

Redemption - The Doctrine

What is Christianity? Part 4

By Very Rev William M. Moran, D.D.
Catholic Truth Society of Ireland No.dd0933 (1944)

Being the Fourth Booklet in a series entitled "What is Christianity?" by Very Rev. William Moran.
The Doctrine of Redemption.

A REDEEMER WAS NECESSARY.

Let us now look at Adam's position after the fall. He had been given certain gifts, which he could never have gained by his own efforts. Neither could we have claimed those gifts as due to him, by reason of his creation as a human being; they were far above the requirements of human nature as such. In short, those gifts were beyond man's reach from every point of view; so that he could never have possessed them at all, if they had not been conferred upon him gratuitously by God. They had been conferred conditionally; the condition for their continuance had now been broken; the gifts were withdrawn; and Adam was helpless to recover them.

The spiritual bankruptcy of Adam and his posterity is frequently referred to by Saint Paul. According to the Apostle, Jew and Gentile alike are under the bondage of sin, and can escape from it only through faith in the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. In his Epistle to the Romans, written from the licentious city of Corinth, he paints a lurid picture of the moral condition of the Gentile world. The law of God, written in their hearts, has not prevented the Gentiles from becoming steeped in sin. They have shut their eyes to the manifestation of God's greatness, contained in the works of His hands, and have made for themselves false gods in the shape of men and brutes and creeping things. Wherefore they have been delivered up to the sinful desires of their own hearts (Romans chapter 1).

And then he turns to the Jews, who while condemning the Gentiles are in no better condition themselves. The law of Moses is no more a barrier to sin for the Jews, than the light of reason is for the Gentiles. This fact is proved both by Scripture and by experience. The condition of mankind from Adam to Christ can be summed up in the statement that all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, are under the dominion of sin.

Are we to despair then of justification from sin? Must we give up all hope of sanctification and salvation? No; but we must turn to Jesus Christ, through Whom alone we can obtain these gifts. Justification cannot come from the natural efforts of the Gentiles; neither can it come from the works and ceremonial of the Mosaic Law. It is a gratuitous gift of God, and it can only be obtained through faith in Jesus Christ. "There is no distinction," says the Apostle, "for all have sinned, and do need the glory (grace) of God; being justified gratuitously by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:22-24). And then the Apostle goes on to develop more fully this idea of redemption through Christ: "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation (propitiatory sacrifice), through faith in His blood, to the showing of His justice, for the remission of former sins" (Romans

3:25). And again: "When as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us. Much more, therefore, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:9). Hence the well-known comparison drawn by Saint Paul between Adam and Christ. For as through the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners; so through the obedience (unto death) of One, the many shall be made just" (Romans 5:19).

WHY A REDEEMER WAS NECESSARY.

While Saint Paul insists so strongly on the two facts just mentioned, – that is, the spiritual bankruptcy of mankind, on the one hand, and the efficacy of the redemption wrought by Christ, on the other – he does not discuss the underlying reasons for either of these important facts. He gives us the beginning and the end of the story, so to speak, and he allows us to fill in the middle as best we can. Reason enables us to fill in this gap in a manner that conforms at once to the data of revelation, and to human conceptions of guilt and reparation. Let us try to reconstruct the situation brought about by the fall.

Adam had grievously offended God, and thereby incurred a debt – a debt of reparation of honour, due to God, on account of the dishonour caused by sin. But the injury to God's honour had been so great, that neither Adam nor any of his posterity was capable of paying in full the consequent debt of reparation. The result was spiritual bankruptcy for mankind.

To understand man's helplessness in respect of this debt, it is necessary to consider the implication of mortal sin. Sin is an insult offered by the creature to the Creator, who holds the sinner in existence even at the moment when he is offending Him. What an affront to God's honour from one who was bound by so many ties to reverence and obey Him! No such situation could arise between man and man, because all men are on substantially the same level as human beings. And yet, even among men an insult demands satisfaction, that is, reparation of injured honour. In former times, when dueling was permitted by the civil law, such reparation was often sought in the life-blood of the offender. I do not wish to imply that these "affairs of honour," as they were called, were lawful or reasonable means of settling quarrels between gentlemen. I mention them merely to illustrate the whole-hearted acceptance in human society, of the principle that injury to honour, no less than injury to property, demands reparation. If that principle holds good in our relations with our fellow-men, it holds good with far greater reason in our relations with God.

It is possible to injure another's property to an extent far in excess of one's capacity to make restitution. A man whose worldly possessions do not amount to more than a few shillings, might conceivably cause thousands of pounds worth of damage by fire or explosives. This is something like what Adam did in the moral order. He injured God's honour to an extent far in excess of his capacity to make reparation. It will help us to understand the situation that Adam created for himself, if we first consider how honour and dishonour, insult and reparation, are measured in human society. Two elements are taken into consideration, the importance of the thing done, and the relative dignity of the parties concerned. By reason of the thing done you would offend a man more by slapping him in the face at a public meeting, than by merely giving him "the cold shoulder." By reason of the relative dignity of the parties concerned, it would be a more serious offence for a private soldier to strike an officer, than to strike a man of his own rank.

Although the dignity of human nature is substantially the same in all men, and only minor differences due to authority, social status, et cetera, exist between man and man; nevertheless, the principle is well recognised in human society, that the greater the dignity of the person offended,

and the lowlier by comparison the person offending, the greater will be the gravity of any given offence. For instance, if a Catholic workman should use what is called "un-parliamentary language" to a fellow workman, to express disapproval of something done by him, nobody would pay very much attention to it. If he treated the Pope in precisely the same way, he would provide a sensation for the newspapers of the world.

When we come to consider the rendering of honour, or reparation of honour, on the other hand, we find the same principle recognised, except that the order of persons is reversed. Dishonour is measured in terms of the dignity of the person offended. Honour is not measured, however, in terms of the dignity of the person honoured, but in terms of the dignity of the person conferring the honour. If the king only congratulates an athlete on the achievement of a new record, the honour is regarded as worth broadcasting that evening on the radio. If a man like Napoleon Bonaparte condescended to apologise to a private soldier for some humiliation to which he had unfairly subjected him, the poor fellow would deem it such an honour, that he would boast about it to the end of his life.

Now, if men, who all enjoy the same dignity as human beings, take so much account of the accidental differences and status between man and man; what shall we say of the infinite gap that divides the majesty of the Creator from the nothingness of the creature. Like a good father, God is patient with His children. He does not disinherit them for petty faults. He does not stand on His dignity, so to speak, in regard to trifling infringements of law. And so we have venial sins as well as mortal sins. But when we do commit a grave violation of His law, as Adam did; when we really defy His authority in a matter that He has made a test of our allegiance or rebellion, consider the gravity of that offence by reason of the Majesty offended, and the nothingness of the offender. The injury to God's honour has a kind of infinity about it, by reason of the dignity outraged. Man's capacity to make reparation of honour, on the other hand, is measured by his own dignity, which is insignificant by comparison with the dignity offended. And so it comes to pass that man is capable of incurring by a single mortal sin a debt of reparation, which he is quite incapable of paying-off.

That was the situation, in which Adam found himself, after the fall. Neither Adam, nor any nor all his posterity were capable of making full satisfaction – full reparation of honour – for even one mortal sin, much less for all the sins of mankind. If full reparation were to be made at all, it must be made by a person whose dignity lent to his actions that same kind of infinity, which attached to the sin by reason of the infinite dignity offended.

For two distinct reasons, therefore, man was helpless to retrieve his supernatural fortune. First, the goods lost were supernatural goods, which man could neither achieve by his own efforts, nor claim as a right due to him. Secondly, these goods had been lost through an injury done to God's honour in the shape of a mortal sin: and that injury still remained unrepaired, and, so far as man was concerned, un-repairable.

How did God, who is at once infinitely just and infinitely merciful, deal with man in this impasse? Revelation has answered the question for us. His wisdom and goodness found a way of satisfying at once, and to the fullest extent, the claims and promptings of both justice and mercy. God Himself provided a mediator capable of making full reparation for sin on behalf of fallen humanity. That mediator was His own Son, Who took a human nature like ours, and in that nature not only made reparation for our sins, but also won back for us the supernatural gifts lost by Adam. God's mercy was abundantly exercised in providing a scheme, whereby man was enabled to secure a free pardon,

and restoration to his supernatural status. God's justice was satisfied at the same time, by the abundant reparation of honour made to God by Jesus Christ. How Christ made this reparation of honour will be explained presently.

JUSTIFICATION THROUGH CHRIST.

Let us now consider the justification, which, Saint Paul tells us, is obtainable only through Christ. What exactly is this justification? I cannot better explain it, than by quoting the words of 'the Council of Trent. (Footnote: This is the General Council, called together in the sixteenth century, to deal with the errors of the Protestant Reformation.)

"Justification does not consist merely in the remission of sin, but also in the sanctification and renewal of the inward man; whereby man from being unjust (that is, un-renewed, displeasing to God) becomes just (pleasing to God), from being an enemy becomes a friend (of God), that he may be heir in hope to life eternal" (Session 6.) Justification, therefore, includes two things – remission of sin, and the restoration of sanctifying grace, by which we become adoptive sons of God, and heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. Imagine a man lifted out of the state of sin into the state of grace, and you have the notion of justification.

The Council (of Trent) next proceeds to enumerate the various causes of justification. The final cause (that is, the end or purpose) of justification is "the glory of God and Christ, and life eternal." From these words, we gather that justification has two purposes, one subordinate to the other. From the point of view of the person justified, the immediate purpose of justification is to make it possible for him to attain to life eternal when he dies. But as man's salvation will conduce in turn to the glory of God, the ultimate purpose of justification is the glory of God.

We next come to the efficient cause of justification, that is, the cause that actually works the change in our souls – the change from the state of sin to the state of grace. This efficient cause is stated to be "the merciful God, Who gratuitously cleanses and sanctifies (the soul)." As the gift of sanctifying grace is a divine gift, only God Himself can give it to us; only God can make us sharers of His own divine nature.

The next cause mentioned is the meritorious cause, that is, the person whose merits procure for us justification. This cause, according to Trent, is God's "beloved and only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, Who by His most holy passion on the Cross merited for us justification, and made satisfaction to the Father on our behalf."

Lastly, we have the instrumental cause of justification, that is, the instruments by which we get the benefits of Christ's merits actually applied to our souls, for the purpose of having them lifted out of the state of sin into the state of grace. This "instrumental cause," according to Trent, "is the sacrament of Baptism, the sacrament of that Faith, (see the Footnote) without which there is no justification."

(Footnote: Faith as well as Baptism is necessary for those who are capable of believing. But infants, who are incapable of faith, can receive justification by Baptism alone. Trent had already made this point clear in the previous session (number 5).)

The Council is speaking, of course, about the reception of justification for the first time. If a baptized person loses justification by mortal sin, then the instrument for recovering it is not the sacrament of Baptism (which cannot be received a second time), but the sacrament of Penance.

In the words, which I have quoted from the Council of Trent, we have a summary of the main points of the Catholic doctrine of Redemption through Christ. Let me tabulate these points in logical order:-

1. Christ is the sole mediator, by Whose influence sin, whether original sin or personal sin, is taken away.
2. By His passion and death, Christ made satisfaction to God on our behalf – that is, He paid the debt of reparation of honour due to God on account of Adam's sin, and on account of our own personal sins.
3. Christ merited for us justification – that is, He merited not merely pardon for sin (original sin and our own personal sins), but also our restoration to the state of sanctifying grace, whereby we become once more adoptive sons of God, and heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven.
4. We do not come into the world in actual possession of this justification: it comes to us through the instrumentality of Baptism.

A few words of explanation will bring out more clearly the full meaning of these four propositions.

1. "Christ is the sole mediator, by whose influence sin is taken away." A mediator is one who interposes to bring about a reconciliation between two parties, who are at variance with each other. In order that his interference may not be resented – in order that it may have a prospect of success – the mediator must be a *persona grata* (an acceptable person) with the aggrieved party; and he must have some kind of right to speak on behalf of the offending party. In the case under discussion, the parties, at variance were God and the human race. Christ was an eminently suitable mediator to bring about a reconciliation between them. He was a *persona grata* with the aggrieved party, God; for, not only was He entirely sinless, but He was a Divine Person. For that reason, even His human nature, in which He mediated, was most pleasing to God: and its actions had, in the eyes of God, a corresponding value and acceptableness, derived from the majesty of His person. Christ was likewise a most suitable mediator from man's point of view. Being a man Himself, by reason of the human nature He had assumed; being moreover the man of all time by reason of the unique dignity of His manhood, He was the most appropriate mediator to intercede with God for fallen humanity. Not only was He the most appropriate mediator, but He was the only man capable of undertaking the task at all. He was the only man that did not Himself need the help of a mediator; He alone had no sin to atone for, and at the same time was capable of satisfying fully for the sins of other men.

By saying that Christ is sole mediator, we mean that no one has ever been lifted out of the state of sin into the state of grace except through the mediation of Christ. This is true of the Saints of the Old Law, as well as those of the New Law. All alike are indebted to Christ for their reconciliation with God. But we often speak of mediation in another sense – the secondary and subordinate mediation of the Saints, and particularly the Blessed Virgin. Having themselves become the friends of God through the mediation of Christ, the Saints are in a favourable position to intercede for us with God – to add their prayers to our own – and thereby increase our chances of obtaining some particular good, which we desire. But this power of the Saints to help us is based entirely on the mediation of Christ. Without that mediation, they would not now be God's friends in Heaven. Without that mediation as a foundation to go upon, their prayers for us even now would be of no avail. The mediation of the Saints, therefore, is only a particular application of the mediation of Christ. He is the one and only mediator in His own right between God and men.

2. The second of the four propositions (enumerated above) states that Christ by His passion and death made satisfaction to God on our behalf. Here we have the first aspect of Christ's mediation, namely, to make satisfaction to God for our sins. The other aspect of Christ's mediation, namely, to merit for us justification, is dealt with in the third proposition, which I shall explain presently.

Christ satisfied for our sins. What does that mean? It means that He paid on our behalf the reparation of honour due to God from us by reason of our sins. When you injure another's property unjustly, you are bound to repair it. That reparation, in the case of property, is called restitution; and your obligation to repair the injury is called an obligation to restitution. When you unjustly injure another's honour by (for instance) a public insult, you are likewise bound to repair the injury; but the reparation in this case is called satisfaction rather than restitution. Satisfaction is, therefore, reparation for injured honour. Now, sin is an injury to God's honour; and the injury is so great that – as I have already explained – neither Adam nor his posterity was capable of fully repairing the injury done by even one mortal sin, much less all the sins of mankind. And so, a great debt (continually growing bigger) remained unpaid, until the Son of God came on earth to pay it. When we say that Christ satisfied for the sins of mankind, we mean that He paid the whole of this debt. In other words, He rendered to God an amount of honour sufficient (and more than sufficient) to compensate for the dishonour caused by all the sins of mankind. He did so by His passion and death on the Cross.

At first sight, that may seem an extraordinary statement. How could one man give to God as much honour as is taken from Him by hundreds of millions of sinners?

How in particular could he do so by suffering agony and death on a Cross? How could the cruelty of the Jews to our Lord honour God? What pleasure could God take in human suffering? These questions are often asked by non-Catholics. But they arise out of a misunderstanding of the situation. The cruelty of the Jews did not honour God; on the contrary, like every sin, it dishonoured Him. Nor did the mere suffering of pain by Christ give any satisfaction or pleasure to God. What honoured God was the great love and reverence for God, manifested by Christ in allowing Himself to be so treated by His tormentors.

Look at the matter this way. Men do not throw over their allegiance to God without some kind of motive. They always have in view the gratification of some passion – the gratification of pride in one man, the pleasures of the flesh in another, and so on. How might we expect Christ to set about repairing the dishonour done to God by the sins? Consider how our own courts deal with offenders brought before them. If you have unjustly damaged your neighbour's property, you are compelled to make good the damage out of your own pocket. If you have committed some other kind of crime, you may be sent to jail, or in extreme cases put to death. Note that the criminal is always sentenced to something disagreeable and painful to human nature. We never dream of condemning a criminal to something pleasant and enjoyable. Christ accommodated Himself to human ideas in His passion and death. He submitted to what was disagreeable and painful in reparation for human sin. For human pride and sensuality, He paid the price of humiliation, suffering and finally death.

(Footnote: His passion and death had, however, other aspects, which we shall consider at a later stage.)

Christ did not suffer and die as a helpless victim of human cruelty and injustice; He submitted freely to what He might have avoided. He tells us Himself: "Therefore does the Father love me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No man takes it from Me; but I lay it down of

Myself. And I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again" (John 10:17-18). Whatever His executioners may have thought or intended, the fact remains that Christ freely submitted to His passion and death in reparation for human sin; and it was the great love and reverence for God, manifested by Him in doing so, that honoured God. The greatness of the suffering, freely endured, is a measure of the great love that prompted and sustained each endurance. That, however, is only one of the two elements that go to make up the full measure of the honour thus rendered to God by Christ. The other element is the dignity of the person giving the honour. It was a Divine Person that made reparation of honour to God, a person whose divine majesty lent to all His actions, even the actions of His human nature, an infinite dignity. It was that dignity that raised the already great reparational value of Christ's passion and death to a wholly different level, the level of the infinite. And that is why the reparation made by Christ was sufficient to cancel out the dishonour caused to God by all the sins of mankind. And so, we have the words of Saint Paul (Romans chapter 5): "As then through one transgression it has come to condemnation for all men, so also through one justifying it comes to justification leading to life for all men."

3. The third of the four propositions already enumerated states that Christ merited justification for us. Merit differs from satisfaction in that its aim is not to wipe out an existing debt, but to establish a right to some reward. A labourer, for instance, by doing the day's work set out for him by his employer, merits the wages he is paid for it. A person can merit a reward either for himself or for somebody else. For instance, if a nurse in one of the city hospitals wishes to go out to attend a funeral, let us say, during her hours of duty, she may get permission to do so, if another nurse is willing to do her work while she is away. During the absence of the first nurse in such a case, the second nurse is working on her behalf, and earning (that is, meriting) for her the wages that will be paid in respect of that particular period of duty. We can therefore have vicarious merit (that is, merit on behalf of another); just as we can have vicarious satisfaction (that is, satisfaction made on behalf of another). We have just seen that, according to Catholic doctrine, Christ made vicarious satisfaction for the sins of mankind. The proposition we are now considering means that Christ vicariously merited for mankind the gift of justification, that is, not merely pardon for sin, but also the restoration of sanctifying grace with the right to heaven hereafter.

When Adam fell, he not only lost the gift of sanctifying grace, but he also rendered himself liable to eternal punishment in hell. Every man since Adam's time, who committed mortal sin, rendered himself liable to similar punishment.

Now, it is conceivable that God might be willing to pardon all these sins, and release the offenders from liability to hell, without however restoring them to any supernatural gifts. He might leave them in a state of pure nature, that is, a state in which they would have just what was due to them as rational animals, and nothing more. If the mediation of Christ was to be fully effective, therefore, it was necessary for Christ not only to satisfy for human sins, but also to merit for men the gift of justification. He has actually done so. He offered His passion and death for the double purpose of satisfying for our sins, and of winning for us justification. The infinite dignity of His person made the value of His passion amply sufficient for both purposes; and God accepted it as such. Because sanctifying grace is a strictly supernatural gift, nobody was capable of meriting it by his own efforts, except Christ. And Christ was capable of meriting it, only because His divine personality lent an infinite value to His meritorious actions. Hence, Christ is sole mediator under both aspects of His mediation: He alone was capable of satisfying fully for human sin; and he alone was capable of meriting for us the gift of justification. From the beginning to the end of human history, no man

has ever passed, and no man ever will pass, from the state of sin to the state of grace, except in virtue of the mediation of Christ, completed on Calvary.

4. The last of our four propositions states that we actually receive the gift of justification through the instrumentality of Baptism. Now, it is easy enough to understand why those, who lived before Christ, came into the world deprived of grace. But now that Christ has repaired the damage done by Adam – now that He has paid the debt of honour due to God, and merited for us justification – you may wonder why we do not come into the world already justified. Why are we not born adoptive sons of God and heirs to heaven? The reason is that we are born sons of Adam, not sons of Christ. Adam, as I explained in the previous booklet of this series, was juridical head of the human race; and in that capacity, he sinned against God. The link of solidarity between the rest of the race and its head (Adam) was a natural link – the link of carnal descent. We thus come into the world bound by a natural link to our sinful head. We have no such natural link with our other head, Christ. To be linked up with Him – to be brought into solidarity with Him as our Saviour – we have to be born again, by the artificial birth of Baptism. Only then do we become children of Christ. Only then do we actually benefit by what He has already done for us. Only then do we become His members – members of the body, of which He is the head.

For a person not accustomed to the terminology of Scholastic Philosophy, the term "instrumental cause" may possibly suggest that justification is conferred in a purely mechanical way by Baptism; and that no real change of heart is required in the sinner. That would be a Complete Misunderstanding of the teaching of Trent. It is true that children, who have no personal sins to repent of, and who are incapable of faith, can be justified by the mere reception of Baptism. We can only regard that privilege as a concession made to their helplessness by the mercy of God. For an adult, capable of dispositions, it is quite otherwise. For him, not only Faith in Christ, but also true repentance for his sins (if he has seriously offended God) are essential. Otherwise, he will not receive justification, even though he is validly baptized. The Council of Trent not only insists on the necessity of these dispositions, but in a masterly analysis of the various psychological phases in the normal process of conversion to God, it maps out the successive acts elicited by the sinner coming to justification for the first time – Faith in Christ, fear of God's justice, confidence in His mercy, hope of pardon, the beginning of charity, sorrow for sin, the resolution to be baptized, and to begin a new life in conformity with God's law. The redemption wrought by Christ was not intended by Him as a licence to sin; and it is not represented as such by the Catholic Church.

Christ's mediation for us is often called "redemption". The word literally means a buying back, or the return of a thing to its former owner after he has paid a price for it. For instance, when an Irish farmer fails to pay his land annuities, his cattle are sometimes seized and auctioned by agents of the Government. If – as sometimes happens – the farmer himself buys back the cattle, the transaction is an example of redemption in the literal sense. Christ's mediation for us was not a redemption in this literal sense; for mankind never passed from one owner to another, and consequently was never bought back. But Christ's mediation was sufficiently like the transaction of buying back, to make redemption a very useful image, under which to represent it to the faithful. This was particularly true at a time when human beings were bought and sold as slaves in the market place. If a slave had a friend able and willing to pay the price, the slave could be "redeemed," that is, bought out of the state of slavery, and restored to freedom. It was this situation the sacred writers had in view, when they spoke of Christ's mediation as a redemption.

From his former happy position as adoptive son of God, man had fallen into a state of permanent sin. This new state was looked on as a state of bondage or slavery to sin and the devil. Christ merited man's release from this metaphorical slavery, and restored Him to the freedom of adoptive sonship of God. He did so at the price of His passion and death. Hence, Christ's mediation can be very appropriately called a work of redemption. He bought us out of the bondage of sin at the cost of a great price – His own blood.

The frequent use of this term "redemption" in the New Testament led a few theologians of the early Church to propound a curious error. They conceived the idea that man became a slave of the devil in the literal sense, and that the devil acquired some kind of ownership over mankind as a result of the fall. In keeping with this notion, they looked on the passion and death of our Lord as the price demanded by the devil, before he would let his captives go. This extraordinary view has no foundation in revelation; and has been abandoned for many centuries. It shows how easy it is to err, if we push too far even the most useful of metaphors.

"Atonement" is another word used as an alternative, term for the mediation or redemption wrought by Christ. Literally, it means the reconciliation of people who are at variance – getting them to be "at one," instead of "at variance;" hence "at-one-ment," now called "atonement." There is another Scriptural word, that must be mentioned in connection with Christ's mediation – the word "sacrifice." Christ offered Himself in sacrifice to God upon the Cross. What that means will be explained in a later booklet of this series. In the present context, it will suffice to note that the Epistle to the Hebrews has something to tell us about the purpose and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. It tells us that Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice of propitiation (see Footnote) for the sins of mankind; and that this sacrifice of Himself by Christ was the only propitiatory sacrifice that ever had any real value in the eyes of God. (Footnote: A propitiatory sacrifice is a sacrifice offered chiefly for the purpose of appeasing God's wrath, incurred by sin.) The propitiatory sacrifices, offered by the Jews under the old Law, were acceptable to God, only because they were figures and shadows of the future sacrifice of Christ.

I have now briefly explained the main points in the Catholic doctrine of redemption through Christ. According to that doctrine, Christ has satisfied for our sins, and merited for us our restoration to adoptive sonship of God, and heir-ship to heaven. That is what is meant when we say that Christ redeemed us vicariously – He satisfied and merited on our behalf (for our benefit). Christ was not merely a religious pioneer, showing us how to save ourselves. Justification is not the work of the person justified: it is the work of God in him and for him. Of our own powers, we could never achieve it, even with the example of Christ before our eyes. Justification is a gratuitous gift of God, obtainable only through the mediation of Christ. That mediation had an objective value, wholly independent of any efforts on our part. And it is that objective value that is the important thing in the retrieving of man's supernatural fortune.

Besides the objective value just mentioned, the passion of Christ has had a tremendous subjective value for Christians down the ages. It has helped them enormously towards living a better life, by giving them a sublime example to meditate upon, and imitate. In the light of Christ's passion, we can appreciate more easily the greatness of God's love for us, the enormity of sin and the necessity of avoiding it, the value of sanctifying grace, and so on. Yet all this subjective value, important and useful as it is to us, is not the chief purpose of Christ's passion and death. The chief purpose was to satisfy for our sins, and merit for us justification.

The proof of the doctrine, expounded in the preceding pages, will form the subject matter of the next booklet in this series.
