

PART I: HOLY BAPTISM

Haggerston Catechism



H. A. WILSON

HAGGERSTON CATECHISM

PART ONE
HOLY BAPTISM

BY
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HAGGERSTON CATECHISM

INTRODUCTION

I promised I would write to you so here goes. Well I've got here and if I had my way I would come home tomorrow. I expect the countrys O.K. for those that like that sort of thing but I am not one of them at least I do not think so. I mean I dont care much for cows and pigs smelling like one oclok and school a long way off and no buses or trams and no pictures to go to and its all so quiet at night I get the wind up. And father theres such a funny church here not a bit like ours. When you go inside it smells all damp and cobwebby and there's graves or tooms or something all over the shop and its got an old old clergyman who wears such funny clothes and hes got a moostarsh (don't know how to spell it) and a wife and would you believe it theres no Catechism here at all. I could knif old Hitler for busting up our Catechism and stopping my house winning the prize for being built first. And I was sick in the train. Give my love to mum but dont tell her about me being sick please. Love and kisses from Peggy.

This was one of the letters I had in 1939 from Haggerston boys and girls uprooted from their native East Two heath by the canal and gasworks of Shoreditch, and pitchforked into an alien if not unkindly countryside. Of course it was for their safety that they were evacuated, and I would not have had them here in the air-raids of 1940 and 1941. But I too would fain knif old Hitler for busting up our Catechism: though, had he not done so, the Rev. R. M. B. Mackenzie, Vicar of St. Mary's, Shrewsbury, could not have written thus in his parish paper.

On July 9, 1941, a watcher was in St. Mary's Church, rather hidden away in a corner. Three children, two

girls and a boy (ages about 12, 10, and 8 or 9), poor and ill-clad, wandered in. A gasping intake of breath; "Coo, wot a luvly church." On tiptoe, hand in hand, they wandered up the nave, eyes all big and round with wonder, and so to St. Anne's Chapel. Here, though not so much to the surprise of the watcher, accustomed to the ways of the Cockney children of London Town ("Coo" is a great expression there), they all kneeled down at the Communion rail, and, led by the elder girl, said together Our Father and another prayer not heard by the watcher. Making the Sign of the Cross they rose and bowed to the altar. The pilgrimage continued to Trinity Chapel, where the same drama of prayer was enacted. The watcher left his place quietly and went to a corner of St. Nicholas' Chapel. After a prayer at the High Altar the three little scraps of humanity, Jesus' children, arrived. The leader at once saw in the surrounding darkness the perpetually burning light before the Presence. In an audible whisper she said, "Jesus is 'ere; bow yerselves." And on spindly legs (poor waifs, they looked half-starved), down they went on the cold stone floor on their bare knees in adoration of the presence of Jesus in his sacrament. They moved to the rails, and a small piping voice said, "Jesus, dear, keep daddy safe on the sea. Amen." The watcher felt the burning tears streaming down his face in shame at his own and his people's many lost opportunities of prayer, compared with this single opportunity seized upon by these three wandering pilgrims from London. He moved to brush away the tears, and the form creaked. The children turned and saw him. "Allo, farver." He joined them at the Communion rail. The elder girl led them in prayer, and the watcher (unnecessarily, as he thought afterwards) exercised his priesthood and gave the pilgrims the Church's blessing. "Where do you come from?" "London, farver." "What church?" "Saint Or-gustyne's, 'Aggerston. Goodbye, farver." They tiptoed away. The watcher remained to thank God.

When these three, whose identity I have been unable to discover, Peggy, and many others, return to their East London, I hope that they may find that there is still a

St. Augustine's in Haggerston. I also hope that it may be my happy fortune to be in that church with the Catechism on Sunday afternoons; for that great priest, Cardinal Manning, was right when he wrote in his book, *The Eternal Priesthood*,

Children come round a priest not only by a natural instinct, drawn by kindness, but by a supernatural instinct as to one who belongs to them by right. The love of children for a priest is the most unselfish love on earth.

Until that day I keep my hand in by writing what follows. I hope that it may perhaps be of some small use to both those in whom is vested the tremendous responsibility of teaching religion to children and the Peggys (with their brothers) in whose churches "there's no Catechism at all."

* * *

Much of the following paragraphs is in a book of mine called *Chalk and Children*, published by Mowbray & Co. in 1939.

St. Augustine's Catechism is confined to boys and girls between the ages of ten and fourteen, though of course this limitation is purely arbitrary. (Infants are catered for, at the same time, by Sisters in the adjoining parish-hall; and, before Germany again began to make a nuisance of herself, I also had in church from 4.0 to 5.0 a Catechism for people over fourteen and under ninety-nine, of which there were some fifty members.)

At the beginning of each of the three quarters of the year—a two months' holiday is taken in the summer, which is good for both catechised and catechist—the members ("children" *never*: there are few things that a child hates more than being called a child: to this day I recall my unutterable, if unuttered, contempt for the priest who, in my Eton-jacket best-Sunday-suit days, per-

sisted in using such phrases as "Children, sit," "Now, children, as I was saying last Sunday," "Children, kneel") are apportioned to rows; five in each; sexes unmixed; a slightly self-conscious monitor, of about the same age as the other four, in charge of each row. Members choose with whom they will sit; and I find it wise to allow a fresh choice to be made each quarter, since friendships change with devastating speed in schooldays. Monitors, however, are appointed by myself. Behind the rows, at small tables, are two young women in their twenties who add this to their practical Christianity, that they spend most of their Sunday afternoons in helping their small brothers and sisters in God to learn religion; and that by the dull but necessary means of dealing with hymn-books, writing-blocks, pencils, and other similar paraphernalia. They are the intendants. At the back of all, near the west door by which every one enters, also at a table—except when she plays hymn-tunes on a not very grand piano—is a Sister of St. Saviour's Priory. She is the registrar; keeps the records of attendance at Mass and Catechism, visits absentees, tells me when such are ill.

The normal programme is as follows, though the autocratic management reserves to itself the right to make occasional and startling variations as and when it wills.

2.30. The two M.C.s (chosen by me each quarter; for some reason that I have never been able to discover, envied by every one; not so much Masters of the Ceremonies or holders of the Military Cross, as Masters or Mistresses of the Cupboard) appear in the church porch, generally sucking liquorice. They plus catechist, the latter having politely declined a moist segment of the confection, proceed (as the Navy says) into church, and make all things ready. Monitors' cards, hymn-books, newly-sharpened pencils, scribbling-blocks are placed in appropriate rows.

Two vast blackboards and easels are carried from the clergy-house, and erected in the choir tantalizingly the wrong way round. Piano is opened. Wastepaper-basket is put by the Sister's table. And so on. When Catechism has begun, absence of fuss is not unimportant.

2.55. For some minutes it has been apparent that an increasing concourse is assembling in the porch, to the ill-suppressed fury of Rab and Mick who growl and bark their remonstrances from the clergy-house yard. At five minutes to the hour the bell-ringer (a boy, generally proud in his first long trousers only worn on Sundays) begins to ring the church bell. At its first rather weary notes—it is more than sixty years old, and has had much to put up with—the doors are fastened open by an M.C., and the Catechism pours in over the still wearier and entirely disillusioned horsehair mat. Stamp-albums (product of the Faith Press) are handed to the Sister, in order that she may enter in her registers marks for attendance at the morning's Mass; 5, though stamps are unobtainable after the Gospel has begun. Remnants of sweetmeats are either swallowed whole, or removed by the frugal into the safe keeping of fairly clean handkerchiefs for future attention. The chatter dies. The bell-ringer, warmer, forsakes the rope. The clock strikes.

3.0. The opening prayer, as indicated on a subsequent page, is always the same. It is said aloud by all; and is followed by a hymn, requests for favourites having been made to the Sister and nearly always being granted. During the hymn late-comers trickle in; and receive full marks, 4 (it is less important to go to Catechism than to Mass), if they are in their places before the end of the last verse. Subsequent arrivals only receive 2.

3.7-3.15. Questions. A vitally important, and indeed essential, part of the religious education of children: on

no account should it be neglected. The twelve questions (I think that they should be neither less nor more) are thought out by me with some care ; and, on the preceding Monday, are displayed, for everybody's information, on a notice-board in the Catechism Corner. Marks given for answers (2, if correct ; 1, if half so) are immediately entered by the monitors in small figures in the relevant squares ; thus :

MONITOR'S CARD. Row 1 (girls)							
	Jan. 1	Jan. 8	Jan. 15	Jan. 22	Jan. 29	Feb. 5	Feb. 12
Joyce Smerald	1 2 4						
Florrie Bregenza	1 4						
Peggy Car- penter	2 2 2						
Irene Bluck	4						
Joyce Mary- gold	4						

(Miss Carpenter, it will be seen, began the new year by being late for Catechism, but made amends by answering a brace of questions ; and the Misses Bluck and Marygold were seemingly so replete with Sunday dinner that they sat mute.) The monitors' cards are given to the Sister at the end of question-time, who transfers their markings to her registers. At the annual prize-giving three special awards are given for question-answering. The asking of questions is an invaluable means by which the catechist may learn how much, and how little, of his teaching has been understood and remembered. (For example, in reply

to a question as to what was known of St. Matthew I was once confidently assured that “’E kep’ a cab-rank”; because I had said that he collected taxes). It is, of course, the essence of “*Catechism: a system of teaching drawn up in the form of questions and answers.*” May I repeat that the questions should no more be asked without forethought on the part of the catechist, than the instruction should be ill- or un-prepared by him? Nor should they be difficult.

3.16. Second hymn; for young limbs like to move, church-pews are hard, and young voices like to sing.

3.17–3.22. Five minutes’ (never a split second more) instruction. This is given from the pulpit, for it is well for the catechist not to remain all the time in the same spot, as young heads easily grow sleepy, especially at the worst possible time for teaching children—Sunday afternoon, when young “tummies” are full by reason of the best dinner in the week. The instruction *must be* (I apologize for the italics, but it simply *must be*) carefully written out and learned by the catechist; so that it is given clearly, fairly quickly, and without trace of hesitation or surreptitious (always spotted) perusal of notes. It ends with such words as, “Now draw that”—cue for the M.C.s to leap violently eastwards from their pews, at long last reveal what is on the other side of the blackboards, and switch on choir-lights so that there may be no straining of young eyes.

3.23–3.28. Complete and voluntary silence, while nearly every small right hand draws the picture on one board, and copies what is printed on the other.

3.29. “Sorry. Time’s up.” “Co-oo-oo, fa-ther!” Blackboards are ruthlessly re-turned, blank backs to front; blocks and pencils are collected by intendants.

3.30–3.35. Homily. Jam after powder. Story, fable, relevant anecdote or incident from the life of a “current”

saint or concerning the contemporary festival. Sometimes, a serial, running for six or seven weeks. Told by the catechist as he walks up and down, or stands still, in the nave. Told also without notes, but also not without preparation.

3.36-3.41. Prayers; including, *inter alia*, both intercessions sent in by the members, and the Birthday Prayer for those whose natal days fall in the ensuing week.

3.42. Notices. It seems better to give these at the end, rather than at the beginning. Punctuality is not one of the more noteworthy East London virtues.

3.43. Concluding prayers. Always the same. Said by all, aloud.

3.45 (without fail). Blessing. Followed by leisurely departures, individual conversation-pieces with the catechist, visits to the Catechism Corner, and frequent collection of "our kids" who have been at the simultaneous Infants' Catechism in the hall.

* * *

The blackboards are some six feet by five, for St. Augustine's is a large church. On one is drawn, as has been said, the picture, sometimes accompanied by a few words: on the other is printed in large block capitals the gist or summary of the instruction (it is similarly printed in the suggested instructions that follow).

During the five minutes at their disposal such members as feel so inclined (of course no compulsion is used: Catechism is not a "kids' show," but neither is it "school") make rough pencil copies—as rough as they like. Each who does so is given, at the end of Catechism, a plain post-card. The rough drawings, etc., are copied during the week on to the cards—frequently to the interest, and occasionally to the edification, of "mum" and "dad"—,

which are handed to an intendant on the next Sunday, who marks and returns them to their owners a week later. Nearly all children like to try to draw: every one of them has the collective instinct. When a member can show half a dozen consecutive corrected cards he or she is given a post-card album in which to keep them. I know of more than one present-day soldier and member of the W.A.A.F. who has at home a complete set of cards, of which I suspect that he or she is still secretly proud. The best card each week is framed and hung in the Catechism Corner, though it gains no extra marks. Marks awarded are high—*maximum*, 20; and of course take no cognizance of the ability to draw.

The ideal, of course, would be to draw the pictures before the Catechism's eyes, as one gave the instruction. To this, however, I have never aspired; for the adequate reason that I am constitutionally incapable of inscribing a straight line without a ruler, or a curve or circle without a piece of string tied round a stick of chalk—which, as often as not, breaks at the critical moment. After Mass and breakfast on Monday, I write in my manuscript book the intention which I purpose to give on the following Sunday. Then I search my bookshelves until I find a simple and relevant picture which even I can both copy on to the blackboard and trace into the notebook. Children's books, annuals, magazines; illustrated stores-catalogues and trade-circulars; the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*; press-advertisements in magazines and daily papers: such are frequent sources of inspiration. Then follows the long task of enlarging the picture to dimensions commensurate with the blackboard, which I place on an easel in the privacy of my vast dining-room. Rab and Mick stroll in now and then to see how I am getting on; but after a few moments of pained survey of my attempts the

Scotsman remarks, "You know, my lad, the Old Man can't draw for little dog-biscuits. I *ask* you! Have you ever *seen* an angel with wings like that? Let's go out in the garden, and see if we can find a cat." If I am lucky the picture is finished before I take my lunch some three hours later.

It may be suggested that all this is a waste of time. I do not think so. To my mind no pains (I use the word advisedly) are too great which are spent in trying to make the learning of religion both easy and, as we say in the purlieu of Hackney Road, "*inter-est-in*." So often we priests are brought to this most difficult task, the teaching of Christianity to Christ's little ones, without ourselves having been taught how to do so (in this connection may I protest violently against the all too common custom of delegating the Sunday School or Catechism to the junior curate merely because he is the junior curate, while the incumbent indulges in forty or more winks on Sunday afternoon?). But at least we can realize the gravity and responsibility of the undertaking, and bring to its fulfilment all the enthusiasm and energy at our command. In the years to come, we ourselves will reap the fruit of our labours; when those who were "our children" grow to man's or woman's estate, and still both call us "father" and also treat us as such. In Westminster Hospital young Ernie lay dying. He was one of my Wolf Cubs. We said some prayers together. Then he asked me to talk to another small boy in the next bed. I talked to him about God, showed him the small crucifix that I always carry on the end of my watch-chain, told him that that was how much Jesus loved him. He said, "Who's Jesus? I've never heard about him, except when dad swears. And I've never seen a crucifix before. Is he still dead?" Ernie died, smiling, holding my hand, unafraid. In a village near

Adelaide there once came to see me two strapping young sheep-farmers. The nearest church to their home was miles away. So every Sunday afternoon they taught their children about God out of their old instruction-books written when they were small boys in my Catechism at St. Matthew's, Westminster. A week or two ago a young mother sat by my fire, talking to me about her three-year-old only child, evacuated into the country, who had slipped away from her care, walked into a stream, and was drowned. After a while she said, "I want to thank you now for all that you taught me in Catechism. It has just kept me going."

It may be said that few catechists can draw. This is probably true; and I repeat that I am not one of them. But every one can ultimately produce on a blackboard something which is at least recognizable, provided that he or she is possessed of sufficient patience, enough chalk, and a duster. I would add that children are neither hyper-critical nor, in general, unappreciative of what they speedily realize to be hard work on their behalf.

And, to judge by my own experience, the necessary inspirations for the making of the pictures are not very hard to come by, assuming that one uses one's imagination and remembers that one was once a child.

* * *

I think that the somewhat fashionable cult of Children's Corners can be overdone; if they are made the most attractive part of the church, and surpass in splendour the sanctuary and altar. But, at the same time, it is well to provide children with a corner in their church which they feel belongs to them alone; and for the cleanliness and tidiness of which they themselves are made responsible. Ours is at the west end of the church, hard by the

door. Our children like, and use, it. But no child has ever been found praying there. That is naturally to be done at the other end of the same aisle, in the chapel where a white light burns before the tabernacle, in indication of the perpetual presence in the sacrament of his own devising of the Children's King.

In the railed-off corner (a notice by the entrance proclaims that "Trespassers will be Prosecuted") hang the Scouts', Cubs', Guides', and Brownies' flags. On the two walls are a number of pictures, mostly given by the children themselves, and changed periodically. On the step of the small altar is built at Christmas a small crib, and at Easter a miniature resurrection-garden (both obtainable, at no great cost, from the Faith Press). On a bracket among the pictures stands a happy image of the Holy Child, some three feet in height, with arms outstretched in welcome. There are a well-filled bookcase (contents also changed from time to time), chairs of the right height, a table with its own electric reading-lamp, notice-boards for the display of marks, charts, and so on.

When Peggy and her friends were removed into the country, and the one-time Austrian house-decorator began to paint Europe red, we were in the throes of creating a Catechism Housing Estate. At the beginning of the quarter each of the twenty-three rows had been given a house to build. The bare outlines were drawn on squared paper. Every five marks earned meant the painting in appropriate colours by the catechist during the week of a yellow brick, section of green front-door, or part of light-blue window. All the houses were of identical size, and stood in a long row on detachable boards hung in the corner. Each member could earn over 30 marks a week (Mass, 5; Catechism, 4; Questions, 4; Postcard, 20): 5 in each row = 150 = 30 squares. The houses were grow-

ing fast. Peggy's was ahead, nearly to the red roof.
Hence her bloodthirsty desire for that knif.

* * *

If what I write in this, and other parts to be published later, is of use either to those who take Catechism, or to those who make it (I try to express myself in language suitable to both), I shall be glad. It would be kind of them to say a prayer now and then, both for me, and for my at present Peggy-less Haggerston.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S CLERGY HOUSE
YORKTON STREET, HACKNEY ROAD
LONDON, E.2

April, 1942

PRAYERS

IT is, I find, well to use set forms of prayer during Catechism. Thus they become unconsciously learned by heart, and return to mind at all sorts of other times. Late one night in the London Hospital I had given communion to a boy about to undergo a serious operation, from which in point of fact he did not recover consciousness. While we waited for the trolley to take him to the theatre, I began to say, "Jesu, thou art my greatest need . . ." He replied, "So, Jesu, never leave me. 'Sright, ain't it?"

In addition to the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, Apostles' Creed, Gloria, and Divine Praises, we use the following :

At the beginning of Catechism

O God, bless this Catechism. Help us to fight against our sins, to learn and love thy truth, and to live our life in Jesus, our pattern and our king. Who liveth . . .

At the end of Catechism

Jesu, thou art my greatest need,
Without thee I am poor indeed ;

Then let me never lose thee.

Without thee I cannot be good,
Nor ever do the things I should ;

So, Jesu, never leave me.

Holy Mary, be a mother to me.

St. Augustine, and all saints, pray for me.

My guardian angel, watch over me ; to keep me from
all sin.

Jesu, have mercy on me.

Mary, pray for me.

✠ May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Birthday prayer

Grant, O God, that thy children (*names*), who are dear to us, and whose births we now commemorate with gladness, may remain thy faithful children for ever; and may so grow in grace in this life that, in the life which is to come, they may be thy loving children for ever in heaven. Through . . .

For those preparing for the Sacraments

O God the Holy Spirit, bless and strengthen all who are now getting ready for Holy Confirmation, First Confession, and First Holy Communion. Keep them thy faithful soldiers and servants to their lives' end. Through . . .

For our homes

Visit, we beseech thee, our homes, and drive far from them all snares of the enemy. Let thy holy angels dwell in them, to keep us in peace; and may thy blessing rest upon us evermore. Through . . .

For the parish

Almighty God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth, hear the prayers of us thy servants, and grant to this parish all things needed for its spiritual good. Strengthen the faithful. Bless the priests and sisters. Protect and guide the children. Comfort the ill, the old, the sad, the tired. Convert the wicked. Rouse the careless. Recover the fallen. Restore the penitent. Remove all that might hinder truth. And bring us all to our true home, heaven. Through . . .

That Christ may keep us

Heart of Jesus, think of me.
Eyes of Jesus, look on me.
Hands of Jesus, bless me.
Arms of Jesus, enfold me.
Feet of Jesus, guide me.
Body of Jesus, feed me.
Jesu, make me grow like you.
 Make me always
 Your loving child.

Another of the same

From thy high throne, O Jesus,
Stoop down and hear me.
In thy great godhead, Jesus,
Always be near me.
From thine altar, O Jesus,
Turn thy face to me.
Lift thy pierced hands, Jesus,
In blessing over me.
To thine altar, O Jesus,
More and more draw me.
In thy love, Jesus,
Hold me
And keep me
For ever.

That Christ may go with us

Jesus divine,
Sweet brother mine,
 Be with me all the day.

And when the light
Has turned to night,
 Be with me still, I pray.
Where'er I be,
Go thou with me ;
 And never stay away.

To St. Michael

Holy Michael, Archangel, defend us in the day of battle. Be our safeguard against the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray. And do thou, Prince of the heavenly host, thrust down to hell Satan and all wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls.

In preparation for Holy Communion

Grant, Lord Jesus, that all thy blessed angels and saints, and especially thy glorious mother Mary, who, face to face, behold thee whom we here receive beneath the sacramental veils, may help us by their prayers; that we may so receive thee here at the altar, that we may hereafter see thee for ever in heaven.

For some one who has recently died

May the angels lead thee into paradise; the martyrs receive thee at thy coming, and take thee into the holy city. May the choirs of angels welcome thee; and mayest thou, with Lazarus once poor, have everlasting rest. May the face of Jesus Christ appear to thee kind and joyful; and mayest thou be with them who are with him for ever.

Before a crucifix

Thou who, on the cross, didst see
 All mankind, and all I love, and me;
 Still look down from heaven and see
 All mankind, and all I love, and me.

Acts

Of faith. O my God, I believe in thee, because thou art truth itself.

Of hope. O my God, I hope in thee, because of thy promises to me.

Of love. O my God, I love thee above all things, because thou art so good. Teach me to love thee daily more and more.

Of sorrow. O my God, I am sorry that I have so often made you sad, by my sins of thought, word, deed, and omission. Forgive me my sins, and help me not to make you sad again.

Of recollection. I come from God. I belong to God. I go to God.

For foreign missions

O Jesus, who didst order thine apostles to preach the gospel to everybody all over the world, bless the work of the Church abroad. Guide the bishops, strengthen the priests, give much grace to the Christians, call the heathen. So that the day may soon come when the whole earth is full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.

[Note. Prayers 2, 7, 8, and 9 are from the well-known and excellent small books of Children's Prayers, written by Fr. Roche, S.J. I hope that I have reprinted them accurately; but I have used them from memory for many years, and have not the books by me. I think that the publishers are Longmans, Green & Co.]

PART ONE
HOLY BAPTISM

As has been said, words printed in large type in these instructions are those which should be similarly inscribed on the blackboard which does not contain the picture. If it is found that the younger members (e.g. under 12) at first find a difficulty in copying down in five minutes the contents of both blackboards, they may be allowed to confine their attention to one; which should be that having the picture. The post-cards should be numbered consecutively, according to the number of the lesson (which should be put on the blackboard). It is good for both catechist and catechised to use the Bible; consequently I give occasional references, which may perhaps be dictated to older members to be looked up during the week.

1

Of course I don't think that you are really like the boy or the girl whom you will soon see on the other side of one of the blackboards. I have never seen a Haggerston boy with hair like that, or in such preposterous clothes; and I don't want to. And she looks too good to be true. But I couldn't find any other pictures easy for you, and me, to draw.

But you are either a boy or a girl; and each of you, like everybody else in the world, has been made by God. Your mother and father had to help God to make you, for nearly always God does his work in this world through people who live in it. But only God could give you life (*Genesis 2, 7*).

God made you a body and a soul. That is what you are now, body and soul.

Your body keeps on growing and changing. You have to get your hair cut (I wish that the cissy-looking Clarence on the blackboard would): scars and bruises disappear: fingernails and toe-nails must be cut (not bitten): teeth have to be pulled out (doesn't it hurt?). Your body is not the same as the one you had when you were a baby: when you are grown-up it will be different to the one you have now.

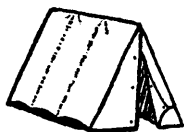
But you don't change. Because the real you is your soul, living in your body, like a Scout or Guide living in a tent at camp.

Some day, I hope not for a long time, the tent of your body will get old and be worn-out, or it may have an accident; some day your body will die. Then your soul will go out of your body into the life that is beyond this world, like some one walking out of a tent. For your soul will not die. The real you can never die (*St. John 5, 24*). You will never end.

So, what are you?

YOU ARE A NEVER-DYING SOUL, NOW LIVING IN A ONE-DAY-TO-DIE BODY.

1



WHAT ARE YOU ?

2

Well, here you are. In dear, dirty, noisy, happy, old Haggerston. Close to the gas-works (six black blobs), and St. Augustine's Church (marked with a cross). Why?

God never does things by accident, or without a good reason. God made you, me, everybody, to know him (*St. John 17, 3*), love him, serve him, in this world; and to be happy with him one day and for ever in heaven (*Revelation 21, 4*).

But God did not make you like a tram or a machine. He gave you the power to go where you like and do what you wish. In your soul he put a voice, called Conscience, which always tells you what is right and what is wrong. But you can listen to it and obey it, or not; just as you choose. You have Free Will.

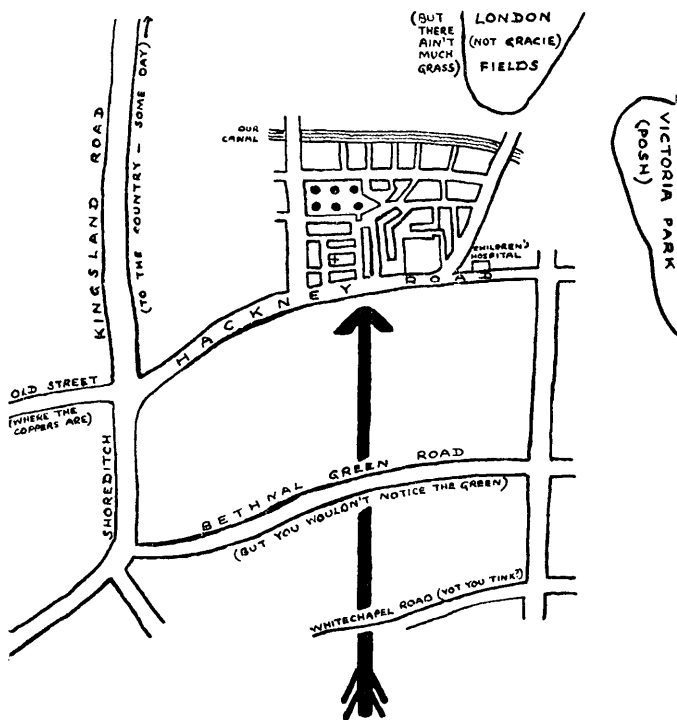
If you like, you can have bad friends, do sin, be selfish, say no prayers, be unkind, give up going to church. God will not stop you. He is so proud of you that he has given you Free Will. If you like, you can choose the good things: truth, purity, fairness, courage, unselfishness, love. But it will be you who choose, of your own Free Will.

And, as you choose during your life in that tent in this world, so you will receive in the next world beyond this life. If you want heaven while you are in Haggerston, you will get heaven when you have left Haggerston for ever; and if you don't, you won't.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

TO KNOW, LOVE, AND SERVE GOD IN THIS WORLD; AND TO BE HAPPY FOR EVER WITH HIM IN HEAVEN.

2



3

Of course the Church wants to help you to know, love, and serve God; so in the Book of Common Prayer (“common” means “for everybody,” like Clapton Common; it doesn’t mean “rude”) there is a catechism of questions and answers (which is what “catechism” means) that you must learn before you are confirmed. This is how it begins:

Question. What is your name?

Answer. N. or M.

(M means two names, like Sarah Susannah.)

When your mother carried you to church to be baptized, I expect you were a pink, wrinkled, fat, slobbering baby who screamed at my spectacles (I don’t know why, but babies generally do, especially girl-babies). If your mother’s name was Mrs. Luvaduck, your only name was The Luvaduck Baby.

When your mother took you out of church, probably still yelling, you were Horace Horatio Archibald Luvaduck; or Greta Garbo June Elizabeth Margaret Rose Luvaduck—or whatever you had been christened. For you had been given at the font Christian names.

Those names I wrote in the church’s large white-bound Baptism register. At the same time they were written in a larger book in heaven, the Book of Life (*St. Luke* 10, 20). They are, you might say, your Heavenly Identity Card: and I didn’t make a blot like Miss Snatchpiece did.

WHO ARE YOU?

I AM A BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN.

3

NATIONAL REGISTRATION
IDENTITY CARD

ATNT	60	1
SNATCHPIECE		
Sarah. S.		

DO NOTHING WITH THIS PART
UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD

Full Postal Address of Above Person:—

18. Talavera. Place.
Yorkton. Street. Hackney.
Road. London. E2.(Signed) Sally Sarah. Susannah.
Snatchpiece.

Date May 10th, 1940.

4

Directly after you were baptized, and before you were given back to your godmother, the priest at the font made on your forehead the sign of the cross: "in token," as he said, "that hereafter you shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner."

Your surname is your earthly-family name. It is a "supersurname," to distinguish people who have the same Christian names. Some surnames were first given because of people's trades (Carpenter, Smith, Baker, Painter); others because of their parents (Williamson, Johnson, Jackson). Your Christian name is your heavenly-family name: the name by which God and your guardian angel know you. So your Christian name should remind you that you belong to God (*Isaiah* 43, 1).

When the sign of the cross was made on you at the font, you enlisted in God's army, the Church Militant ("fighting: military") on earth; and

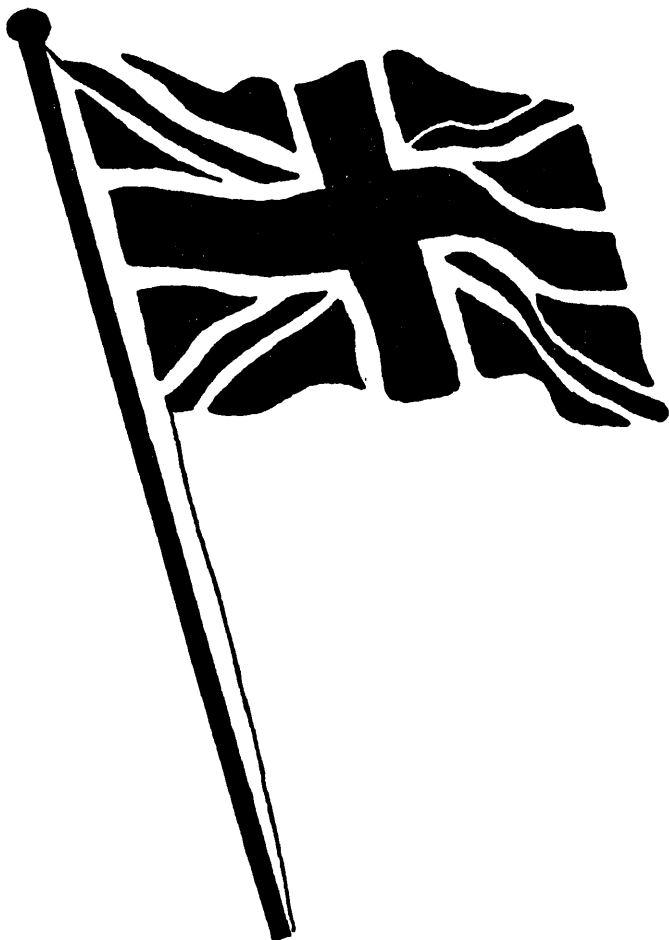
YOUR CHRISTIAN NAME

IS YOUR FIGHTING NAME.

Because you are a Christian, there are things that you are bound to do and things that you are bound not to do. Also because you are a Christian, there are three powerful enemies who, so long as you are in this world, will fight against you, and try to make you do the wrong things and not do the right things; because they are God's enemies, and want to keep you from heaven.

As a British soldier fights under the banner of the Union Jack, so every Christian soldier has to fight against three enemies stronger than Germans, Italians, or Japanese; and the Christian's fight for Jesus Christ (2 *Timothy* 2, 3) lasts as long as life in this world.

4



5

Question. Who gave you this name?

Answer. My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism. . . .

One of the rubrics ("rules," generally printed in italics—print first used by an Italian) at the beginning of that service in your Book of Common Prayer which is called The Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants, says that a boy should have

TWO GODFATHERS AND ONE GODMOTHER

and a girl

TWO GODMOTHERS AND ONE GODFATHER

but of course they need not be such hideous frumps as on the blackboard (have you ever *seen* such hats, and what price Uncle Percy's moustache?).

A baby should be baptized as soon as possible. Naturally it cannot then understand or speak. So its godparents answer the four questions for it, and also promise that, when it is older, it shall be told what was done for it at the font and what promises were made on its behalf. The godparents are the "guarantees" or "sureties" that the child shall be brought up as a Christian. So of course each of the godparents must be a baptized Christian; and it is very desirable that each should also be a communicant.

If you look at almost the last words in the Baptism Service you will see that the godparents are told "to take care that the child be brought to the bishop to be confirmed." At your confirmation you take on yourself the promises made for you at the font. After you have done this, you are responsible for yourself; but until then your godparents guarantee that you are brought up as a Christian.

5

A BOY HAS



A GIRL HAS



6

Question. Who gave you this name?

Answer. My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ . . .

A member is a living part of something. Hands are members of the body; Members of Parliament living parts of the Government. But a chair-leg is not a member of a chair, because it is not alive; though the branch from which it was made was a member of a tree when it was a living bough growing on it. The rushes by the island on the boating-lake (where the swans are) in Victoria Park are alive; each leaf is a member of the whole plant, because the sap flows through it. Break off a leaf, stop the flow of sap; and the leaf dies because it has ceased to be a member.

In baptism you were made a living part of Jesus Christ. One day he said that he is like a vine, and that we are some of its branches (*St. John* 15, 4-6); and St. Paul said that our Lord was like a human body, with us as some of its members (*1 Corinthians* 12, 12).

The life that Christ gives all his members (like sap in a plant or blood in your veins) is called Grace. Grace is God's power, given to people, to enable them to be good (like ripe fruit on a living bough). Unforgiven sin stops Grace (tie a piece of string tightly round your finger, the blood stops flowing and your finger grows cold, numb, dead): it can cut you off from membership with Christ, like an axe cutting a bough off a tree.

In baptism you were joined on to Christ. He made you one of his living parts; and gave you, by Grace, his own life. Members

OF CHRIST ARE LIVING PARTS OF HIM.

6



MEMBERS

7

Question. Who gave you this name?

Answer. My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God . . .

When you were born, perhaps the child of Mr. and Mrs. Shovealfpenny, you were God's child by creation (*Acts 17, 28*); for it was God who made you, and gave you life. You became a member, a living part, of the great human family all the world over descended from Adam and Eve. But Adam and Eve sinned; so everybody has caught sin from them, like measles (only much worse).

At your new birth in baptism (*St. John 3, 5*) you became God's child in a new and better way, by adoption (*Romans 8, 15*): God adopted, took, you into his divine or heavenly family. This family is called The Church. In it are all whom Jesus Christ—the Second Adam, because he came to this world to give it a fresh start (*Romans 5, 19*)—redeemed, or bought back, from sin (like something is redeemed, or bought back, from "Uncle's," the pawnbroker's). When the water was poured on you at the font, the sin which you could not help catching from Adam and Eve (Original Sin) was washed away; you were given a fair start in life.

Have you noticed the difference between the first and second things that happened to you when you became a Christian by baptism? The difference between "a" and "the"? You were made "a" member of Christ, but "the" child of God. This means that God loves you as if you were his only child, "the" child; that, if you were the only baby in the world

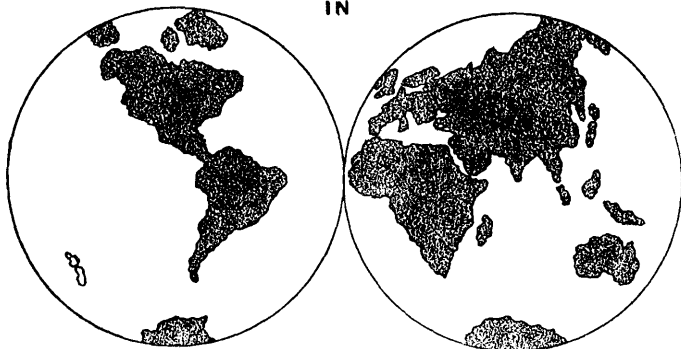
GOD COULD NOT LOVE YOU MORE THAN HE DOES.

7

IF YOU WERE THE ONLY



IN



8

Question. Who gave you this name?

Answer. My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Suppose that somebody in his will left me property in America. Although I have never been there (I should like to go one day, for one reason because there are people there who are kind to your and my Haggerston), I could say, "It's mine now"; and, when I did go there, I should see that it belonged to me and to nobody else. At your baptism God promised you heaven: it is yours now, although you have never been there and do not quite know what it looks like: one day, if all is well, you will see that part of heaven marked out for you by your Christian name and belonging to nobody else, except of course God (*Galatians* 4, 7). For "inheritor" means "a person who owns something now, which he will possess one day."

Every baptized Christian is now an inheritor of God's kingdom; heaven is now his or her eternal home. God's kingdom is in this world, as well as in heaven. Here it is not perfect (*St. Matthew* 13, 24, 25, 27): there it is perfect (*St. Matthew* 13, 47-49). But here, in this world, you and I and every inheritor are given by God—if we care to use it, it all depends on Free Will—all the help we need to reach heaven; the power of prayer, the grace of the sacraments, the guardianship of angels, the prayers of saints, human love and friendship, etc. And all through this life we know that heaven belongs to us now. In short:

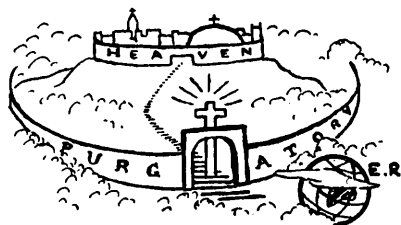
I come from God.

I belong to God.

I go to God.

So do you. Thank God!

8



I COME FROM GOD
I BELONG TO GOD
I GO TO GOD

9

Question. What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?

Answer. They did promise and vow three things in my name. . . .

The Catechism was written nearly four hundred years ago (in 1549); so naturally some of its words are a bit old-fashioned. The question means, "What did your godparents do for you when you were baptized, besides giving you your Christian name?"

In return for the three things God did for you they made three solemn promises to God for you (a "vow" is a solemn and unbreakable promise made to God). Sometimes people say that that was not fair on you, as you were too young to understand what was happening. But suppose that, when I baptized you, I gave your mother £100 on condition that she banked it in your name for your use when you were grown-up, and she promised and vowed to do this; would you think it unfair?

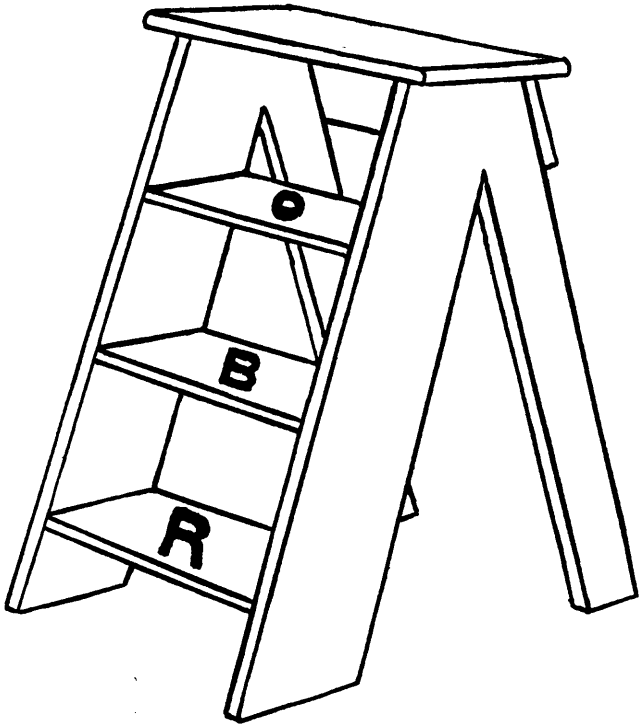
The three vows were R, B, O: RENOUNCING, BELIEVING, OBEYING. Your godparents made them for you; but at your confirmation you take them upon yourself (5), since they were made "in your name." (The £100 in the bank "in your name" belongs to you, and to nobody else.) You can do just as you like about keeping the vows: you have Free Will. But you will never reach your inheritance unless you do keep them; though you will always be a member of Christ and the child of God.

Do you remember Jacob's dream (*Genesis* 28, 10-12); and the Identity Card (3)?

Sarah Susannah Snatchpiece's "ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reaches to heaven" has three steps: R, B, O.

So has yours; and mine.

9



~~JACOB'S~~ SARAH'S LADDER
(AND YOURS)

10

Answer. They did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works . . .

Your ladder's first step, R. Your first vow, Renouncing. To "renounce" means, as the Baptism Service says, "to refuse to follow or be led by." It does not mean to "give up": you can't give up and have nothing to do with the devil, the world, and the flesh—at least, not in this life: but you can refuse to be their slaves or servants.

The devil was once the chief of the holy angels in heaven; he sinned through pride, of his own Free Will; there was war in heaven; Michael and the good angels won; the devil ("Satan," which means "enemy") and the bad angels were thrown out for ever (*Revelation 12, 7-9*); and will be in this world until the end of time.

He does not look like the dragon on the blackboard, any more than you look like the piccaninny with the wind up. But he really is much stronger and cleverer than you, or me, or any one else; and he hates every Christian, because he knows that he or she can be in heaven instead of him. So he disguises himself in all sorts of clever ways; and shoots into our minds bad thoughts like invisible poisoned arrows (Lying, Being jealous, Hating, Losing our tempers, Bullying, Having cruel tongues, Being stuck-up and proud, Snicking things, Playing impure games), to turn our minds away from God and his good things. He is always "tempting" us, "trying to make us sin." And his cleverest trick is to try to make us think that there isn't any devil at all.

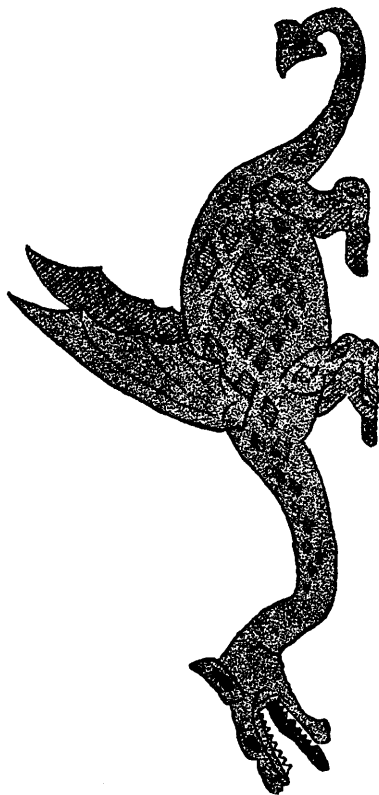
But, strong though he is, he is not almighty. He can tempt us, but he can't make us sin (we always have Free Will); and temptation is not sin.

YOUR FIRST ENEMY IS THE DEVIL.

And you have promised and vowed not to become his slave, to refuse to follow or be led by him. Pray every day to keep your vow (*St. Matthew 6, 13*).

10

YOUR THREE ENEMIES



11

Answer. . . . that I should renounce . . . the pomps and vanity of this wicked world.

When God made this world, he made it "very good" (*Genesis* 1, 31); and he made man and woman very good. But ever since the devil was turned out of heaven he has been doing his best to make people think that this world, and all the good and lovely things in it, are more important than God; as it were, weighing down scales in people's minds. (*St. Matthew* 4, 8-10 tells you what Satan has done to the world, and how our Lord answered him.)

"Pomps" used to mean "processions," in which people dressed up; it now means just "swank," "showing off." It is right to wear nice clothes; but it is wrong to think they are more important than anything else. Money in itself is not bad, and can do much good; but it becomes a "pomp" if its owner thinks it the most important thing in life. "Vanity" means "emptiness"; and when you remember that you can't take with you into the next life anything that this world gives you, you realize that all things which are only worldly things are "empty" (*St. Luke* 12, 15-21).

God has a right to the first place in your heart, because you are made to live for him now and to be happy with him for ever hereafter. God wants you to be happy in this world—to have good friends, perhaps to like dancing and playing games and going to the pictures and reading and listening to music, perhaps to have good health, perhaps to have money. But God wants you to remember that none of these things last for ever; and that all his blessings are chiefly sent to help you to reach heaven.

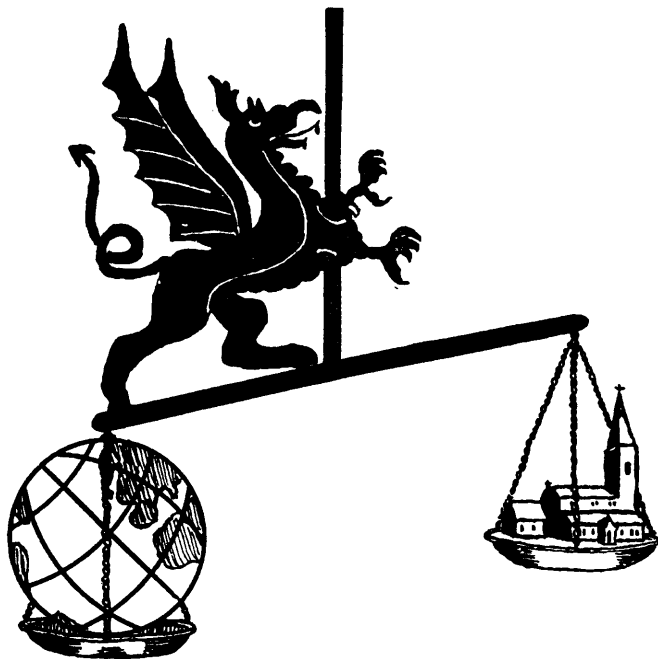
If it comes first in your mind (and it is always trying to, because of the devil),

YOUR SECOND ENEMY IS THE WORLD.

"Renounce" it; "refuse to follow or be led by" it. Keep God first. Then everything will be O.K. But if you don't, everything will be Orl Wrong.

11

YOUR THREE ENEMIES



12

Answer. . . . that I should renounce . . . all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

Your first two enemies are outside you. The third is inside. You see him or her every time you comb your hair, put on your dress, or brush your coat, in front of your looking-glass. YOUR THIRD ENEMY IS YOURSELF.

“Lusts” is an old-fashioned word which simply means your bodily wants; such as sleep, food, drink, love, water (outside as well as inside). Of course these are not wrong. Our Lord on earth was tired, hungry, thirsty: he loved to be with children and his mother and his friends.

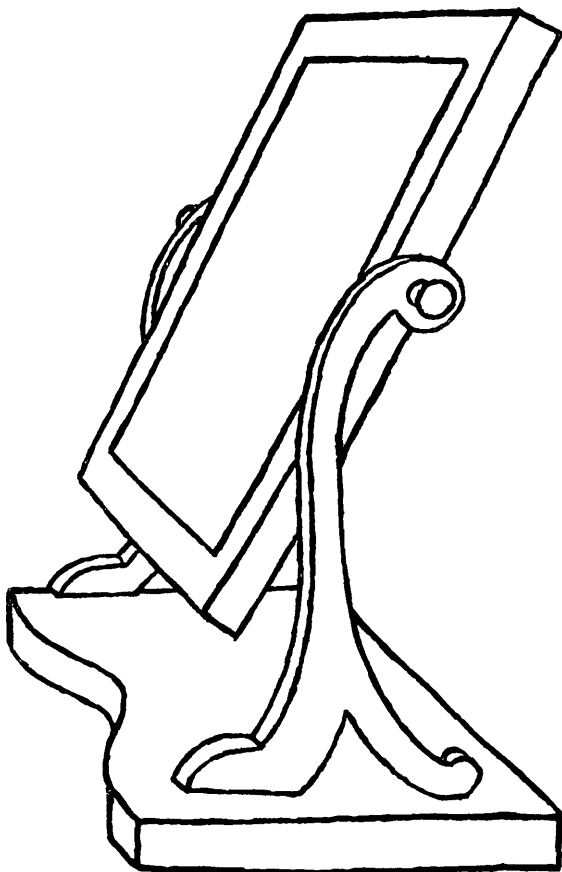
But what you and I must remember is that our bodies are good servants but bad masters; like horses, or fire. If we let them run away with us, be “boss,” there will be accidents, or worse; and our good bodily wants become “sinful lusts.” Hunger changes into greed; sleep to sloth; thirst to drunkenness; love to impurity.

You and I must never forget that all through this life, because we are Christians, there are certain things that our bodies are not allowed to do or say, or our minds to think; though this does not alter the fact that they are often wanting to do, say, and think them. We have to learn—and the sooner we begin, the better—to say No to our bodies; to keep them under control; to “refuse to follow or be led by” their good wants if these seem to be changing into wrong wants (1 *Corinthians* 9, 24-27).

To sum up: I have promised and vowed not to be a slave of the devil and the world (outside me), and the flesh (inside me). And perhaps my hardest enemy to beat is the third.

12

YOUR THREE ENEMIES



13

Answer. They did promise and vow three things in my name. . . . Secondly, that I should believe all the articles of the Christian Faith.

When Adam sinned his mind was injured (like a clock which has fallen). He, and everybody who came after him, including you and me, lost the power of seeing clearly the things of God (1 *Corinthians* 13, 12). But we did not lose the power of knowing God. This is called Faith; and Believing (the second step on the ladder) is having Faith. Faith is like the eyes of the soul (*St. John* 3, 3).

Our Lord came into this world to show us all what God is like, and to tell us what are the right things to believe about God. When he returned to heaven he sent God the Holy Ghost (or Spirit) on the first Whitsunday (or Pentecost) to live in the Church which our Lord had started, to speak through the Church, to teach you and me and everybody "all the articles of the Christian Faith" (*St. John* 14, 26). An "article" is "a small piece," like a bit of a jigsaw-puzzle.

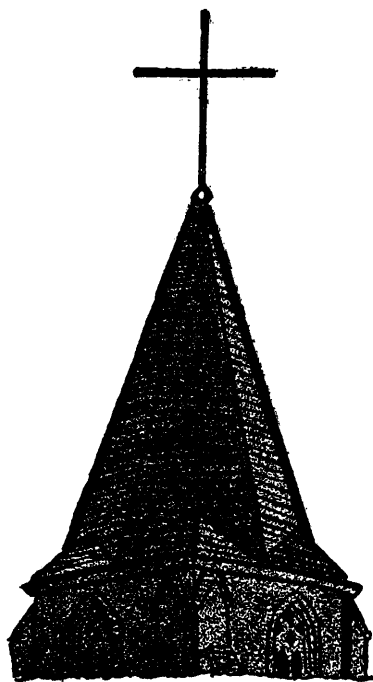
In the Church you find the Creed (Latin, "*credo* ; I believe") : it tells you what to believe. In the Church you find the Bible (Greek: "a book") : it is the history-book and geography-book of God and the things of God, both in heaven and on earth. In the Church you learn how to worship God in the right way. In the Church you find and receive the seven sacraments.

You are not bound to *understand* all the different bits and pieces (articles) of Christianity. I don't think that we shall ever really understand the Holy Trinity, or, perhaps, the Blessed Sacrament, until we see God face to face in heaven. But you have promised to *believe* them; and the Church is here to help you in this.

Every Church spire is, you may say, God's finger.

IT POINTS THE WAY.

13



GOD'S FINGER

14

Answer. They did promise and vow three things in my name. . . . Thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.

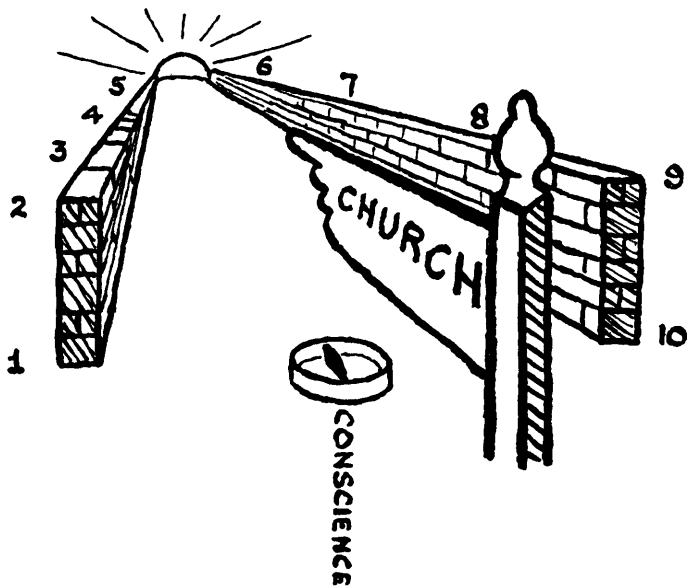
R, B, O. Your third vow is the vow of Obedience, which is the real test of love (*St. John 14, 15*).

Life in this world is a journey: the only happy end of the journey is God (like the light of the sun shining along the long hard road): your heart and mine are so made that they can only find full joy in God (*Psalms 16, 12*). But all along the journey you will find that there are many things, and quite a number of people, which make you want to leave the road that leads to God: your three enemies are always trying to get you off the road, and often they are attractive and nice to look at and think about. The devil is far too clever to let you see him as he really is, for he knows that then you would have nothing to do with him: he is very good at dressing up, disguising and camouflaging himself (like a battleship, or Hackney Town Hall).

God knows this, wants to protect you, does all he can to prevent you leaving the road and losing your way. So he gives you his ten commandments, like walls on either side; the Church, to point out the right road; and the voice of God the Holy Ghost inside you, your conscience (like a compass, which never points in the wrong direction).

You won't find it easy to keep God's holy will and commandments all the days of your life; and, it seems to me, the older one grows, the harder it becomes. But—because of WALLS, FINGER-POST AND COMPASS ON THE ROAD TO GOD—you can never say that you did not know how to make your journey. And always God will help you, if you let him.

14



15

Question. Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and to do, as they have promised for thee?

Answer. Yes verily (truly); and by God's help so I will. And I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end.

Although God will never force you to keep your three Baptism Vows, at the same time your free will cannot keep them without his grace (*St. John* 15, 4 and 5). And you must always remember that it was he who "called" ("invited, welcomed") you into the Church. He chose you, before you chose him.

The "state of salvation" means the "state of being safe." When you were in your Anderson in your back-garden, or in Baum's Shelter in Boston Street, or in a tube-station, during an air-raid you were in a "state of salvation" from shrapnel and blast. In the Catechism, the words mean "being safe from hell," worse than any air-raid. The Church is often pictured as a ship (which is the reason why part of it is called the nave); and the Baptism Service speaks about the baby passing safely through "the waves of this troublesome world." God called you to baptism to make you safe in the Church, as safe as Noah in his ark: safe for ever.

So you say, "Thank you, God." It is a good thing to find out from your mother or your priest the day on which you were baptized, and to say a special Thank You then in your prayers—in church, if you can. And always you pray for grace to stay in the safe Church, built on and made by Jesus Christ our Saviour; the Church which will never be destroyed (*St. Matthew* 7, 24-27).

15

