, Summa theologiae, 3, qu. 19, art. 1.

6. Ibid., 3, qu. 16, art. 8.

7. Kasper, op. cit., p. 199.

8. See Bouyer, pp. 151-167; E. L. Mascall, Theology and the Gospel of Christ: An Essay in Reorientation (London: SPCK, 1977), pp. 65-117.

9. James Barr, Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 1-39. Although I do not agree altogether with Barr's implicit position and his critique of fundamentalism, his description and analysis of what fundamentalism is, is important. "Fundamentalism" ought not to be used to dismiss anyone outside the profession who criticizes commonly accepted assumptions of Scripture scholars.

10. On "Messiah," "Son of Man," and "Servant," see Xavier Léon-Dufour, Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 2nd ed. (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). See also Bouyer, op. cit., pp. 168-182.

11. A very instructive study on these matters is Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., and Léopold Sabourin, S.J., Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), summarized pp. 290-296. See also Kasper, op. cit., pp. 113-121 and 252-268.

12. Ibid., pp. 225-244, treats this idea and shows its historical origins, around the time of the Reformation, among both Protestant and Catholic writers. It is part and parcel of modern legalism.

13. On sacrifice, see Robert J. Daly, S.J., The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 53-83.

Questions for study and review for chapter eleven will be found on p. 11-21

Questions for study and review

1. Explain the relationship between the nature of evil as privation and the manner in which evil is overcome by God's redemptive work in Christ.
- 5 2. Someone might say: It is very inefficient of God to redeem us in such a complicated way when He could have done it by a simple almighty word. How would you respond to this observation?
3. Why is it important to hold that God is angry and that He hates evil?
- 10 4. What common features can be noticed in God's redemptive acts in the old and new covenants? What limitations were there in the old covenants as compared with the covenant completed in Christ?
5. Explain the distinction between the divine and human actuations of the Word in the actions of Jesus, and show how the two are really distinct yet perfectly united in His single human life.
- 15 6. Summarize what Scripture and the teaching of the Church indicate about the basic commitment of Jesus.
7. How can Jesus be tempted? Is He able to commit sin? Summarize the explanation of the temptations of Jesus proposed here.
- 20 8. In what sense does Jesus' commitment to His personal vocation fulfill the Scriptures?
9. Show by some examples how the activity of Jesus during His life is rendered intelligible by His fundamental commitment.
- 25 10. Considering His acceptance of death simply as a human act, explain precisely what Jesus does in freely accepting death, and why--so far as one can tell from the available data--He does it.
11. Discuss and criticize various false accounts of the redemption. Compare these with various real and important aspects of it, which can be related to Jesus' human act of freely accepting death.
- 30 12. In what respects must one maintain that redemption is first and foremost (and also last and through and through) the work of God?