

But just as a prudent doctor employs one specific at the beginning of a malady, another in the middle and yet another at the end, so at the beginning of a conversion one remedy is necessary, later on another and still later yet . . ."

If only the eye of our soul is single  
 " directed at the end for which I was created,"  
 if only our heart throbs  
 in the restlessness of a sincere desire for Him,  
 if then however many clouds blot our every vista  
 however many raging storms drown the "gentle whispering,"  
 if only prayer and entreaty are never silent within you  
 " that you be not deaf to His Call  
 but eager and ready to do His Divine Will,"  
 that you may desire and recognise  
 what is more pleasing to His Divine Goodness "

" asking His Grace to choose that which is more to the glory  
 of the Divine Majesty "

and the salvation of your soul ;  
 when all your will is a prayer  
 for " that which I desire and need,"  
 then  
 all things  
 lead you " nearer to intimate union  
 with your Creator and Lord  
 in growing love."

*(To be continued.)*

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## THE DEFICIENCIES OF CHRIST

BY

DAMIAN MAGRATH, O.P.

The following lines are offered with all reverence in an attempt at understanding some of the implications of S. Thomas's teaching on the sufferings of our Lord. They are meant to suggest the apparent ineffectualness of the theologian's doctrine in face of the bitter experience of the disciple.

### I

#### THE DISCIPLE PROTESTS

You speak to me of the sufferings of Christ; you tell me to think of them in my pain; to bear my own, and to offer them up with his. They are the penalty of my sins, and Christ's Passion has given them meaning and purpose, if only I accept them as he did for me. Yet what consolation is that to me, for his sufferings cannot compare with mine? You pretend the Passion was a sort of Epiphany: a manifestation of the reality

of Christ's Humanity. But Christ was not like us, not equal to us in all things! A very human God would be a consolation and a help. Why was not Christ like us in all things: subject to suffering, pain, ignorance, temptation and sin? You have to draw the line because your Saviour was not merely man but God. It seems to me that the Incarnation has failed to reach me in my suffering, just at those points where I need it most—give me my comrade who is mere man and not this pale Sufferer!

You tell me to think of the bodily suffering of the Christ upon his Cross: the hanging body, the riven members, the wounds, the thorns, the burning thirst. Meditate upon the mental anguish, the sadness of the rejection: the jeering crowd, the fleeing disciples. These things, you say, he bore for my sake.

Yet when I press you, demanding to be told the real depths of this passion, you reply with specious distinctions which empty it of all that is most profoundly painful. This is suffering without its sting: without sin, and ignorance, and disorder!

What is this burden of bodily suffering and mental anguish that I have to bear in common with my fellow-men? It is something I cannot escape, pressing me on every side, inevitably interwoven with my life—this is its deepest painfulness. How it preoccupies my mind and binds my will, crushing me inwards against all my wishes, choking all freedom, denying all my instincts their development! Christ, you tell me, also bore it against his will; but here you distinguish and say that in his higher will he accepted it all for my sake, chose it with full liberty. How light would be my burden if I could choose to suffer, how it would release my whole being if I knew that I had freely entered into this with love!

Again you say Christ had emotions, but hasten to add—only good ones; only feelings that his mind and will were able to control. Did he not have to bear the burden of temptation, carrying the devil about with him in his body? Were not even the instinctive needs of his nature able to assault his integrity? No, his emotions never got out of hand, never perverted his mind, were not able to become occasions of sin!

There was no ignorance in Christ's mind for he was God and even in his Humanity knew everything. He was never called upon to bear that burden of doubt and darkness and that indecision of will it causes. How easily could I bear it all if I saw clearly whither it was leading!

Finally, you tell me he was entirely without sin. He had never to bear the burden of sin: the horror of the past, the hardness of the present, the fear of the future. He could not experience that momentary nothingness when we turn the world into a chaos. How easy it would be to bear the penalties if we had not also to bear the sins! Moreover, although you say that

he bore our sins for us, yet that is an easy matter when we consider that he himself was not involved in them, for we find it heroic to bear the sufferings of others without their guilt.

The Cross has been called a stumbling-block and a scandal. Men are said not to understand infirmity: they expect a saviour who is strong and victorious. The Cross is no stumbling-block to me—it is only inadequate, only a disappointment. I look for a saviour like us in all things, for how consoling and helpful is it to be able to turn to a comrade who knows our sufferings even as we do ourselves. The Crucified seems pale and remote!

Have you never wished to lose your life—the life of your soul—for the salvation of your brother. Christ could not do this, he could not enter into the hell of the damned. He is cut off from all that heroism we know so well, that generosity and heroism of man for man, inspired by a humanity which is beyond his reach. Pale brother! Did not your Apostle say that his sufferings were insufficient; we can fill them up and do greater things—because we are men, not gods.

## II

### THE THEOLOGIAN REFLECTS

It is well to recall that there is nothing in Christian Revelation which would lead us to expect a saviour who is identical with us in every way. There is one purpose in the Incarnation and that is the accomplishment of man's salvation and redemption from sin. This gives us the clue to the falsity of the viewpoint which has just been suggested. Man is most himself, most perfectly realising his capabilities, when he is conformed to the purpose for which God created him. Our Lord's life was meant to make this possible by providing the grace which removed sin and directed us Godward's. Therefore it is wrong to expect that his life be exactly similar to our own. He was perfect God and perfect Man; that was the way devised by God through which man should be redeemed. But we remain imperfect men. He is the image, example, model, not of our life as it is, but as it ought to be: in other words Christ's humanity is like to a redeemed humanity. He remains God while we remain men and sinful; but he is also perfectly a man.

It is quite true, therefore, that there is a point at which our Lord cannot reach us, for all the real evils of creation are denials of his Godhead and the consequent perfection of his Manhood. The malice of sin he cannot take upon himself; neither can he suffer that pain of Hell which is the loss of God. He can only take upon himself those effects of sin which imply no such defectiveness. His life shows us how pain and suffering can be given purpose and made redemptive because accepted and borne by one who is God. The work of the Incarnation is to

redeem, restore, and direct human things to their supernatural purpose, making human things, both good and evil—excepting sin—centred in God. So we turn to Christ not to find out what we are—though we shall plumb the depths of self knowledge by doing so—but in order to discover and become what we ought to be: He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Bodily suffering is valueless in itself, something to be avoided or removed; mental anguish is an evil of the mind. Yet it finds a purpose when it serves the soul, and in the acceptance of it we, with Christ, are set free: the burden is eased, we have freely chosen it with the assistance of grace. It is the wilfulness of Christ's suffering and our willingness to accept our burden that enable us to make satisfaction for our sins. This is the liberty which the saints have understood; something, not crushing, but realising, the deepest spiritual powers in a man; purging the sinful flesh and transfiguring it upon the Cross so that it may attain the glory of resurrection.

Likewise our emotional life must be made to serve the spirit, made to bear the impress of the soul, a sensible expression of our inner life. Truly when we see this Man of Sorrows do we perceive how befittingly is man weighed down with grief under the burden of his sins. Our Lord is no stoical hero, but a man like us. If he was not wounded by ignorance, nevertheless in that mysterious moment of forsakenness he must have felt something akin to our sad moments of blindness. But now for us that darkness of creaturely unknowing can be replaced by the new, assuring darkness of faith which gives us confidence that we are being led in the way of truth.

If our Lord had not the experience of sin, he knew the horror of it more than any creature, seeing it past, present and future in all its cumulative iniquity. And his bearing of our sins was personal to himself, for he made himself, through his possession of our human nature, the substitute and very sacrifice by which we were redeemed. No association in sin itself could profit us: rather we needed the gift of that which we did not possess. Although he cannot be with us in the moment of sin, yet he is there before and after, to prevent our iniquity or effect forgiveness.

How few are they who willingly bear the responsibility for another's actions. Indeed one man can never entirely take it upon himself for his comrade, for responsibility is towards God, residing in the innermost freedom of the person. The deepest sympathy for suffering is that which springs from understanding that only God can intrude effectively. Only he can touch the will in its innermost depths; only he can turn suffering to his purpose and remove the burden through acceptance. And God does intrude—through Christ. For not only is our Lord an

object lesson, but his sufferings merit that ours should have a purpose, becoming a means of our salvation. His grace reaches into the very heart of our freedom whence arose the defect of sin.

You may, indeed, block the mouth of Hell for another, but you cannot desire damnation for the salvation of your brother. This is a strange perverted wish, denying to yourself, against the whole order of God's Providence, what you unavailingly will for another. Are you not preoccupied with your own love rather than with the good of your brother?

Contemplating the Passion there seems little reason to suppose that Christ's sufferings were mitigated because of his Godhead. In his Humanity he experienced fully all kinds of indignity and bodily pain heaped upon him by an apostate nation and an ignorant Gentile world, by prince and people, man and woman. In our Head we must see a sorrow unlike to ours, measured only by the magnitude of the task He undertook.

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## LOVE FOR GOD

BY

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*(Translated by a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey)*

Before treating of the means of obtaining love for God, it would be well to speak of the fruits and excellence of this love, that those who strive to gain it may know for what a precious jewel they labour and may be encouraged. For when it is won, we shall exclaim with the bride in the Canticles, "If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing" (*Cant.* 8, 7); and like the strong woman in the Proverbs of Solomon, we may taste and see that the traffic is good and be willing to pay what is asked of us. (*Prov.* 31.)

Let no one suppose that it is possible to say in a few words all that this virtue deserves for as St. Paul says, "The end of the commandment is charity" (*Tim.* 1, 5); for nothing that has been or might be written could exhaust the ocean of its grandeurs. Therefore we will only write briefly of how it excels all other virtues.

The first excellence of charity is that, speaking theologically, it is the queen of virtues and the greatest of them all. Faith, hope and charity, called the theological virtues, surpass all the rest, for they honour and regard God as the supernatural end of man and regulate his dealings with God though in different ways. For faith regards him as supreme truth, giving firm and complete credit to all he has revealed; hope looks upon him as the highest and supreme good, to which it endeavours to attain, helped by divine grace and good works. But charity gazes upon