

8475

CROSS AND CROWN

A THOMISTIC QUARTERLY OF SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

EDITED BY THE DOMINICAN FATHERS
OF THE
PROVINCE OF ST. ALBERT THE GREAT

VOLUME

I

1949

B. HERDER BOOK CO.

ST. LOUIS 2, MO.

Publishers

CROSS AND CROWN

of the things of God. Thirdly, he must also be generous in the use of examples, and know well effects through which he can on occasion explain causes. Hence [the Apostle] speaks of the *word of knowledge*, which is the knowledge of the things of man: for 'the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made' (Ia IIae, q. 111, a. 4).

Moreover, this most prudent warning and precept of our Constitutions must be continually kept in mind: "In all questions adhering faithfully to the pure truth of faith with submission of mind and heart to the magisterium of the Church not only in its definitions but also in its declarations, let our Brethren ever pursue the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, clearly and strongly assert it, work untiringly for its acceptance, and in theology and philosophy firmly maintain it . . . avoiding in all things novelty of expression and science falsely so called" (no. 628).

As to complete fidelity to the directives of the Church, it is well to recall these words of St. Thomas: "The very teaching of Catholic doctors has its authority from the Church; hence we must rest more on the authority of the Church than on the authority of Augustine or Jerome or any other doctor" (IIa IIae, q. 10, a. 12). *A fortiori* this must be said of those teachers or writers who are far from possessing the authority of the above-mentioned doctors.

The very competent and devoted staff of editors will, We are confident, attend to all these points.

There remains for Us only to beg God's copious blessing on the editors, the contributors, and the readers of CROSS AND CROWN.

FR. EMMANUEL SUAREZ, O.P.
Master General

Rome, 15 February, 1949

The Crown of Life

RECENTLY I received a letter from the United States inviting me to write an article for a new magazine, CROSS AND CROWN. Greatly honored by the request, I was even more intrigued by the name of the new review and the desire to know what type of magazine it could be. On learning its ascetical-mystical nature, I was profoundly moved by this Christian paradox, that the New World, prosperous and, as has often been said, materialistic, so energetically dedicated to material things and to marvelous productions of technology, is now starting in pursuit of things far higher than its skyscrapers, more precious than its gold and minerals: in a word, it is more specifically interested in spiritual things.

I do not mean to say that the things of the spirit were not appreciated in the United States before this. The evangelical leaven has always made gentle, silent progress there and, in the course of years, has profoundly penetrated the American Catholic soul. How many beautiful churches, schools, and colleges flourish on American soil! The cause or explanation of this phenomenon is surely to be found in the intensity of the spiritual life of priests, of both men and women religious, and of the faithful who by their personal sacrifices have labored for the diffusion of the Christian and Catholic faith in the United States.

However, the founding of this review gives evidence of a desire for something more specific on the very nature of the spiritual life and on the principles of the direction of souls according to the scientific teaching of theology. I am greatly pleased to see the sons of St. Dominic of the Province of St. Albert, both of whom were such great disciples of

the Blessed Virgin Mary, begin a magazine of this type. (It will certainly be a CROSS and a CROWN for them.) I am even happier that they wish to follow the sound, lofty, and strong doctrine of the Common Doctor of the Church, our dear brother, St. Thomas Aquinas. Today the world greatly needs his teaching, that it may reach an ordered solution of the weighty problems confronting everyone.

To attain this solution, the final goal must first of all be clearly envisaged. Consequently I have decided to begin by discussing the last end of our whole life, and, therefore, more particularly of our spiritual or interior life.

In the present period of uncertainty, threatened, as we are, with a third world war, so close upon the two preceding ones, the Lord asks believers to make an earnest effort to live more profoundly by their faith, that it may become firm, living, penetrating, and communicative. He asks this in order that we may help the many souls seeking the way of truth and salvation and quite frequently coming to us for light and comfort.

We Christians must live more and more by our faith, by our trust in God, and by sincere and generous love of God and of our neighbor. We must do this that we may not allow ourselves to be deceived by so many serious errors abroad in the world, that we may not let ourselves be cast down by difficulties, that we may remain firm instead of yielding to our adversaries on what we have no right to yield or surrender: the divine truth and our great duties. We are faced with the task of preserving our treasure of faith and supernatural life and of communicating it in the greatest measure possible to others for their good in the present life and for their eternal salvation, since, after all, souls are either lost through their own fault or saved by the grace of God for eternity.

The Fathers of the Church and spiritual writers have often said that in the spiritual life he who does not advance, falls back. Why? Because it is a law that we must advance. The same thing is true for the child in the natural order: if he does not grow and become a normal adult, he does not remain a child, he becomes an abnormal creature, a deformed dwarf. His body and members grow in disproportion to his stature. It is a natural law that a person must grow until he becomes an

adult. Likewise it is a supernatural law of the interior life that the Christian who is advancing toward God should grow in charity and all the virtues until the end of his life on earth, when he will be judged according to his works, be they good or bad.

Since this is true, it is highly fitting to discuss spiritual progress, which is that of sanctifying grace, of charity, of the other virtues, and of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost that always accompany charity and are connected with it. All these virtues and gifts grow together, says St. Thomas,¹ like the five fingers of a child's hand.

Because consideration should always be given first to the final end of spiritual progress, in view of which the means are chosen, we can see why our Lord, at the beginning of His ministry in the Sermon on the Mount,² started with the evangelical beatitudes which are in us the prelude of eternal beatitude: Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, they that hunger and thirst after justice, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They will be consoled, satiated; they will see God, they will attain eternal beatitude. All men naturally desire happiness, but often they are deceived in seeking it where it does not exist. That is why St. Thomas begins his exposition of moral and spiritual theology by the tract on the ultimate end of life and of eternal beatitude.³

It is, consequently, important to answer well the primordial question: Why was man created? Grain is made to nourish man, domestic animals to assist him in his labors, the plow to till the land. But why was man made? This inevitable question may be well or badly answered; not to wish to examine it is to reply badly, to deviate from the goal to be attained, to decrease, to annihilate oneself.

THE WORLD'S THREE ANSWERS

The world, or rather the spirit of the world, has three answers, which certainly do not suffice to give the happiness desired or to provide a

¹ See Ia IIae, q. 67, a. 2.

² Matt. 5:1-12.

³ See Ia IIae, q. 1-5.

CROSS AND CROWN

foundation for duty. These answers may tempt us under a less gross form, and it is well to recall them at the beginning, the better to see by contrast the grandeur of the true answer, which is that of the Gospel.

The first answer given by the spirit of the world is so inferior that it attempts itself to correct this reply by the second, and lastly by the third, which is also deceiving.

The first of these answers states that man is made for pleasure, to enjoy earthly goods, pleasures of every kind. Among these, some very delicate ones are appreciated by the dilettante who, according to this theory, would be the wise man. Man would have no duty toward a Being superior to himself; his good pleasure would be his rule. This was the maxim of paganism, especially in its decline, and there is an appalling return to this maxim today. People desert the country where, they say, the work is too hard. They go to the cities to find, together with as little work as possible, all desirable pleasures: movies, gambling, sports, as if man were his own end and had to do nothing but what pleased him.

The critique of this moral of pleasure, which is the negation of all morality, is easy. Such conduct does not lead to the desired happiness. The search for pleasure without any higher rule leads to disillusionment, to weariness, to ennui—to that ennui which worldlings drag over all the beaches of the world, because the depths of their souls are empty and unsatisfied. This boredom often leads even to disgust because people ask from poor finite ends what these cannot give. The result is the ruin of individual life (as shown by the growing number of despondent souls, of suicides), the ruin of family life (by birth control, divorce, the utter neglect of children left without any moral training), the ruin of social life (by the envy and struggle of classes, a struggle which continually increases the price of the necessities of life); it also results in hatred among men and world wars. Since a divine law is no longer acknowledged, nor even a natural law, to preserve a certain order the police force is continually increased within the country, and armaments against foreigners without. It is a state of permanent war, at a time when progress, peace, and happiness have been proclaimed. Especially in the last thirty years the Lord has thus shown us what men can

THE CROWN OF LIFE

do by themselves when they wish to get along without Him. All they can do is to tear each other to pieces.

This answer to the problem of life is so inferior that the world itself perceives its inadequacy and seeks to correct the moral of pleasure by that of the general interest. This second answer tells us that man is not made for the search for immediate pleasure, but for the laborious pursuit of his earthly, individual, family, national interests, so that he may make, at no matter what cost, a desirable position for himself and his children. Accordingly for a number of people, virtue becomes a means of an assured livelihood, of a certain reputation among men, of some tranquillity in life. This is the theory of climbers, and they are represented in every center.

What is this theory worth? If one does not rise higher, it does not lead above egoism, either individual or collective, which may be called *nosism*. And this egoism has never given happiness, for the depths of the soul still remain empty, and disillusionment does not delay in coming with its consequences. Then, to excuse himself, man designates as *sentimentalism* the noblest aspirations of the human heart: devotedness and sacrifice no longer have any meaning. The three theological virtues which unite us to God and our neighbor and the whole Gospel would be only the fruits of the imagination and of an exalted sensibility. Religion would no longer have any meaning, the spiritual and moral patrimony of humanity would have lost all value; and this is what people call progress.

Lastly the spirit of the world proposes a third reply, formulated in the past by the Stoics and in modern times by Kant and his disciples. This answer tells us that man is made for the full development of his personality, which is effected only through respect for his personal dignity and the practice of his individual and social duties, which he ought to accomplish "religiously." Here religion is only an adverb, for man remains his own last end; he must love himself above all; if not himself individually, at least humanity which evolves. By this route the *religion of humanity* is reached. Whereas the Church believes in God, hopes in Him, and loves Him above all, this new religion believes in

CROSS AND CROWN

humanity, hopes in it, and loves it with a platonic or theoretical love above all else.⁴ The dignity of the human person would be the summit of evolution; there would be nothing above it, or only the Unknowable, in regard to which we can not have special duties.⁵

This third reply is deceiving and false like the preceding one. It is the answer of pride, which has never given happiness to anyone. That man might love himself above all or love humanity more than all, humanity would have to be wisdom itself, truth itself, the sovereign good. Now humanity with its tares and its formidable reversions toward barbarism, so manifest in the last two world wars, is far from being wisdom itself, truth itself, the sovereign good. Absolute evolutionism says that humanity is God who is becoming, and who will never be, for He will always become. But to deny the existence of the true God is not sufficient to make Him cease to be.⁶ This negation is an additional proof that man is appallingly limited from the physical, intellectual, and moral point of view; he is still often perverse, very sensual, cruel, and, as H. Taine says, "When society deviates from the Gospel, it becomes a cut-throat place and an evil place."

Man who comes into existence and dies, did not give himself existence, life, intelligence, will, good will; he received them from Him who is Being itself, Justice, and Love, and it is only through the help

⁴Treating of the French Revolution, Proudhon, in spite of his opposition to the Church, wrote: "The Revolution believes in Humanity, the Church believes in God. It is the most striking manifestation of the divine Essence and, among the sects, she alone knows how to adore Him." It is well known that Proudhon's mind abounded in contradictions.

⁵This conception is spreading to such an extent that a young man who wished to enter a religious community replied to the master of novices who asked him his reason for entering: "Why, Father, for the full development of my personality." The master of novices pointed out to him: "Be careful! You are answering as might an atheist who has no other aim than the full development of his personality. Now I am asking you a question of a religious nature. Why do you wish to enter a religious Order where souls live by faith, hope in God, love of God, by prayer, by obedience . . . ? And you answer me without even mentioning God. Do you believe, then, that when we celebrate Mass, it is only to develop our personalities, and not to offer to God worship of adoration, petition, reparation, and thanksgiving?" "But Father," said the young man, "I was speaking of the development of my personality in a good sense." "I should hope so. It would have been truly lamentable if you had taken it in an evil sense, which would be equivalent to saying that you wish to enter religion through pride and not to love God above all and to work for the salvation of souls."

⁶At social gatherings people used to ask Renan: "Mr. Renan, does God exist?" He would answer, "Not yet," unaware of the enormity of the blasphemy.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

of the Creator and of His providence that man can attain the term of his destiny and find the truth and the good that do not pass.

THE TRUE ANSWER

St. Philip Neri excelled in lifting souls up to the consideration of their last end. One day near Rome he said to a peasant who was working in a sunlit field: "Why do you work so hard, Francesco?" "To have grain and to feed my family." "Nevertheless, my friend, in spite of all the grain that you and your family harvest, you will die." "Of course we shall." "And after death, what will there be for you and yours?" "After death?" "Yes. Recall what the catechism says: after death there will be either purgatory followed by heaven, or hell. So, my dear Francesco, you would do better to work not only to have grain and to feed your family, but also for God. The one does not hinder the other; on the contrary, you would work with greater zest, in peace, and with joy, if you were thinking that you were thereby earning eternal life. And at evening you would bring your children not only bread for their bodies, but food for their souls, and they would love you much more because they would see in you the image of God, our Father." St. Philip Neri spoke in the same manner to an officer whose greatest desire was to become a captain, and to a monsignor who was somewhat too eager for a nunciature and who did not think enough about God. To all he used to say: "And what do you desire after death?"

Consequently the three answers of the world to the problem of life have no value for the hereafter, neither have they any for the present life, which should prepare that of eternity. Divine revelation, which is preserved in its original form among all peoples in spite of the changes to which it has been subjected, tells us that there will be a judgment after death. This opinion was also that of the best philosophers of pagan antiquity, those who admitted a future life, which the modern world shockingly forgets, for it is as if immersed in fleeting time and evanescent goods.

Recently a lady in Turin, out walking with her little six-year-old daughter, met a statesman whom she knew well and questioned him about the general situation in Europe. The gentleman launched into a

political dissertation not at all interesting to the little girl, who kept tugging at her mother's skirts to go on. Finally her mother said to her: "Listen to this gentleman who is one of the best informed men in our country." Looking up at him, the child asked: "Sir, why were you created and placed in the world?" Though a Catholic, the man was momentarily at a loss for a reply; he was not expecting this question, to which he had given little thought. Then looking directly at him, the little girl said to him: "Sir, you were created and placed in the world to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, and in this way to obtain eternal life." The gentleman was delighted with the loftiness of her answer; he remembered that he had learned it in the catechism, but had never thought seriously about it. He believed he had been made especially for politics, and now this child reminded him of the word of God about the real last end of all our life.⁷

The Gospel does not answer the question about why we were created by telling us that we were brought into being to enjoy earthly things, or to make a position for ourselves on earth, or to develop our personality to the full. Such things are only "the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life," to use St. John's words.⁸ The Gospel and the catechism tell us that we were created to know God, to love Him, to serve Him, and in this way to obtain eternal life.

The sole light of reason in itself suffices to show us the falsity of the world's maxims and to tell us that man's last end consists in knowing God and loving Him above all else. The end of our intellect is, in fact, to know the truth and especially supreme truth in the measure in which this truth is accessible to it. Likewise our will is made to love and will the good and above all the sovereign good, which is God, in the measure that it is knowable.

⁷Not long ago an archbishop wrote in a pastoral letter on religious ignorance even in some Christian centers: "This ignorance is at times almost incredible. For example, a very well educated and esteemed count was dying. His wife, deeply affected, began to recite the Our Father with the greatest recollection. Struck for the first time by the elevation of these words, the count said to his wife: 'Countess, did you compose that prayer?' He had recited it mechanically many times, but he had never seen its grandeur. Before dying he glimpsed it, as if our Lord revealed it to him, giving him the light to understand it well."

⁸See I John 2:16.

If God had created us in a purely natural state with a body and a rational and immortal soul, but without the life of grace which we received in baptism, even then our last end would have been to know God and to love Him. But we would have known Him only by the reflection of His perfections in His creatures, as the greatest pagan philosophers knew Him. He would have been for us only the first Cause of the universe and of our nature, the supreme intelligence which ordered all things. We would have loved Him as the Author of our nature with the love of an inferior for a superior, which would not have been friendship but rather a sentiment made up of admiration, respect, and gratitude, without that sweet and simple intimacy which is in the heart of the children of God. We would have been the servants of God, but not His children by adoption.

However, this natural last end is in itself very lofty, immensely superior to all that the spirit of the world and its pride propose to us. First of all, it is a spiritual and not a material end, and consequently can be possessed by all and everyone in particular, without one's possession of it injuring another's and engendering jealousy. This immaterial end therefore unites souls, whereas an ardently desired material end, and still more pride, divides them.

Moreover, this natural end of man consists in a knowledge of God which would never produce satiety. As the eye does not grow weary of the blue of the heavens, the understanding does not weary of the knowledge of God, especially if it is free from error. And from this knowledge normally proceeds a love of God which would not weary the heart either, since God is the sovereign good.

But this natural or rational knowledge of God would allow many mysteries in regard to the intimate harmonization of the divine perfections to subsist. How, for example, harmonize infinite justice and boundless mercy? How reconcile omnipotent goodness and the permission of physical and of moral evil? If at the end of a period of trial, we were to receive only natural beatitude, our intellect would not be able to refrain from saying: "If I could only see this God, source of all truth and goodness, creative cause whence comes the life of creation, what happiness I should experience!"

CROSS AND CROWN

What the most powerful human reason and the strongest angelic intellect could not discover, divine revelation has made known to us. According to revelation, our last end is to know God immediately as He knows Himself, and to love Him as He loves Himself with an intimacy about which we can only stammer on this earth. Thus we who are children by adoption shall be configured to the only Son begotten from all eternity; we shall share in His intimate life, "that He might be the firstborn amongst many brethren," as St. Paul says.⁹ God in creating us was not obliged to make us share in His intimate life; but He could do so, and by entirely gratuitous goodness He willed it.

St. Paul tells us: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. But to us God hath revealed them, by His Spirit. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."¹⁰ Our Lord Himself says in the Gospel of St. John: "This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."¹¹ St. John adds: "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is,"¹² "face to face," says St. Paul.¹³ The Psalmist had already said: "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear."¹⁴

We are, therefore, called to see God not merely in the mirror of creatures, perfect as they may be, or only by His radiation in the world of pure spirits; but we are called to see God without the intermediary of any creature, more clearly indeed than we see here on earth the persons with whom we speak; for God, being pure spirit, will be intimately present in our intellect, which He will illumine at the same time that He gives it the power to see Him. Between Him and us there will not be even the intermediary of an idea, for, being limited, no created idea can represent as He is in Himself, Him who is infinite being, truth, wisdom, a pure flash of divinity and of eternally subsistent love, the living and luminous source of all truth and of all created good-

⁹ Rom. 8:29.

¹⁰ See 1 Cor. 2:9 f.

¹¹ John 17:3.

¹² See 1 John 3:2.

¹³ See 1 Cor. 13:12.

¹⁴ Ps. 16:15.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

ness. And we shall not be able to express our contemplation even by any interior word. This contemplation will be absolutely ineffable, for there is only one word that can express the divine essence, and that is the Word engendered from all eternity.

As a person who is absorbed by a spectacle of ravishing beauty cannot express it, so the immediate vision of the divine essence will be beyond all expression. And this first gaze on God will always be new, with an eternal freshness, for it will be measured by the single instant of immobile eternity. In eternity one instant does not pass and another arrive; there is no past or future, but an eternal present in its ever new freshness, like an eternal morning or an eternal springtime.

This face-to-face vision of God infinitely excels the most sublime philosophy and also the natural knowledge of the highest angels. We are called to see all the divine perfections together, identified in their eminent source; to see how the tenderest mercy and the most inflexible justice proceed from one and the same infinitely generous and infinitely holy love; how the same eminent quality of love identifies in itself attributes in appearance so contrary; how mercy and justice are united in all the works of God. We are called to see how this love, even in its freest good pleasure, is identical with pure wisdom; how in this love there is nothing that is not wise, and in this divine wisdom nothing that is not converted into love. We are called to see how this love is identical with the supreme good, loved from all eternity; how divine wisdom is identical with the first truth always known; how all these perfections are but one in the very essence of Him who is, Jahweh, and who alone could say to Moses: "I am who am."¹⁵

We are called to contemplate this eminent simplicity of God, this absolute purity and sanctity, the sum of all His perfections without any trace of imperfection. In short, we are called to see the infinite fecundity of the divine nature blossoming into the three divine Persons; to contemplate the eternal generation of the Word, splendor of the Father and figure of His substance, to see the ineffable spiration of the Holy Ghost, term of the mutual love of the Father and of the Son, and, as it were, the fruit of Their very intimate communion.

¹⁵ Exod. 3:14; Apoc. 1:4.

CROSS AND CROWN

Who can tell the love and joy that will be born in us of this vision? If we are delighted here on earth by the reflection of the divine perfections shared by creatures, by the splendor of a sunlit ocean, by the beauty of a starry sky, and even more by the spiritual splendors of the lives of the saints; what shall we feel when we see God, infinite beauty, creative source of all the life of creation?

This joy will be that of so strong and absolute a love of God that nothing will ever be able to destroy it or even to diminish it. This love will doubtless be composed of admiration, respect, gratitude, but especially of friendship, with the simplicity and intimacy which this implies. Even more, it will be the love which St. Teresa calls the *consummated transforming union*, like the spiritual fusion of the glorified soul and God. In spite of the infinite distance between the Creator and the creature, He will say to us: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,"¹⁶ and we shall enter into the infinite beatitude of God.

Our Saviour tells us in His sacerdotal prayer; "Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."¹⁷ Eternal life, therefore, consists in knowing God as He knows Himself, and in loving Him as He loves Himself. But this knowledge and supernatural love are possible only if God, so to speak, deifies our higher faculties and our souls. Even in the natural order, man is capable of intellectual knowledge and of an enlightened love superior to sensible love only because he has a spiritual soul. In like manner we will be capable of a divine knowledge and of a divine love only if we have received a participation in the divine nature or the intimate life of God; only if our souls have been, in a sense, deified by consummated and inamissible sanctifying grace, which is like a divine graft enabling them to live a new life, very superior to their natural life. This is what the apostle, St. Peter, says: (Through our Lord Jesus Christ, God) "hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature: flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world."¹⁸

The blessed in heaven can in their faculties share in the divine oper-

¹⁶ Matt. 25:21, 23.

¹⁷ John 17:3.

¹⁸ See II Pet. 1:4.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

ations only because in their souls they participate in the divine nature, the principle of these operations. To understand this truth clearly we must remember that, according to revelation, from all eternity God the Father engenders a Son equal to Himself, the Word. To Him He communicates all His nature, without dividing or multiplying it; He gives Him to be "Light of light, true God of true God." Out of pure goodness He has willed to have in time adopted sons, according to a sonship not only moral and legal, but real and intimate. He has loved us with an entirely gratuitous love, which makes us truly participate in the very principle of His intimate life. As St. Paul says, "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son; that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren."¹⁹

Such is the essence of the eternal life which God reserves for those who love Him. It is what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard"; what our hearts could not naturally desire. It is what God has revealed to us by His Spirit, which "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."²⁰

The elect belong to the very family of God; they enter the cycle of the Blessed Trinity. God engenders His Word in them; the Father and the Son breathe forth love in them. Infused charity even now makes us like the Holy Ghost; the beatific vision will liken us to the Word, who Himself will render us like the Father of whom He is the image. Then evidently it will be true to say that the Blessed Trinity, seen and loved, will dwell in us as in a temple of glory; and at the same time we shall be in the Trinity, at the summit of being, of thought, and of love.

Such is the goal of our life, the ultimate end of spiritual progress. Whereas the spirit of the world tells us that it is sufficient to seek pleasure or worldly interests, or again the full natural development of our personality, divine revelation teaches us that we must tend infinitely higher. The Lord calls us to become conformable to the image of His only Son, to see Him as He sees Himself, to love Him as He loves Himself eternally, in an instant which will never pass and which will always keep its newness and its freshness like an eternal youth which nothing can wither.

¹⁹ Rom. 8:29.

²⁰ See I Cor. 2:9 f.

CROSS AND CROWN

Such is the message of the Son of God, but as the Parable of the Guests says: "The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage; and they would not come. . . . But they neglected, and went their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. And the rest laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it he was angry and, sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers and burnt their city. Then he saith to his servants: The marriage indeed is ready; but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways; and as many as you shall find call to the marriage."²¹ We read the same message in the Magnificat: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away."²² Poor people understand the divine message of the Gospel, while those who are infatuated with their wealth or their pseudo-wisdom refuse to receive it. This is the mystery of the divine call and of its results.

How can we attain so lofty an end as eternal life? Spiritual progress can tend to this end only because it presupposes in us the seed of eternal life, which baptism gave us. In the natural order the seed contained in the acorn cannot become an oak unless it has the same nature as the oak. A little child cannot become a man unless he has a rational soul, though it is not yet awakened in him. Similarly in the supernatural order the Christian on earth cannot become one of the blessed in heaven unless he has already received the seed of divine life. This is why all Christian tradition says: "Gratia est semen gloriae," sanctifying grace is the seed of eternal life.

If we wish to know the nature of the seed contained in the acorn, we must consider this nature in its perfect state in the oak. In the same way, if we wish to know the life of grace, we must contemplate it in its supreme development. Then we see that the life of grace even here on earth is essentially the same as that of heaven; it is "a beginning of glory in us,"²³ says St. Thomas.

²¹ Matt. 22:2-9.

²² Luke 1:53.

²³ *Summa*, IIa IIae, q. 24, a. 3 ad 2; Ia IIae, q. 69, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 2.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

The life of grace and the life of glory are the same supernatural life in spite of two differences. Here on earth, we do not see God, but we know Him with certitude in the obscurity of faith. In addition, we hope one day to possess Him, but we can lose Him because of the fickleness of our free will. In spite of these two differences, it is the same life, for, when faith disappears to give place to vision, and hope gives place to the inamissible possession of God, sanctifying grace and charity, which are in the souls of the just, will endure forever. "Charity never falleth away," says St. Paul.²⁴ Charity will never fall away; moreover, it is inseparable from sanctifying grace and is connected with the infused moral virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

This is why our Lord said to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. . . . He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst forever: but the water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting."²⁵ Likewise, in the temple at Jerusalem, Jesus cried in a loud voice: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink. He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."²⁶ "He that believeth in Me [with a living faith, united to charity] hath everlasting life," that is to say, he has the beginning of eternal life. This assertion recurs six times in St. John's Gospel: 3:36; 5:24, 39; 6:40, 47, 55. This is why our Lord says again: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say: Behold here, or behold there. For lo, the kingdom of God is within you."²⁷ By grace and charity God reigns in souls of good will; this is the beginning of the kingdom of God which is not of this world, but which begins in this world, like the grain of mustard seed, like the leaven that causes the loaf to rise, like a treasure hidden in a field.

Accordingly we must not be surprised that St. Thomas wrote: "But

²⁴ See I Cor. 13:8.

²⁵ John 4:10, 13 f.

²⁶ John 7:37.

²⁷ Luke 17:20 f.

CROSS AND CROWN

the good of grace in one is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe,"²⁸ and therefore the slightest degree of sanctifying grace and charity in the soul of a baptized child is more precious than the natural good of the entire universe. And not only is it worth more than the entire physical universe, but more than all angelic natures taken together; for grace is a gratuitous gift for the angel as well as for us. It is, therefore, greatly superior to the loftiest angelic nature, and even to all creatable angelic natures, for grace is a participation in the intimate life of God. This idea is not difficult to understand. In the natural order, the smallest blade of grass, because it is living, is worth more than the entire mineral kingdom, than mountains of gold or of diamonds; the slightest sensation of the tiniest ant is of greater worth than the whole vegetable kingdom; the slightest human thought is more valuable than the entire animal kingdom. Must we, then, be astonished that the least degree of grace and of charity, a participation in the intimate life of God, is more precious than all angelic natures taken together?

In his *Pensées*, Pascal says: "All bodies, the firmament and its stars, the earth and its kingdoms, are not equal to the lowest mind; for mind knows these and itself; and these bodies, nothing. All bodies together, and all minds together, and all their productions are not equal to the slightest movement of charity, which is of another and infinitely higher order. From all bodies together, men cannot obtain even one little thought; to do so is impossible, and thought is of another order. From all bodies and minds, one cannot draw a movement of true charity; to do so is impossible because charity belongs to another order, the supernatural."²⁹

Whereas minerals share in existence, plants in vegetable life, animals in sensible knowledge, men and angels share in intellectual life; but the just man, through sanctifying grace, shares in the Deity, in what makes God God, in His very nature or His intimate life. The Deity contains formally and eminently being, life, and intelligence, but whereas these perfections can be shared in naturally, the Deity as such can be shared in only through grace. We do not yet know It as It is in Itself;

²⁸ See *Ia IIae*, q. 113, a. 9 ad 2.

²⁹ *Pensées* (Havet ed.), art. 17, 1.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

in regard to the Deity we are like men who do not know white light, but only the seven colors of the rainbow which proceed from it. In heaven we shall see the Deity as It is in Itself and in It the three divine Persons. Even now They dwell in the just soul as in a temple that is still dark, says St. Paul.³⁰ Our Lord says so: "If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him."³¹ At the same time Jesus promises to send us the Holy Ghost. And from time to time, says St. Paul: "The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God."³² He gives us this testimony by the filial love for Him which He inspires in us.

Such is the nature of the life of grace, the seed of eternal life in us; and thus we see what the last end of spiritual progress is, the inamissible possession of God. Even now we perceive that the contemplation of revealed mysteries, a contemplation proceeding from living faith illuminated by the gifts of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, is in the normal way of sanctity, since these gifts are in all the just and grow simultaneously with charity, which ought always to grow until our death and to last forever.

Spiritual progress is not made especially along the horizontal line of time which advances toward an uncertain future (let us remember what happened to ancient Greece after its decline). Spiritual progress is made along the vertical line which, by true merit, links up the various moments of fleeting time with the single instant of immobile eternity. From this point of view, some past centuries considerably surpass ours: the first century with Jesus and the apostles; then the Golden Age of the teaching of the Fathers (the fourth and fifth centuries); next, the most glorious period of theology in the thirteenth century, in which there was also a Pleiad of saints. Those among us who have been called "the prophets of the past," like Joseph de Maistre, repeat, in order to lift us up, the grandeur of the masters of other times, the elevation of their thought and of their lives.³³ It is true that the world has grown

³⁰ Cf. II Cor. 6:16; I Cor. 3:16.

³¹ John 14:23.

³² Rom. 8:16.

³³ Father Garrigou-Lagrange explains that De Maistre was great in his day. Modern skeptics admit it, saying: "He was a prophet of the past, but we need a better one."

CROSS AND CROWN

old and cannot return to the first or the fifth or the thirteenth century; but if it wishes to reascend toward God, it will find in the spiritual treasures of the past its true future, which is an ascending progress toward eternity.

Before this ravishing spectacle of our "future" to which God gratuitously invites us, the Christian soul should reflect from time to time. What a disaster not to realize these great hopes, not to share in the beatitude of the beautiful heaven which God in His goodness has prepared for those who love Him! The following thought should frighten us: I may fail to reach heaven, and if I do fail, it will not be God's fault but mine, that of my own sins. Meditating in this manner, the soul that reflects will be dazzled by sentiments of humility, of salutary fear, and at the same time of confidence, of love of God and of neighbor, which ought to animate all his life.

We should in any case think of our last end, of the happiness to which God calls us. "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"³⁴

In this article we have dealt particularly with the crown of human life. This crown is not won without suffering, without tremendous efforts. But like the star which glows on the forehead of our holy father, St. Dominic, this crown should be for us the *star of the sea*, leading us through difficulties to the harbor of eternal life with God, our Lord, His Mother, and all the angels and saints. Then for us the important thing is not to have several years still to live, but to have a happy death followed by unending beatitude.

REGINALD GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, O.P.

(Translated by Sister M. Timothea Doyle, O.P.)

³⁴ Matt. 16:26.

Sons Through the Cross

This decree, my brother, is buried from the eyes of everyone whose wit is not matured within love's flame. But since this target much is aimed at, and discerned but little, I will declare why such mode was more worthy.

Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto VII

CHRISTIANITY is the religion of the cross. Its very heart is the mystery of Calvary; all its life-giving activity pulses with the flow of Christ's blood. With unflinching constancy the Church of God administers every sacrament and performs every rite under the sign of Christ's cross, as a continual reminder that all holiness lives through the power of His passion. At the very outset of life, the water of baptism traces the form of a cross on the babe's head to vitalize its soul with the saving grace of Redemption. Again, at life's close, it is the cross of anointing which seals the senses for death. Why the cross? Because Christianity without the cross is a contradiction in terms.

This assertion becomes strikingly clear as one studies the heroes of Christianity, God's saints. The stirring biographies of today strive to individualize these great men and women, breathing into each a vibrant personality. This tendency follows the spirit of our times; for the world is seeking its own exaltation in the emergence of the individual. Therefore the saints, too, have been psychoanalyzed. The method has its merits. But not even our modern emancipation of the individual will ever rob the saints of that common characteristic which is, at the same time, most personal to each: namely, conformity with Christ cru-