

# THE MAN WE CAN'T IGNORE

*by Herbert O'H Walker, S.J.*

THE calendar read the first week of August, but the weather shouted late October. The lake crowd shivered in summer dress, and the homes along White Bear Lake were closed tightly about the warmth of fires on open hearths. A spanking breeze came off the lake, cold and wet. The surface waters rolled and fussed along the piers and shore line - grey like the low clouds crossing the sky in packed formations.

Tommy McShane was removing the cover from a motor-boat. The beautifully lined toy, champing and tugging in the heavy wash, threatened to snap her tether. Running out on the dock, rejoicing in the bold weather, the wind in her clothes, her wave blown to a memory, came Jane, the popular daughter of Dr. Weyward.

"Hello, Tommy," she shouted. "And please admit I'm here on time."

"Hello, Palmolive."

"Why Palmolive?"

"Oh, the green wrapper you are wearing and the honest complexion."

"Thank the sun and plenty of spinach in my youth."

## Inland Gale

In a moment the motor-boat was off sweeping round the end of the pier and out into the lake. Alert to every thrill, eagerly riding into the challenge of the wind and flying spray, Jane and Tommy enjoyed the heavy going to the full.

"Great, isn't it?" she cried, lifting her head to the wind, eating it up, intoxicated with it.

"This is sport, Jane. Football isn't in it. Wait till we reach the point. I'll pull this beast right up on its hind legs."

Seated on the mahogany hatch, her feet swung down on the seat, she reached forward and downward, clinging to the blue sweater at his shoulders.

The voice of the engine opened up, ran down a couple of octaves to a deep bass, and went into a crescendo. The nose of the boat lifted out of the water higher and higher, and like a sword knifing through the peaks of the waves, the boat shot past the point and with incredible speed cut a long triangle down the lake. It was furious going - bucking, hurtling and splashing.

In a moment they were in the bay before the town of White Bear. The power was cut and the flying shell of a boat slumped immediately.

"Was that wild enough for you?" he challenged. "Wonderful! It was barbaric!" she exulted. "I love wild things like this."

## Like Wild Music

In a rich baritone he sang out the first theme of Marche Slav.

She shivered with emotion. "That's my favourite. It sends big icy chills down my back. I feel that the bubbling forces of a serf rebellion will burst through at any second."

"Volcanic, Jane. But if Tschaiowsky had only known Russia after those seething powers had blown off the lid, what a subject for his genius! The smouldering crater of Russia!"

"My! How dramatic you are! Smoking Russia! Tell me about the big, hairy men with flaming torches, the darkening steppe and horror prowling. Woof-woof, Tommy! You can't frighten me."

The launch got caught in the trough and began to roll treacherously. Tom sped up the idling engine, cut a graceful swath in the bay, and started on the five-mile course to Wildwood.

"Say, Little Emotion," said Tommy, "just one snort out of rioting Bolsheviks would put you away like a toppled doll."

### **Like Russia**

"Why all the gloom about Communist Russia ? They are just getting on their feet after all the years of serfdom. They've gone modern. That's all. Learning industry and things. A mechanical revolution."

"That's not the sad part, Jane. Everybody likes to see them move ahead. But they have never matured over there. No growth; and no tradition to build on."

"Oh, yes, they've got plenty to remember. A fine memory of long suppression. They know what they don't want. You can bet on that."

"Well, if they didn't want any more oppression, they certainly are getting what they didn't want. They can't even think as they might wish to, now. Freedom of thought is gone. Decent parents are not allowed to teach their children the consoling religious doctrines that made their harsh lives at least liveable during the days of the Empire. The State has condemned them all to atheism. They are raising a monster; the Soviet will never be able to control it."

### **Backs to Christ**

"Oh, Tommy, just because a few churches were burned and closed you are getting hysterical. You have to expect such things in every violent change."

"Not the loss of a church here and there so much as the purpose behind the change is significant. They believe that by crushing out religion they are getting revenge for their past slavery. They are hurling their furies directly at Christ - the only person that can possibly save them and give them stability. If they want Western civilization, let them look at the foundation upon which it is builded."

"We get along without Christ. I'm not an atheist, but I don't go to church."

"But you don't get along without Christ - not after nineteen hundred years of Christianity and more. The flavours and salts of Christianity have sunk deep into our body politic. They are there. Christ is there even if you don't recognize Him. As long as we have the tradition of Christianity, or are sponging upon the good fruits of its teaching, no one can say that he is getting along without Christ."

### **Through Hate to Oblivion**

"Well, Tommy, I think that Communist Russia will always know about Christ, anyway; for people who hate anyone have to know who it is they hate and the reasons for their hatred."

"That's just the sad part about it. If they really knew Christ they could not hate Him. What they hate is not Christ at all, but a distorted picture of Him. But why worry about it, after all ? Rome tried to ignore Christ. When Christianity was only an infant, Rome swore to crush it out. She failed. And if Rome failed when Christianity was young, I don't see how the Communists in Russia can succeed now that Christianity has stature and is spread over the whole world."

"A good point, Tommy. But can't Communist Russia, say, just drop Christ out of her life, just let the people grow up without ever hearing about Him ?

"No. I don't think so. Communist Russia can't educate her children without mentioning Christ. History is against it. An educated Russian might care to travel. As soon as he steps out of his country he will be confronted with Christ in a thousand ways. Churches, the Cross, Sunday, the calendar, he will meet Christ everywhere. They really can't expect to get away with any plan like that. They might just as well face the facts and admit that they cannot ignore Christ."

### **Homeward**

They swept close in to the resort called Wildwood; and cutting down the gas, worked slowly through the public bathing places.

The place was deserted. The amusement halls and the scaffolding supports of the mechanical toys for grown-up folk were spectre-white and dreary-looking. The cold, raw morning kept away the daily colour and the babel of the noisy crowds searching for happiness at their shrines of varnished pomp and tin-pan splendour. The dreariness drove Jane back to her mind, where the question, "Why can't Christ be ignored?" was making a nuisance of itself. It demanded her attention.

The ride from Wildwood to Montemed is a short one. In a few minutes they were back at the dock, serious like the weather. As they followed the walk up to the cottage, a casual passer-by might have observed their thoughtful deportment, and smiled to think that young lovers still quarrelled and that life was an old story ever much the same, a monotony of joy and sorrow.

### **Doctor at Ease**

Dr. Weyward had watched Jane and Tommy go off in the launch and then turned to make himself comfortable for the morning. He was a squat, punchy man, with a round, jovial face. Deep-cut radii at the corners of his eyes told of kindness and sympathy. His eyes did most of his conversation for him - wise old eyes hiding in the caves below his heavy eyebrows. When one thought of the doctor, one remembered those alert eyes.

The dull, chill morning was forbidding, but the snapping of the fire in the open hearth and the feathers of yellow flame weaving among the twisted fagots were warm and inviting. There stood his easy chair yawning before the fire. Its ease and comfort, a warm punch, a pipeful of fresh tobacco, an essay or two by his favourites Cobb and Baring, were rather pleasant antidotes for a dreary day, and not to be scorned by a man well on in years.

Snuggling down into the chair, He took up Cobb's "Here Comes the Bride" and began to read "Some Crying Needs."

### **Reformers Rampant**

He chuckled audibly as he finished the second paragraph. "All male professional reformers should be bumped off at dawn. In the case of lady professional reformers I shouldn't care to wait that long; I'd have them out before the firing squad as soon as the moon was up."

His brother Fred had unwittingly married a lady professional reformer. Poor Fred had been uplifted so much and trained to act like so many leaders of the various sects that he now looked like a composite religious conference on marriage problems.

A sound of mirth rolled off the doctor's lips, a sound that came from the depths of his body. He pictured Fred aligning the firing squad at once, without waiting for the rise of the moon.

"I have been neglecting Fred," he thought. "I must get him out from town for a night. The poor devil needs a drink and a decent laugh. I will read this at him and then lean back in my chair to hear him roar out his woes about Emily."

The doctor had listened to Fred's screed so often that he knew it almost by heart. The trick of getting his brother started was an old one with him. "The paragraph will do the work. Then after a pause Fred will get going. What a woman! Can't see beyond her nosey nose. She's the All-American end of reformers: Damming the Pope for being infallible and out-pope-ing the Pope by their own dogmatism!"

"Forcing morality upon us by stuffing the ballot box! They pin the whole nonsense on the fair name of Jesus of Nazareth. No wonder they see religion breaking up. They're blocking up the doorways of religion. Smug, self-righteous Dracos. A lot of sound and fury."

### **Enter Aunt Emily**

Someone entered the room and stood behind his chair. His laughter and the dream speech stopped together and altogether. He felt the blood go from his face; for in someway he felt at once who that person was. When he turned and saw Emily, Fred's wife, he did not learn anything that he had not known from the first. Emily had all the bearing of a magistrate in the unofficial court of virtue. She was a school-marm

in the new university of religion. The service of her stale god, Philanthropy, was heavy and one could read its record out of large blue year books.

### **Reform on the Loose**

The doctor was a philosopher and a reader of poetry and the informal essay. He had a warm heart. He knew love. The companions of his leisure - the glass sparkling with Three-Star Hennessy, the blue whip of smoke standing in his pipe-bowl, the humour of Cobb, the restful chair - all were splendid witnesses of his expansive soul. But, strange to say, they graved marks of pain on Emily's face.

"How do you do, Emily?" he said limply, and, a trifle unnerved, awaited her exorcism.

### **Introductions**

As Emily was about to speak the front door opened, letting in Jane and Tommy. Dr. Weyward realized that their presence would spare him an annoying scene with his brother's wife and that strategy lay in their company. As Emily whisked the scandalous glass out of the room, he called to them.

"Come in. Come in here. You scamps must be chilled after the ride. Pull a chair up to the fire and make yourselves comfortable.

Tommy McShane was introduced to Aunt Emily.

"He is such a promising lawyer, Aunt Emily," Jane babbled on, much to Tommy's confusion, "and has loads of ideas. You should hear him on Communist Russia. We were just discussing how absurd the Red Russians are in trying to ignore Christ."

Aunt Emily beamed. "How beautiful, Jane! You must tell me about it."

"Well, we decided that it is impossible to go through life and neglect Christ; that everyone has to consider Him."

### **None Can Ignore**

"Why, of course, Jane," Emily replied, in that vague voice so habitual among students in September or straight back from vacation. Memory, lost in a rapid and useless search for the answer, seems to speak from the far-off places of her flight.

The doctor had grown so accustomed to the dogmatic positiveness with which Emily spoke on religious matters, even in denouncing dogma, that the flimsy, undetermined tone had about the same effect upon him that would have been produced if she had offered him a drink. A germ of an idea - a mere suspicion that Emily was not well founded in her professed business - evolved so rapidly that, before he could squirm to an upright posture on the edge of his chair, the resolution of testing her knowledge had been planned, debated, judged and decided upon.

"Why can't Christ be ignored?" he asked her, so quietly and so innocently that if Emily had not been coasting her memory up and down the ruts of her brain in the section labelled "Sunday school," she certainly would have read his purpose.

Jane, who was little better than a modern pagan, had the same question in her head and turned to her Aunt Emily for the answer.

As Emily remained silent, the doctor's alert eyes lighted up.

### **Messias**

"Because He was the Messias. (or Messiah, if you prefer the Greek) He was foretold as God," Tommy suggested, after the fashion of prompters in the flies speaking out the cues to the stumbling memories on the boards.

While the doctor scowled at Tommy for intruding into his cross-examination, Emily was cudgelling her memory. At last all the old lessons she had given the children in the Oak Park Chapel came tumbling out.

"Centuries before His birth," she said, "Jesus Christ lived in the soul of a people. In fact, His mission was prepared by the Hebrew people. From their earliest beginnings they had a knowledge of the One True God. Pagan nations were their neighbours, and often enough led them away to a captivity in the heart of idolatry; yet their faith in the one God was unshaken. This belief, so unique with them, kept them united. They became an exclusive race. They clung to the hope that from among them would grow up the Messiah, the One foretold by the prophets, who was to rule Israel and extend her power over the whole world."

Never had any other idea of the doctor's failed so utterly. Emily poured on.

### **Prophets Speak**

"Great prophets stood up in those days, calling attention to the Coming One. Bit by bit they enlightened the people about His future work. He would redeem mankind, by suffering, from the slavery of sin. All nations, until the end of time, would be able to profit by His scheme of salvation.

"Events in His life were prophesied. He would be born of a virgin, in Bethlehem. Wise men would visit Him. The great Isaiah described His miracles, His passion and death as accurately as though he were an eye witness of them. I believe that, if one were to piece all these prophecies together, the main outlines of the biography of Jesus of Nazareth would be complete.

"Another wonderful thing about the Messiah is the time of His birth, which was given out so many centuries before. He would come before the sceptre had passed from Judah and after the second temple had been built. And so on.

"So really, Jane, Christ is too unusual a person to be neglected. He just cannot be ignored."

"Oh, auntie, you don't understand us. We didn't mean that one need not know about Him - ignore Him that way. We meant ignoring what He said, ignoring that His teaching has been the foundation of our civilization; that we must consider it. Wasn't that it, Tommy?"

The doctor's eyes betrayed his pleasure. "Well, listen to Jane," he thought, "checking up her aunt so neatly!"

### **Trustworthy ?**

"I think it might be wiser, Jane," Tommy answered, "if one considered who the person is that does the teaching before paying attention to what he says. Is he worthy of trust ? Does he know what he is talking about ? What authority has he ? What are his credentials ? When you are satisfied with the information you receive on these points, then consider the teachings."

"But, Tommy, you can't find out anything about Christ. All we have are His Gospels. We can study His doctrines, but they are only a part of Him, like a piece of music that tells something about the composer, but not a great deal. We try to find other information about him in books. But Christ only appears in the Gospels."

"Why consider all the prophetic witnesses that Mrs. Weyward talked about," Tommy responded "Isn't there a conclusion to be drawn from the prophecies ? We know that God knows all things and is the only one who has knowledge of the future. These prophets were people like ourselves; they didn't have any monopoly of future events. And they admitted it. They did not claim any superiority, but frankly stated that it was God who gave them the information they imparted to the people.

"But the One who was to come was foretold to be God. It was God Himself Who would come and save His people. And it was Jesus Christ Who fulfilled all these prophecies: St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in order to show that Christ had fulfilled the prophecies and that the Jews must accept Him for what the prophets said of Him - that He would be really and truly God. That is why Russia or China or Communism or Secularism cannot ignore Him. That is why everyone must consider Christ."

### **The Jews were Unconvinced**

"But the Jews didn't think that Christ had fulfilled the prophecies. They don't think so today." The doctor finally had got himself into the argument.

"That isn't altogether true, doctor. Many Jews at the time of Christ did accept Christianity. Five thousand were converted after the first speech of St. Peter. Some of their greatest doctors of the law studied the Scriptures in that day and embraced Christianity. Many in our own time are being converted.

"Still one must remember that the Jews had begun to dream of a Messiah in the role of a great leader. They were in high hopes of ruling the world. They expected to take over the power that was Rome. Human nature, especially boastful human nature, finds it rather difficult to put aside its sweetest expectations and substitute a failure for them. They could not get themselves to think that a crucified person could be the great leader they had been waiting for during so many centuries. They got the spiritual kingdom of the Redeemer mixed up with the temporal. If they refuse to consider the proofs and credentials of Christ, how can they be said to have given the matter fair treatment? If they say that Christ has not fulfilled the prophecies, where are their proofs? One unfulfilled prophecy would be sufficient for their stand. They are, as Christ said of them, stiff-necked in this regard."

### **Impossible to Cheat**

"It seems to me, Tommy, that anybody who knew these prophecies could adapt his life to them and pass as the One Who was to come." Jane was showing a deep interest.

"No. Not a chance. What man could, for example, manage to be born of a virgin? Who could pick the town of his birth? What has the unborn got to say about the tribe in which he will be born? One cannot pick out one's own kind of death. These detailed prophecies are more than mere biographical data. They are so unusual as to stand proof against anything like a fraud. When they are fulfilled, they point with certainty to the object for which they were intended, to a manifestation of divinity."

Aunt Emily's face manifested that fine shade of thought and concomitant passion that registers in the person of the leading lady when some girl in a subaltern role steals the act from her.

### **No Consequences**

Who was this young fellow to draw conclusions for her - conclusions she never intended? Years back she had accepted the thesis that Christ was a myth and Christianity a legend. Had not the new philosophy of Humanitarianism gathered the necessary statistics to prove that, if civilization is to go ahead, the criminal, the insane, the poor, and the crippled, always stumbling-blocks to progress, must be quietly but effectively destroyed?

She and her colleagues were most willing to admit that Christ was a great teacher, but still a teacher whose doctrine just did not fit in with the newest modern thought. His care for the poor, the insane, and the criminal nursed the survival of the unfit. Much recent thought was wrong if Christ was God, and therefore she took it that Christ was wrong and could not be God.

"The things I have just said prove nothing," she said condescendingly. "You must learn to know that modern criticism exploded all this poppycock about the divinity of Christ. The men who wrote the New Testament had a splendid knowledge of the old prophecies, and in writing up the life of Christ wrote it in the light of these prophecies. They fitted His story to the old biography, for they knew that people could not escape the overwhelming proof such coincidence would offer. So, very cleverly, they measured this new life to match the pattern of the old, and by doing so imposed on the world the greatest fraud of all time. In fact, it was only during the last century or so that it was detected. So, young man, although your conclusions were neatly drawn, they actually mean nothing."

Things were getting tense. Jane and the doctor exchanged a wink which said, "I wouldn't have missed this for anything."

### **True Records**

"But, Mrs. Weyward, that was an explosion that didn't blow up anything. It turned out to be a lot of noise and smoke. The Gospels were written at a time in which those who had known Christ could read them or listen to them read. These people were in a position to judge whether or not these accounts were

true.

"The lovers of Christ would not have permitted a distorted picture of their Friend to get into circulation. Nor would His enemies, who had put Him to death and were at the time persecuting His disciples, have allowed an invented story to pass for an accurate account. If they could have detected any forgery in the Gospel records they would have joyfully pointed it out in order to condemn those records as frauds and burn them and bring discredit upon Christ's followers.

"The theory of fraud you mention did not have any foundation. A few critics went on the assumption that the Gospels were written about one hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ. But when these critics got down to solid study they found from their careful research that the New Testament was put in writing in the times of those who had walked with and listened to the Master. This blasted their theory, and the whole superstructure of myth and legend came tumbling down."

### **Discarded**

Emily was like a man who has entered the sad struggle to fight for his hair. As his brow lengthens out, the bald reality drives him to either of two desperate recourses: a wig to fool everybody else but which only fools himself, or an attitude of defiance.

"To have lost my faith in Christianity," she began slowly, "does not prove that I am irreligious. I believe that the personality of Christ is most attractive, and for certain people presents a very high mark of goodness for them to aim at. There is the splendid example of His courage to lead them on. But any social worker knows that our modern social maladies are with us despite the presence of Christianity, and that Christianity has failed utterly to correct them. The weaknesses of today's civilization are the weaknesses of Christianity. We must resort to our own ingenuity and efficiency to remove them."

### **Why Different ?**

"Mrs. Weyward, you interest me very much. But may we stay for a time just on the personality of Christ?" The others nodded agreement, and Tommy continued.

"If Christ is merely a good man, He is no different from, say, a saint; for saints are good men, too. But if Christ is a divine person, He is essentially different from man; for His personality is that of a personal God, while ours is a human one. Christ and I differ in personality. Like me, He had a human nature. The fact that He is God makes Him very different. A God can demand service of His creatures. It is up to them to learn what that service is; and the giving of service according as it is demanded of them constitutes their religion.

"If I believe the truths that He has revealed to me, I am said to have faith. If I observe the rules He has laid down for my conduct, I am said to be moral, How do I know what I am to believe and do? Why, I study the teachings of Christ. I study His teachings rather than any others, because of His personality, which He has proved to be divine. He has proved that He is God."

### **Exit Aunt Emily**

"It is all a great problem, I'm sure," Emily said, with a sigh.

"Please let me interrupt this discussion and get you to luncheon." Jane was speaking. "It is late now, and the cook will be serving us notice if we delay further. We can talk after dinner."

Mrs. Weyward had an early appointment to keep and could not stay.

"I'm indebted to you for a most interesting morning. I am sorry to leave, but we will try to arrange a similar meeting soon. I am pleased to have met you." She threw a pleased smile over towards Tommy and turned from the room.

"Say, Emily, tell Fred to come out one of these nights." The doctor had almost forgotten his promise.

"Thank you, doctor. I know he will be glad to come." She was gone to her car.

"She's always in a rush, Tommy. Now she will be off to some fool committee. Well, what do you say to a little appetizer?"

## **A Mystery Indeed**

After a late lunch the three were toying with a very friable cake and puddling with their coffee in small cups and saucers. Jane teed off the conversation with a fine drive straight down the fairway.

"Do you really think, Tommy, that Christ was God? Just think what an awfully large thing that is - God Himself. It is hard to believe,"

"It is too wonderful to understand. The more one thinks about it, the more wonderful it becomes. It is a mystery, this life of Jesus Christ. A divine person living an earthly life ! We cannot fathom it. But the fact is there, and honest thinkers must face the truth."

The doctor passed cigarettes about, but preferred a cigar for himself. Jane's interest in the person of Christ was like a revelation to him. He had known her a long time. He knew her temper. He had never suspected this of her.

## **The Story of Doubt**

"I had my proper religious training," she went on. "I learned my Bible stories in our Sunday - school classes. How sweet I was, in my white frock and white hair - ribbons, holding devoutly my picture card of the Good Shepherd awarded me for attention, attendance and deportment !

"But when I got into high school, I was taken up with other interests. There were parties and puppy loves. One forgot about the soul as the root of personality. The milliner, the tailor, the hairdresser made us attractive personalities, and we were happy to wear them everywhere.

"Then Daddy sent me down East to college. If I had any religion left when I arrived there, it certainly didn't last long. We had famous professors; and since they didn't think much about God, we didn't see any need to stress the point. Whenever mention was made of God, it came wrapped up in a sneer or tucked in a joke that made us laugh. God did not amount to much. The literature teachers were forever praising realism and begging us to live our full lives. Self-expression was a slogan. Failure was the test of life. Christ was considered an eminent example of how not to do things. So there you are, Tommy. You say that Christ is God, that we cannot ignore Him, and that we must follow His teachings."

The doctor looked his interest. He did not say anything. A slow flow of light blue smoke curled up from his lips.

Tommy rubbed the ash from his cigarette against the side of his coffee cup. "I can show you from the Bible that Christ lived as God. Have you got a Bible handy?"

## **Protestant Bible**

The only copy that could be found was a copy of the small Gideon. It was one of the war editions that the doctor had picked up during his service in the medical corps. Jane was a trifle embarrassed in offering it to Tommy. Many pages had been torn from it, and this hardly spoke of becoming reverence for the holy book; and besides it was a Protestant version.

"Oh, fine, Jane," Tommy commented. "This will do very well. I want to select some of the sayings of Christ that show that He spoke with divine authority: 'Because I am God I can dictate laws to you and give you a knowledge of truths that are veiled to you.' Observe how He does this."

## **Acts of a God**

He opened the book at the fifth chapter of Matthew and read the twenty-first verse: "You all have heard that it was said of them of old, 'Thou shalt not kill'; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement. But I say unto you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgement." And in verse twenty-seven he read, " 'Ye shall not commit adultery'. But I say unto you that every one that looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her in his heart."

"It is not my intention to read the Commandments to you, but I want you to note the words 'But I say

unto you.' The Jews knew that God had given the Ten Commandments to Moses. Now, note what Christ is doing here in His sermon on the mount. He is changing the commandment of God somewhat, and He is doing it on His own authority. 'Of old it was so and so, but now I make it this and this.' He is speaking as God did with divine authority. And the Jews knew this.

"Another case we have here in the ninth chapter, beginning with the second verse. 'And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy. " Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven." ' Now, every Jewish boy and girl knew that God alone could forgive man's sins. And yet Christ said this man's sins were forgiven. Again He speaks as God does, for to absolve sins is to exercise divine power.

"One more example. In the sixteenth chapter, verse the twenty-seventh, we read: 'For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render to every man according to his deeds.' The Jews knew that God was to pass judgement on their lives. Christ tells them that He is this judge. Certainly He says He is God, for only God uses divine power without restriction. Now I will read a verse or two where He comes out straight with the answer, 'Yes, I am God.' "

Tommy looked up for a question or a difficulty, but as the doctor and Jane seemed very much interested and said nothing, he continued.

### **Claims of a God**

"In the twenty-sixth chapter, verse the sixty-third, we have the following: 'And the high priest said unto Him, " I adjure you, by the living God; that you tell us whether you art the Christ, the Son of God". Jesus said unto him, "You have said it. Nevertheless I say unto you, henceforth you all shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven". Then the high priest rent his garments, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses ? Behold, now you all have heard the blasphemy. What think ye ?" They answered and said, " He is worthy of death. " ' There is nothing indefinite about this question and its answer. Christ unmistakably said that He was God." The doctor lifted his head and blew a thin blue line of smoke towards the ceiling. His eyes were meditative behind the half-closed eyelids. Jane and Tommy watched him, for it was quite evident that he had something to say.

### **Why Son of God?**

"How can you put it as you do, that Christ unmistakably said He was God, when He really said He was the Son of God ? We were taught that as soon as we were baptized we became thereby sons of God and that Christ was our brother - that He was the first son of God in this sense. Do I make myself clear to you ? He was the first to experience that close intimacy with the Father, so that the Father could say to Him : "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." ' "

"That isn't what the high priest meant when he put the question," Tommy answered. "He knew that Christ claimed to be God, that He claimed to preach with divine authority, and that He performed miracles to prove His divinity. And so, when he addressed the question to Christ, he meant, in plain, blunt words, 'Are you God?' His judgement is a proof of this. ' "You have heard the blasphemy. What think you ?" And they said, "He is worthy of death." ' Well, if it had been a question of a mere moral union - an adoptive sonship - there would have been no reason for the charge of blasphemy.

### **Clear Words**

"Although Christ is often called the Son of God," Tommy continued, "one must not be led into thinking that He is not God. He Himself said, 'I and the Father are one.' St. John refers to Christ as the Word of God. In the first verse of his Gospel he writes: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.' Christ is the natural Son of the Father, for in putting on our human nature He did not lose anything that He was. He remained a divine person - the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the eternal Son of the eternal Father. What we are discussing is whether or not Christ is really this divine person. We have seen that He speaks with divine authority and, under a solemn oath administered by the

highest Jewish tribunal, declares that He is that person - the Son of God.

### **The Just Man**

"But is Christ worthy of our faith? We have considered that He said, 'I am the Son of God.' Should we believe Him? I answer that we must, for His holiness is a guaranty of His words.

"Judas, His daily companion, proclaims Him a just man. The traitor would have snatched at anything to condone his disloyalty. Any fault in his Master's words or actions could have saved him. 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood,' he cried in his testimony to the priests of the Temple.

"Pilate, His judge, after listening to all the testimony that the Jews could produce, said, 'I find no fault in Him.' "

### **Sinless**

"There is no flaw in the perfection of His moral teaching, and His conduct is faultless. He said that not the act alone, but the mere looking at a woman to lust after her, constitutes adultery. Not the outside, but the inside, of the cup and platter forms the test of moral spotlessness. If Jesus had been guilty of the slightest sinful fault, His disciples, who were with Him continually, would not have believed in Him.

"He proclaims Himself without sin. 'He that is without sin among you, let Him throw the first stone at her,' He says to other men. But speaking of Himself, He hurls at the Jews, who searched His life with their merciless eyes, the unheard of challenge: 'Which of you shall convince me of sin?' This is unassailable virtue. He has a horror of deceit. He denounces ruthlessly the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (whited sepulchres). He scourges the merchants out of the Temple. He is all loyalty, all truth.

"The more saintly a man is, the more conscious is he of his own defects. Christ would have been the first to lament His own weakness. He asks forgiveness for His executioners and, facing death, none for Himself.

### **Death for Truth**

"Could anyone hesitate to believe Him when with impressive calm he declares Himself God, though knowing that He is thereby condemning Himself to death? Death is a great test for truth. No man is anxious to die for a lie. The danger is that he might lie to save his life. But Christ is truthful in the face of an awful death, the most humiliating of all deaths, crucifixion. There a man does not lie.

"There is one truth that Christ teaches over and over again. It is the lesson of His life. Throw out this truth, and the life of Christ is meaningless. It was the burden of the persistent statement, 'I am the Son of God.' "

### **Thirteen Spades**

"Is there anybody home?" The smooth, rich voice of the doctor's wife preceded her into the room.

"Well, what a funny how-do-you-do this is!"

The room was filled with tobacco smoke that all but blotted up the weak light of the late and very dull afternoon.

"Oh, hello!" the doctor greeted his wife. "What time is it?"

In a moment they were all talking at once. In another they were deeply interested in the unwrapping of Mrs. Weyward's bridge prize. All the chirp of small talk that had made the bridge party a twittering success lived again. And the notable play of the afternoon had been made from a perfect bridge hand.

"Imagine thirteen spades in one deal!"

"That's a mighty nice punch bowl."

"Please do not start talking nonsense. This is a scallop dish for cracked ice."

"Who got the thirteen spades, mother?"

"You will be surprised to know, but not any more than I was. I almost collapsed. I became so hot and

nervous ! I uncovered the cards, spade after spade, and I had them all ! I was so weak I almost dropped them ."

### **Interlude**

"Oh, you dear old dear !" Jane jumped into her mother's embrace and they waltzed about the room, hugging each other. "I'm so happy, mother!"

After a bit mother stopped the jubilee to make arrangements for dinner. The doctor went down on his hands and knees at the fireplace and tried to breathe life into the indifferent embers. Jane turned on a few floor lamps. Tommy helped the doctor get the fire going. Then chairs were drawn up to the warmth of the fresh fire.

"Go on, Tommy, and finish up. We have a quorum again. I really must get this matter decided now, for I want to know whether I am to take up my prayers again tonight or not."

### **Miracles**

"Let me put in a question," said Jane to Tommy. "There has not been anything said about miracles. I remember now of hearing at college that Christ proved His divinity by working miracles. But we were taught that miracles were plain impossible. And for that reason Christ could never prove that He was God. What do you think about that, Tommy?"

"Well, Jane," Tommy began, "take this bridge hand - your mother's perfect bridge hand. Do you think the cards were stacked ?"

"Of course not. Mother is not clever enough to stack cards. Anyway, no woman would take a chance on fixing the cards."

"So you would say the thirteen spades came just by luck ?"

"Yes. Luck or chance."

"What do you think, doctor, would have happened if on the next deal your wife had had another perfect hand ?"

"Oh, Tommy, I should be rather slow to predict anything about women's behaviour in such an event; but I am sure that, if nothing did happen, there would be a terrible lot of unpleasant thinking going on."

### **No Coincidence**

"And then let us say that on the third deal she again held those thirteen spades. What then ?"

"A riot, certainly. All would scream at once that the game was crooked. There would be an end to the game, and the start of a wonderful scandal."

"That's about what I would expect, too. People are patient enough to accept chance occasionally. But if the unusual occurs repeatedly, they demand an explanation and refuse to have anything to do with the possibilities of chance as a probable solution.

"It's the same with the miracles of Christ. Hour after hour and day after day the wonders of His power are manifested. Chance, as an explanation, is absolutely out of the question. The only way to look into the matter is to take Christ at His word. He said He was God. What is more natural than for Him to act as God? He had to prove that He was God. If He acted merely as man, all His kindness, goodness, and so on would not have won for Him any higher distinction than what is common to the greatest saints. He had recourse to His omnipotence, and by using this control over the physical laws He showed most conclusively that He was more than man.

### **Beyond Human Power**

"You perhaps have heard it said that miracles cannot be, because the physical laws are so fixed that they cannot be tampered with. Consider for a moment the heads of our great corporations. They made the

rules that guide the actions of their employees. And they demand that these rules and regulations of policy be obeyed. But this does not mean that the heads themselves cannot shift their rules and change their policies."

"Of course not. "

"It is the same with God and His universe. He very wisely set the business of creation going with all the precision of a fine watch, but He did not by any means get Himself tied to His own machinery. It is absurd to think that He is dependent upon the creature of His handicraft. And when the laws of the universe do not observe their customary rhythm, it is a sure sign that God is at the controls, for no other power can interfere with them.

"To cure the blind by the application of a little mud moistened with spittle is an achievement that no doctor can imitate. A mere word to the sick and the crippled, the diseased and the insane, and they were made whole. Dead people returned to life at His command. Men cannot command life. It is very hard to fool stout fishermen who can tell a storm from a calm. There were no strings to pull, or black cloths to hide, or dark rooms to conceal when Christ opened eyes blind from birth, made decaying bodies snap into living men, or brought sudden peace to a stormy sea.

"Now (and this is the point), Christ refers to His miracles as proofs of His divinity. To show that He is God He does the works that God alone can do. The people behold the wonders. They know these wonders back up His teachings. They believe on account of them. Therefore, I say the responsibility of God is involved.

"Since God could not lend His aid to a liar or to a blasphemer (one claiming to be God when he is not) without people accepting untruth in His divine name. He could not permit the miracles to take place. But it was to approve the teaching of Jesus Christ that the miracles were performed. Therefore God the Father set His approval on Christ's teaching. The miracles are Christ's divine credentials to show that what He says is true: 'I am God.' What room is there for doubt? One miracle would be enough to prove Him God. Christ worked thousands. Therefore He is God.

### **The Great Proof**

"Now, Jane, let us apply all this to one of His miracles. It will serve as well as taking five or six. And since His resurrection is considered the greatest and the most far-reaching of His miracles, in this that it sums up His whole scheme of salvation in a final proof, let us consider it in detail."

Tommy flipped the pages of the sorry-looking Gideon until they stopped at the twenty-first verse of the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. "From that time Jesus began to show unto His disciples that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised up."

"He replied to the Jews," Tommy continued, "who asked of Him a sign confirming the authority He claimed: 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days in the heart of the earth.'

"This was so clear that Christ's enemies understood it. As night and the storm following the death of Christ came down among them, they went to Pilate and told him how they remembered that while Christ was still alive He had said that after three days He would rise again. 'Command, therefore, the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day, lest perhaps His disciples come and steal Him away and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead', and the last error will be worse than the first.' His resurrection was to be final proof of His divinity.

"This rising from the dead was so marvellous that even His apostles dared not believe this promise, daily comrades of His though they were, who had seen the workings of His power. 'What could this mean?' they debated among themselves. The sad story of their unbelief began with the capture of the Master in the garden. In fear they ran and hid themselves in the Cenacle. Some of His disciples fled in despair to Emmaus. His friends among the women carried spices to the tomb for the embalming of His body.

### **Fulfilled**

"And yet, after the Resurrection they all testified that Jesus fulfilled His prophecy in Himself.

"That Christ really died is proved by the witness of His executioners, men thoroughly experienced in this sort of thing. And yet, one of them opened His side with a spear, a very helpful bit of precaution so far as this argument is concerned. St. John, who was there, saw the soldier do it.

"Then, too, common sense says that Christ really died. He was in torture for fifteen hours. The loss of blood during the scourging and crowning with thorns and the three hours on the Cross, and at the final spear thrust - why, this shows death a hundred times over."

### **Seen by Thousands**

"Therefore, He truly rose. For many witnesses saw Him living again - not one poor, nervous sick woman, but a great number of men and women; not once only, but frequently over a period of forty days. Briefly they were: the women who went to the tomb to complete the burial rites; the apostles Peter, James, Thomas, the whole group gathered in the Cenacle; the disciples on their way to Emmaus; the five hundred witnesses of Tiberias; and many others.

"I shall hurry through these points in order to be done with this argument by dinner time. Now, it cannot be said that these people had seen a ghost or a phantom of some sort. For Jesus spoke to them and reassured them: 'It is I. Fear not.' He ate with them. He prepared a breakfast for them in the clear light of the morning on the banks of Gennesaret. He made them touch His Body. 'See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself. Handle and see.' And as one of them was still in doubt: 'Put in your finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither your hand, and put it in My side.' It is the same test that proves that we are alive and are what we are, living men.

"Moreover, the tomb was found empty on the third day. The seal of dread Rome was on it. This seal was sufficient to protect the tomb against violation. The Jewish seal also was on it - the seal of the temple that was holy. It was sacrilegious to break it. Roman soldiers guarded; the Roman soldiers did not sleep. Yet the tomb was empty on the third day.

### **Who Could Have Stolen?**

"For the sake of argument let us say that the Body of Christ had been stolen. Who could have taken it? Certainly not the Jews themselves; for they were the ones who wanted it safe in the sepulchre and had the precautions taken to insure that it would not be stolen. How joyously they would have dashed to that tomb and exhibited the Body and proved to the Christians that Christ had not risen from the dead. The Body was their evidence; and it could never have been refuted.

"The disciples could not have taken the Body. As they tell it to their own confusion, they were in hiding out of fear of the Jews. When the threatening mob circled about their Master in Gethsemane their hearts and their courage failed them, and soon they were flying down the hillside. Slipping furtively from shadow to shadow, they made for the Cenacle. The moon spilled a white-gold wash upon the town, but the apostles entertained themselves with the mysteries of the darkened places, quaking in fright. They were still in hiding when the news of the resurrection first reached them.

### **Not Women**

"The holy women would not have gone out early on the morning following the Sabbath with spices for Christ's Body if the disciples had removed it. If any of their friends had been out to the sepulchre, the news of the Roman guard stationed about it would have been known to them. And yet the women only worry about the difficulty of removing the stone from the entrance of the tomb. They never dreamed of the far greater difficulty of breaking through the Roman and Jewish seals and of dealing with the stern, unbending discipline of Rome. This doesn't show much for the stealing charge.

"If the disciples had stolen the Body of Christ, there would be no story about their slowness to believe that Christ had risen. Nor would they have ever allowed themselves to be put to death rather than not

announce the resurrection. So that just about takes care of the thieving question.

### **Hallucinations ?**

"Sometimes one hears of an eccentric saying that the Apostles were the victims of a collective hallucination. But such a one forgets that these men were sailors and fishermen, out-of-door, robust fellows. Their testimony is so varied, so often repeated, so precise and coherent that collective hallucination is out of the question. Victims of hallucination ? These stout men so deeply depressed, men whose broken moral courage was so suddenly enlarged and overwhelmed ? Not a chance. Common sense says that it is better to admit that their testimony is true and irrefutable.

"The people to whom these Gospels were read knew the writers; knew the Man they wrote about; knew His teachings and His life's work. None of them protested, neither His friends nor His enemies. The heretics argued with the Christians, using the same versions of the sacred texts. If there had been any doubt about them, they would have destroyed them and all discussion together. All knew that the story was true.

"The Apostles were not fools. St. Peter says that if Christ is not risen from the dead Christianity is a vain thing. With Pascal I think we can accept their testimony; it is not hard to believe witnesses who die for their testimony. With these dying men we can and must say that Jesus Christ is God.

### **Obligation**

"Therefore, Christ is God. He has proved it."

"We are creatures of God. He gave us our life and existence from day to day. Christ has taught us how we must spend our days. If we observe His instructions, everything is as it should be; if we do not, He says we are to blame and must face the consequences.

"So no one can ignore Christ. Everyone that hears of Christ must consider who He is. Each person must decide whether he is to follow His divine will or not. That decision will be the story of his life; other accounts of great feats, of great successes, of great philanthropies, or of whatever else do not enter into the real life. Christ says that He will judge all men at the end of time and his test of life will be found in the answer to the question, 'Have you done the Will of God?'"

Tommy stopped speaking. The three were silent. Mrs. Weyward found them still meditative when she joined their company. She was very happy. Her picture and the story of her play at bridge were to appear in the morning Pioneer Press. Her presence woke them up to the immediate things of life. It was time for dinner. Tommy leaped up from his chair.

"I must get home," he said. "I've been hanging about here all day. Mother will be having the guards drag the lake for me. I'll be seeing you, Jane. Say about nine? Let's sail to Wildwood tonight. Pick up some friends for the ride. Goodbye, doctor. Thank you very much for the interesting discussion." Tommy was gone in a moment.

"Great fellow, Jane. Clever. Got a good start in life and all that. I'd keep an eye upon him if I were you. Well, I think I'll be looking myself up a bit of an appetizer."

Jane stood by the window. The wind was still steady. But she was not thinking of the sail to the dance at Wildwood.

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