ANTONIO ROYO, O.P., AND JORDAN AUMANN, O.P.

THE THEOLOGY
OF CHRISTIAN
PERFECTION

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# Introduction

## Doctrinal Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>The End</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>The Glory of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Sanctification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Sanctifying Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Formal Principle of the Supernatural Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Actual Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>The Indwelling of the Trinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>The Indwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>The Infused Virtues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>The Virtues Themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Division of the Infused Virtues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>The Gifts of the Holy Ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>The Gifts Themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Relations of the Gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Supernatural Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>The Sacraments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Supernatural Merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Growth of the Supernatural Organism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Christian Perfection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>Christian Perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>The Nature of Christian Perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>The Obligation of Christian Perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>Related Questions on Perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>The Mystical State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>The State of the Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>The Essence of Mysticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>Complementary Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>Mysticism and Christian Perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>Mysticism and Perfection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>184</td>
<td>Solution of Objections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III NEGATIVE ASPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

217 1: STAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
218 Spiritual Growth
223 2: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SIN
223 Mortal Sin
228 Venial Sin
233 Imperfections
238 3: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DEVIL
238 Temptation
244 Diabolical Obsession
249 Diabolical Possession
260 4: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE WORLD AND THE FLESH
260 The World as Man’s Enemy
263 The Insatiable Desire for Pleasure
271 The Horror of Suffering
280 5: ACTIVE PURIFICATIONS
282 Preliminary Ideas
283 Purification of the External Senses
294 Purification of the Internal Senses
300 Purification of the Passions
307 Active Purification of the Intellect
317 Purification of the Will
324 6: PASSIVE PURIFICATIONS
328 The Night of the Senses
339 The Night of the Spirit

IV POSITIVE MEANS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

345 1: THE SACRAMENTS
345 The Sacrament of Penance
353 The Eucharist

359 The Sacrifice of the Mass
364 2: THE VIRTUE OF FAITH
364 The Nature of Faith
370 The Gift of Understanding
386 3: THE VIRTUE OF HOPE
386 Hope Itself
392 The Gift of Fear
401 4: THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY
401 Charity in Itself
418 The Gift of Wisdom
428 5: THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE
428 Prudence in Itself
431 The Parts of Prudence
432 The Gift of Counsel
436 6: THE VIRTUE OF JUSTICE AND ITS PARTS
436 Justice in Itself
440 The Virtue of Religion
445 The Virtue of Piety
447 The Gift of Piety
454 The Virtue of Observance
461 Allied Virtues
466 7: THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE
466 Fortitude in Itself
468 The Parts of Fortitude
474 The Gift of Fortitude
482 8: THE VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE
482 Temperance in Itself
484 Integral and Subjective Parts
487 Potential Parts of Temperance
496 The Gift of Fear

V THE LIFE OF PRAYER

499 1: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER
500 Prayer of Petition
505 Difficulties in Prayer
511 2: GRADS OF PRAYER
511 Vocal Prayer
TABLE OF CONTENTS

514  Meditation
521  Affective Prayer
524  Prayer of Simplicity
528  3: CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER
528  Contemplation
538  Infused Recollection
541  The Prayer of Quiet
546  4: THE HIGHEST GRADES OF PRAYER
546  The Prayer of Union
551  The Prayer of Ecstatic Union
556  The Prayer of Transforming Union

VI SECONDARY MEANS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

565  1: INTERNAL MEANS
565  The Presence of God
568  Examination of Conscience
570  The Desire for Perfection
573  Conformity to God’s Will
579  Fidelity to Grace

586  2: EXTERNAL MEANS
586  Plan of Life
589  Spiritual Reading
591  Holy Friendships
593  Spiritual Direction
594  The Director
606  The Soul Directed
610  Special Questions

VII MYSTICAL PHENOMENA

617  1: BASIC NOTIONS
617  The Psychosomatic Structure
626  Discernment of Spirits

636  2: CAUSES OF MYSTICAL PHENOMENA
639  God as the Cause of Mystical Phenomena
645  Purely Natural Causes
651  Diabolical Influence

654  3: EXTRAORDINARY PHENOMENA
655  Cognitive Phenomena
664  Affective Phenomena
665  Bodily Phenomena

675  INDEX
The present volume is offered to the English-reading public as a definitive work on the theology of Christian perfection. It is not merely a translation but the adaptation and revision of an original Spanish work entitled "Teología de la Perfección Cristiana," first published in 1954. Since that time it has gone through four editions and sold many thousands of copies.

The principal author, Father Antonio Royo, O.P., has won wide renown in his native Spain as a preacher. For some ten years he has taught ascetical and mystical theology at St. Stephen's in Salamanca, where he received the doctorate of theology at the Pontifical Faculty. In that time he has emerged as one of the outstanding theologians in Spain. A clear and incisive intellect which can penetrate to the depth of the most difficult theological questions is coupled with a clarity and simplicity of style which makes him easily understood by all. His literary output is impressive. Besides his frequent contributions to theological reviews, the following works have already been published or are in the process of preparation and soon to be released: 'Theology of Salvation, Moral Theology for the Laity, Theology of Charity, and Jesus Christ and the Christian Life.' He is likewise the founder of the Preacher's Institute at the Pontifical Faculty at Salamanca.

At Salamanca, Father Royo soon discovered the pressing need for a manual of spiritual theology which would avoid the two extremes of excessive abstraction and undue emphasis on the experimental and casuistic methods. His first intention to compile a textbook for seminarians was soon discarded in favor of a manual which would be suitable for the educated laity as well as for priests, religious and seminarians. The present volume, then, will serve admirably as a textbook of ascetical-mystical theology in seminaries, where the professor will know how to select the sections of the book which have immediate reference to the specialized study of asceticism and mysticism. But the book as a whole will be of invaluable benefit to all those who need a more detailed explanation of the principles upon which the theology of Christian perfection is based and to those who seek detailed applications of those principles in the preaching of retreats, the guidance of souls, and the direction of their own lives.

Father Jordan Aumann, O.P., has prepared the original Spanish edition for publication in English. He has changed the order of the chapters, summarized and adapted certain sections, and rewritten some of the material in view of the English-reading public.

Like Father Royo, a doctor in theology from the Pontifical Faculty at St. Stephen's in Salamanca, Father Aumann is the founder of the Institute of Spiritual Theology and also the founding editor of the Cross and Crown Series of Spirituality. His many works and translations and his public lectures and extensive retreat work have earned him a justified reputation in America.
One of the first problems which arises in the study of any science is the question of terminology. The study of the theology of Christian perfection is no exception. Although the traditional concept of theology is a remarkably unified one, by the middle of the seventeenth century the study of Christian perfection had not only become a well-defined branch of theology, but it was further divided on the basis of new distinctions introduced at that time. Moreover, from the seventeenth century to the present day the differences between the various schools have become so pronounced that they have led to theological conclusions which are in no sense compatible.

The result has been what one would expect: there is no uniformity of terminology among theologians when they treat of the science of Christian perfection. Even when the same terms are used, they are often understood in different ways by different theologians. Such a situation makes it a prime necessity to define one's terms carefully and to indicate clearly the scope of this branch of theology.

What we designate as "theology of Christian perfection" has been called by various names throughout the history of theology. Some have called it simply spirituality (Poutrot, S.S., Viller, S.J.), others have referred to it as spiritual theology (Heerinckx, O.F.M.), spiritual life (Le Gaudier, S.J., Schrijvers, C.S.S.R.), supernatural life (de Smedt, S.J.), interior life (Meynard, O.P., Mercier, Tissot), or devout life (St. Francis de Sales). But the terms most commonly used throughout the history of spirituality have been ascetical and mystical, although these words do not have the same connotation for all the theologians of Christian perfection.

The word "ascetical" comes from the Greek verb meaning to exercise or train, and it had special reference to athletic training. In his epistles St. Paul makes frequent references to the Christian as an "athlete," one who strives, struggles and trains. In the primitive Church the "ascetics" were those who took public vows, especially of chastity, and led an austere life. Origen and St. Athanasius make reference to such persons.

But the word itself came into common Latin usage only in a later period. The first to use the term seems to have been a Polish Franciscan named Dobro-
INTRODUCTION

sielski, who wrote in 1655. After the middle of the seventeenth century the word was used by Scaramelli in contradistinction to mystical. Giovanni Battista Scaramelli, S.J. (1687-1752), wrote his Direttorio ascetico and his Direttorio mistico in an attempt to show that the ascetical life is not essentially ordained to the mystical life and that acquired forms of prayer do not necessarily dispose the soul for infused contemplation.

The word “mystical” means hidden and was commonly used among the ancient Greeks to designate religious truths which were as yet unknown to the uninitiated. The word mysterium is found in the Septuagint version of the Book of Daniel and also in the Deuterocanonical books. In the New Testament it is found especially in St. Paul, who uses it in three different senses: 1) as a secret of God pertaining to the salvation of man; 2) as the hidden or symbolic sense of a narration or description; 3) as anything whose activity is hidden or unknown.

Yet the adjectival form “mystical” is not found in the New Testament nor in the apostolic Fathers. It was introduced in the third century, and with the passage of time it assumed three different meanings: 1) a liturgical sense, to signify something that pertains to religious cult; 2) an exegetical sense, to signify a typical or allegorical interpretation, distinct from the literal interpretation; 3) a theological sense, of which we shall now speak.

The expression “mystical theology” appears in the fourth century in the writings of Marcellus Ancyranus and again in the fifth century in the writings of Marcus Erimita. It was to appear later in the famous De mystica theologia by the pseudo-Dionysius. As used by the last-mentioned author, the phrase was meant to designate an immediate and experimental knowledge of God, superior to that knowledge acquired through reason or from ordinary faith.

Still later, and until the middle of the seventeenth century, the distinction was made between practical mystical theology and speculative mystical theology. The first was the result of infused contemplation, and the second was the result of scientific study. Thus Gerson wrote the treatise: Theologia mystica speculativa and Theologia mystica practica (1706). The term “speculative mystical theology” was then extended to embrace the entire science of the spiritual life, from the first infusion of grace to its full flowering in the mystical life. This is represented in such authors as Henry Hébr, O.F.M., Philip of the Holy Trinity, O.C.D., Anthony of the Holy Ghost, O.C.D., and Thomas A. Vallerana, O.P. But when the term “ascetical theology” was introduced in the seventeenth century, mystical theology was again restricted to the study of infused contemplation and the extraordinary graces of the spiritual life.

Modern uses

In view of the historical development of this terminology, it is not surprising that there is no unanimity among modern theologians in the use of the words ascetical and mystical. That very fact, however, makes it important for students of the theology of the spiritual life to understand the terminology of an author before accepting or rejecting his doctrine. Modern authors will generally fall into one of the following classifications in their use of the words ascetical and mystical:

1) The terms are used interchangeably to designate the entire field of the theology of the spiritual life (Aureliano a Ss. Sacramento, O.C.D.; Murawski; Rouet de Journel, S.J.; Louismet, O.S.B.).

2) Ascetical theology should treat of the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways so far as man progresses in them with the assistance of ordinary grace; mystical theology pertains to the extraordinary gifts and states which constitute infused contemplation or those gratiae gratias datae which sometimes accompany infused contemplation (Poulain, S.J.; Denderwindeke, O.F.M.Cap.; Farges; Naval, C.F.M.; Richstatter, S.J.; Pourrat, S.S.; Zimmerman, S.J.; von Hertling, S.J.).

3) Ascetical theology pertains to the theory and practice of Christian spirituality as far as the threshold of infused contemplation; mystical theology pertains to the practice of the spiritual life from the night of the senses to mystical marriage (Tanqueray, S.S.).

4) The purgative and illuminative ways pertain to ascetical theology; the unitive way belongs to mystical theology (Saudreau; Zahn; Krebs).

5) The distinction between the ascetical and the mystical ways is based on the predominance of the virtues (ascetical) and the predominance of the operations of the gifts of the Holy Ghost (mystical). The gifts, working modo divino, predominate in the mystical life; the virtues, working modo humano, predominate in the ascetical life (Ariniero, O.P.; Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.; Joret, O.P.; Schrijvers, C.SS.R.; Masson, O.P.; Menéndez-Reigada, O.P.; Osende, O.P.).

6) Although fundamentally in agreement with the previous authors, others base the distinction upon the activity or passivity of the soul so far as it operates by its own efforts under the virtues (active and ascetical) or under the influence of the Holy Ghost working in the soul (passive and mystical) (Cayré, A.A.; Mutz; Valensin).

THE THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Since there is as yet no generally accepted term to designate the science of Christian spirituality, we prefer to call it simply the theology of Christian perfection. This title has the advantage of expressing three basic points which are not clearly expressed in any of the other titles: 1) that this is a true...
theological science and a branch of the one theology; 2) that its proper object and purpose is to expound the theological doctrine of Christian perfection in all its amplitude and extension; 3) that there is no previous persuasion or assumption concerning such disputed questions as the necessity of infused contemplation for perfection, the dichotomy between asceticism and mysticism, the unity or duality of ways to perfection, etc.

Since theology is essentially one by reason of the identity of its formal object in all its branches, it necessarily follows that all the parts of theology are intimately interrelated. Therefore, it should not seem strange that the theology of Christian perfection derives from dogmatic theology those grand principles of the intimate life of God which are shared by man through grace and the beatific vision: the doctrine of the indwelling of the Trinity in the souls of the just; reparation by Christ, the Redeemer of the human race; the grace of headship in Christ; the sanctifying efficacy of the sacraments; and other principles which are the foundation of Catholic dogma. Cardinal Manning spoke truly when he said that dogma is the source of true Christian spirituality.

But even more intimate is the relation between moral theology and the theology of Christian perfection. As one of the great modern theologians has said, it is evident that moral theology and ascetical-mystical theology have the very same formal object quod. The reason for this is that the moral act by essence, which is the act of charity toward God, is also the primary object of ascetical-mystical theology. Hence between “moral theology” and “the theology of Christian perfection” there is only a modal or accidental difference, since moral theology considers the act of charity in all its aspects, as incipient, proficient and perfect. Thus “casuistic” moral theology is concerned primarily with incipient charity and the laws of the lawful and unlawful, or of that which is compatible or incompatible with this initial charity; “ascetical” moral theology insists principally on proficient charity, accompanied by the exercise of the other infused virtues; and “mystical” moral theology treats primarily of perfect charity under the predominating influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, there is no exclusive division between any of these parts of theology; it is merely a question of the predominance of certain activities which are common to all these parts.

“Therefore, they are in error who wish to establish an essential difference between moral theology and ascetical-mystical theology by reason of the primary object, just as they would be in error who would attempt to make a specific distinction in the psychology of the infancy, adolescence and maturity of the same man.”

“Pastoral theology” is that part of theology which teaches the ministers of the Church, according to revealed principles, the manner in which they are to care for the souls committed to them by God. It is an eminently practical science and is closely related to the theology of Christian perfection, since one of the principal duties of the pastor of souls is to lead them to perfection. It differs from the theology of Christian perfection inasmuch as the perfecting of souls constitutes one of the partial objects of pastoral theology, while it is the proper and exclusive object of the theology of Christian perfection.

At first glance, and interpreting the title of this branch of theology in a strict sense, it would seem that it should be limited to a study of the questions that pertain to Christian perfection itself or the things that immediately lead to it. But it would be an error to limit the field of spiritual theology to this extent. Since it is closely related to dogmatic and moral theology, it necessarily embraces a much wider field. In order to justify this amplitude of subject matter, we need only turn to the authority of the eminent theologian, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.,

Theology is the science of God. We distinguish between natural theology or theory, which knows God by the sole light of reason, and supernatural theology, which proceeds from divine revelation, examines its contents, and deduces the consequences of the truths of faith.

Supernatural theology is usually divided into two parts, dogmatic and moral. Dogmatic theology has to do with revealed mysteries, principally the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments, and the future life. Moral theology treats of human acts, of revealed precepts and counsels, of grace, of the Christian virtues, both theological and moral, and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are principles of action ordained to the supernatural end made known by revelation.

Modern theologians have often exaggerated the distinction between moral and dogmatic theology, giving to the latter the greater treatises on grace and on the infused virtues and gifts, and reducing the former to casuistry, which is the least lofty of its applications. Moral theology has thus become, in several theological works, the science of sins to be avoided rather than the science of virtues to be practiced and to be developed under the constant action of God in us. In this way it has lost some of its pre-eminence and is manifestly insufficient for the direction of souls aspiring to intimate union with God.

On the contrary, moral theology as expounded in the second part of the Summa theologiae of St. Thomas keeps all its grandeur and its efficacy for the direction of souls called to the highest perfection. St. Thomas does not, in fact, consider dogmatic and moral theology as two distinct sciences; sacred doctrine, in his opinion, is absolutely one and is of such high perfection that it contains the perfections of both dogmatic and moral theology. In other words, it is eminently speculative and practical, as the science of God from which it springs. That is why he treats in detail in the moral part of his Summa not

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2 Cf. Ramírez, loc. cit.
only human acts, precepts and counsels, but also habitual and actual grace, the infused virtues in general and in particular, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, their fruits, the beatitudes, the active and contemplative life, the degrees of contemplation, graces gratuitously bestowed, such as the gift of miracles, the gift of tongues, prophecy and rapture, and likewise the religious life and its various forms.

Moral theology thus understood evidently contains the principles necessary for leading souls to the highest sanctity. Ascetical and mystical theology is nothing but the application of this broad moral theology to the direction of souls toward ever closer union with God. It presupposes what sacred doctrine teaches about the nature and the properties of the Christian virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and it studies the laws and conditions of their progress from the point of view of perfection.

To teach the practice of the highest virtues and perfect docility to the Holy Ghost and to lead to the life of union with God, ascetical and mystical theology assembles all the lights of dogmatic and moral theology, of which it is the most elevated application and the crown.

The cycle formed by the different parts of theology, with its evident unity, is thus completed. Sacred science proceeds from revelation contained in Scripture and tradition, preserved and explained by the teaching authority of the Church. It arranges in order all revealed truths and their consequences in a single doctrinal body, in which the precepts and counsels are set forth as founded on the supernatural mystery of the divine life, of which grace is a participation. Lastly, it shows how, by the practice of the virtues and by docility to the Holy Ghost, the soul not only arrives at belief in the revealed mysteries but also at the enjoyment of them and at a grasp of the profound meaning of the word of God, source and end of all supernatural knowledge. At a life of continual union with the Blessed Trinity who dwells in us, Doctrinal mysticism thus appears as the final crown of all acquired theological knowledge, and it can direct souls in the ways of experimental mysticism. This latter is an entirely supernatural and infused loving knowledge, full of sweetness, which only the Holy Ghost by his action can give us and which is, as it were, the prelude of the beatific vision. Such is manifestly the conception of ascetical and mystical theology which has been formulated by the great masters of sacred science, especially by St. Thomas Aquinas.

This being so, there can be no doubt that the theology of Christian perfection coincides in a certain manner with the field of the one theology. In its experimental and descriptive aspect it should take as its soul what is found at the beginning—even if it be in the state of mortal sin—and teach it the way to be followed, step by step, to the heights of Christian perfection. This is the way in which St. Teresa of Avila understood the spiritual life. At the beginning of her Interior Castle she speaks of “paralyzed souls who live in great danger” and the ugliness of a soul in mortal sin, and then discusses the seven mansions which lead to the transforming union.

We do not mean by this that the theology of Christian perfection should begin with a discussion of the conversion of the sinner who is far removed from any practice of religion or who lives as an unbeliever or pagan. We believe, with Joseph de Guibert, S.J.,⁶ that the study of the conversion of the sinner belongs to religious psychology (if one treats of its modes, effects and motives), to pastoral theology (if one treats of the means to attain the conversion of the sinner), and to missiology (if it is a question of the conversion of the infidels and pagans). But bearing in mind the possibility of sin, even mortal sin, in a pious soul which sincerely aspires to perfection, we believe that a complete treatise of the spiritual life should embrace the entire panorama of this life, from its beginning (the justification of the sinner) to its ultimate crowning in the high grades of union with God.

We can now attempt a definition of the theology of Christian perfection. Let us first see some of the definitions that have already been proposed by various authors.

According to Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., ascetical-mystical theology is nothing other than the application of moral theology to the direction of souls toward ever more intimate union with God. It presupposes whatever sacred doctrine teaches concerning the nature and properties of the Christian virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and it studies the laws and conditions of the soul’s progress in virtue of perfection.⁷ This part of theology, says the same author, is a development of the treatise on the love of God and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and has for its end the explanation of the applications which derive from them and lead souls to divine union.⁸

According to de Guibert, S.J., spiritual theology may be defined as the science which deduces from revealed principles what the perfection of the spiritual life consists in and the manner in which man as viator can tend to it and attain it.⁹ A. Tanqueray, S.S., states that this science has as its proper end and the leading of souls to Christian perfection. Differentiating between ascetical and mystical theology, he holds that the former is that part of the spiritual science which has as its proper object the theory and practice of Christian perfection from its beginnings to the thread of infused contemplation, and the latter has for its object the theory and practice of the contemplative life from the first night of the senses and quietude to the mystical marriage.¹⁰ For J. Schrijvers, C.S.S.R., the science of the spiritual life has for its object

⁷Cf. op. cit., Chap. 1, a. 1.
⁹Cf. op. cit., n. 9.
¹⁰The Spiritual Life (Westminster: 1948), n. 3, 10, 11.
the orientation of all the activity of the Christian to supernatural perfection.\textsuperscript{11} P. Naval, C.F.M., defines mysticism in general as the science which has for its object Christian perfection and the direction of souls toward that perfection.\textsuperscript{12}

All the definitions given are substantially in agreement and differ only in minor details. By taking what is common and best from all of them and adding the experimental aspect of the mystical state, we can formulate the following definition: Theology of Christian perfection is that part of sacred theology which, based on the principles of divine revelation and the experience of the saints, studies the organization of the supernatural life, explains the laws of its progress and development, and describes the process which souls are wont to follow from the beginning of the Christian life to the heights of perfection.

We say that the theology of Christian perfection is a part of sacred theology in the sense that it is based on the principles of divine revelation, for it would not be theology at all if such were not the case. Theology is nothing more than the deduction of virtually revealed truths from revealed data by means of reason enlightened by faith. As one modern theologian has stated it, theology is the explicatio fidei, or the development of the data of faith.\textsuperscript{13}

Theology of the spiritual life also makes use of the experience of the saints, thus manifesting that there are two distinct but harmonious aspects of this branch of theology, one subordinate to the other. The basic element is revealed data and the virtualities contained in that revelation. This is what makes it true theology. But it is not licit to prescind entirely from the experimental element of which the mystics give testimony, for then one runs the risk of formulating an a priori system which turns its back on reality. This experimental aspect is entirely subordinate to the theological, to the extent that the theologian will reject an experimental datum which is not in accord with the certain data of theology.\textsuperscript{14} Nevertheless, it is beyond any doubt that this experimental aspect is of great importance and is indispensable for a complete picture of the supernatural life, its laws and vicissitudes, could not be explained sufficiently by the theologian who lacks the testimony of those souls who have lived this life in its fulness. We believe, therefore, that any definition of the theology of the Christian life would be incomplete if it did not incorporate this experimental element which constitutes to a great extent the material for the investigation of the theologian.

We further state that this branch of theology studies the organism of the supernatural life, and this is the first thing that the theologian should do before he passes on to study the growth and development of that life. In this section the theologian should restrict himself almost exclusively to the data of revelation, because it is only on this firm basis that he can establish the solid principles of the Christian life, which do not depend on the variety of experiences of individual souls or the opinions of particular schools of theology.

Spiritual theology then studies the laws of the growth and development of the supernatural life. Once the characteristics of the supernatural organism have been explained, it is necessary to investigate the progressive growth of that life until the soul reaches the summit of perfection. The theological element, based on revealed truths, still conserves its importance here and is again used almost exclusively, rather than the appeal to experimental data.

Then this theology describes the process which souls will follow from the beginning to the end of Christian perfection. Theology is both a speculative and a practical science, although as a unity it is more speculative than practical.\textsuperscript{15} But the theology of Christian perfection has many aspects which bear directly and immediately on the practical. It does not suffice to know the principles of the supernatural life and the theoretical laws of its growth and development; it is necessary also to examine in what manner this evolution and growth is developed in practice and the paths by which souls actually travel in their journey to perfection. And while it is true that God acts in a variety of ways upon souls and that in this sense each soul may be said to follow a path that is proper to itself, there can be found in the midst of this variety certain common characteristics which enable the theologian to point out the basic steps along which the soul is wont to journey toward perfection.

For this part of the theology of Christian perfection, the descriptive and experimental data are absolutely indispensable. The theologian should study them attentively and contrast them with theological principles in order to formulate the theoretico-practical laws which the spiritual director can apply to each soul according to the dictates of prudence. And this applies not only to certain stages in the struggle for perfection but to the entire journey, although the theology of Christian perfection aims especially at the great heights of perfection which souls ought to attain. So important is this aspect that, since res denominatur a potentia, our science derives its title from the ultimate goal, which is Christian perfection.

Having seen the definition of the theology of Christian perfection, it should be immediately evident that this study is of extraordinary importance. Nothing is so important or excellent for man as that which will teach him the path and the means to intimate union with God, his first beginning and last end. It is true that only one thing is necessary, namely, the salvation of one's soul, but only in heaven will we be able to appreciate the great difference between

\textsuperscript{11}Principles of the Spiritual Life, a. 1.
\textsuperscript{14}We underline the word "certain" in order to forestall any rash and hasty interpretation on the part of speculative theologians.
\textsuperscript{15}Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 1, a. 4.
salvation attained in its lowest grade and the highest and fullest measure which is the salvation of the saints. These latter will enjoy a much higher degree of glory and will glorify God in a much higher measure for all eternity. Hence there can be no object more noble or more deserving of study than that which constitutes the essence of the theology of Christian perfection.

The necessity of this study is manifest, especially for the priest as director and guide of souls. Without a profound knowledge of the speculative laws of the Christian life and of the practical norms of spiritual direction, he will travel blindly in the sublime mission of leading souls to the summit of perfection. Thereby he will contract a grave responsibility before God if he should frustrate the possible making of a saint. For that reason the Church has legislated for the establishment of chairs of ascetico-mystical theology in all the higher institutions of learning for the diocesan and regular clergy. 18

But even for the faithful the study of this branch of theology is most useful. Observe the importance which the Church has always placed on spiritual reading. Few things so stimulate and arouse the desire for perfection as contact with those books which can open new horizons and explain methodically and clearly the road to intimate union with God. The knowledge of these ways facilitates and complements spiritual direction and can assist in supplying for it in those cases, not infrequent, when souls lack a director. Bearing in mind the needs of such souls, we shall in the course of this book frequently descend to practical counsels and details which would not be necessary in a book directed exclusively to priests and spiritual directors.

In approaching the study of spiritual theology one should above all possess a great spirit of faith and piety. The relationship between theory and practice is so intimate in the study of these matters that he who does not possess a vital faith and intense piety will not be able to judge correctly concerning the speculative principles of this science. Speaking of theology in general, St. Thomas says: "In the other sciences it is sufficient that a man be perfect intellectually, but in this science it is necessary that he also be perfect affectively, for we are to speak of great mysteries and explain wisdom to the perfect. But each one is wont to judge things according to his dispositions; thus he who is dominated by anger judges in a very different manner during his seizure of anger than when he is calm. Therefore, the Philosopher says that each one seeks his own end in those things to which he is particularly inclined."

It is also necessary to take into account the intimate relations of this part of theology with dogmatic, moral and pastoral theology. There are certain fundamental points of doctrine which we shall simply recall but whose perfect knowledge demands a deep study of those branches of theology where they are treated in their proper place. In no other science as in theology does that famous axiom of Hippocrates have such significance: "The doctor who knows nothing more than medicine does not even know medicine." One must know well all theology and the auxiliary sciences in order to direct souls, and among these auxiliary sciences rational and empirical psychology and the somatic and psychic pathology of the nervous system and mental illness hold a prominent place.

Since the theology of Christian perfection is a part of the one theology and is intimately related to dogmatic and moral theology (from which it derives its fundamental principles) and since it contains much that is practical and experimental (for it outlines for us the concrete norms for leading souls to the height of perfection), the method to be employed in its study must be at once strictly theological—positive and deductive—and experimental and inductive, substantiated by experience and the observation of facts. The exclusive use of one of the two methods leads to grave inconveniences.

The descriptive and inductive method, if used exclusively, leads to the following defects: 1) It ignores the fact that spiritual theology is a branch of the one science of theology and converts it into a part of experimental psychology. 2) It cannot constitute a true science, for although it does offer certain material on which a science could be constructed, as long as it does not investigate the causes of the phenomena studied and the laws which govern such phenomena there can be no science properly speaking. To assign causes and laws it is indispensable to resort to the principles from which the deductive method takes its start. Without this, the director would have to move in the narrow and confusing field of casuistry and be liable to many perplexities and errors. 3) There is a great risk of placing too much importance on phenomena which, however spectacular, are secondary and incidental in the Christian life. This would be prejudicial to that which is basic and fundamental, such as sanctifying grace, the virtues and gifts. In fact, one of the staunchest defenders of the descriptive and inductive method, while admitting theoretically the truth of the doctrine on the gifts of the Holy Ghost, has gone so far as to say that this doctrine is "little less than sterile for spiritual directors." On the other hand, many modern theologians maintain that only the doctrine on the gifts of the Holy Ghost can solve the principal problem of spiritual theology, namely, of determining what pertains to the order of sanctifying grace and enters into its normal development, and what pertains to the gratiae gratis datae, which are properly extraordinary and beyond the ordinary exigencies of grace. 19

The exclusive use of the analytic or deductive method offers the following difficulties: 1) It tends to overlook the fact that the great principles of the theology of Christian perfection should be orientated to the direction of souls and should therefore be contrasted or correlated with the facts of experience. It would be a grievous mistake to be content with the theological principles of St. Thomas without paying any attention to the admirable descriptions of mystical experience given by such eminent authorities as St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Siena and others. 2) There is the danger of admitting as incontestable, truths taken a priori which do not actually agree with experience and are not confirmed by facts, thus establishing a lamentable dichotomy between theory and practice, which would have dire results in the direction of souls.

It is therefore necessary to make use of both the inductive and deductive method, or the analytic-synthetic method, which is both rational and experimental. One must study above all the revealed doctrine as found in Scripture, tradition and the magisterium of the Church. Then one must determine, by a deductive method, the nature of the Christian life, its supernatural organism, its growth, the laws which govern it, the essence of Christian perfection, what pertains to the normal development of sanctifying grace by an intrinsic necessity and what is extraordinary, etc. At the same time, it is necessary to observe the facts of experience, collect the data from mystics themselves who have lived these truths, examine the tests, trials, struggles, difficulties, methods used for attaining sanctity, results obtained, etc. With all this in mind, one will be careful to distinguish the essential from the accidental, the ordinary from the extraordinary, that which is absolutely indispensable for the sanctification of a soul and that which is variable and adaptable to different temperaments, circumstances, states of life, etc. Only in this way can one give norms and rules of direction which are precise and exact, not following certain a priori principles or certain variable casuistic norms, but concluding from solid theological principles and the actual experience of mystics and the direction of souls. Such is, in our opinion, the only legitimate method to be employed in the study of this branch of theology, and to this end we shall endeavor to develop this book.

**SOURCES OF THIS SCIENCE**

Having shown the method to be followed, we are led logically to discuss the various sources for the study of the theology of Christian perfection. They can be reduced to two general classes: theological and experimental.
This is another important source of information for the theology of Christian perfection. Although Christian spirituality, like the grace on which it is founded, is basically the same in all ages and countries, it is helpful to see the application of the principles of spirituality throughout the centuries and to study the tendencies and schools of spirituality in order to avoid errors and illusions and to stress those means which experience has demonstrated to be more efficacious for the sanctification of souls. It also enables the theologian to discover the common basis of spirituality in all the various schools and to distinguish what is nothing more than the particular tendency of a given school. History is the teacher of life, and perhaps in no other branch of history can we be better instructed.

This source is subsidiary and of much less importance than the others, since the principles of Christianity differ radically from all other religions. Nevertheless, it is helpful to contrast the phenomena of the Christian religion with those of pagan religions which answer a basic need in man’s psychological structure. Thus one can study with interest and profit the states of consolation and desolation, the ascetical and purgative practices, etc.22

These sources comprise, not only those which come from one’s own experience and the experience of others, but the material offered by the physio-psychological sciences, which is necessary for the correct evaluation and interpretation of many of the phenomena which occur in the spiritual life, especially in the mystical state.

The first teaches us the functioning of the internal and external faculties, the formulation of ideas, the laws of the affective and emotional life, the nature of the human soul as a substantial form of the body, the relationship between body and soul, etc. Experimental psychology complements the principles of rational psychology by means of the data of experience and experiment and an analysis of the phenomena of normal and abnormal or pathological subjects. The study of morbid states, whether physical or psychic, is of capital importance for distinguishing between the supernatural, the preternatural or diabolical, and the natural and pathological. It is evident today that many of the phenomena which were formerly attributed too readily to supernatural or diabolical influence must now be attributed to pathological states. Hence this source is of great importance for determining the causes of visions, locations, airdity, consolations, etc.

No other source of information can replace entirely one’s own experience if he is to judge correctly the ways of God. This is evident from the unsuccessful attempts of many rationalists to judge the cases of mystics and saints. Not 22 Cf. J. Maréchal, S.J., “Essai sur l’étude comparées des mysticismes,” in Revue des Quest. Scientifiques, 1926, and Etudes sur la psychologie des mystiques (Paris: 1937), Vol. II, pp. 411-83.
being Christians themselves, they lack the light of faith and therefore find it impossible to comprehend the supernatural, which is the foundation of the Christian life. Nor does it suffice to possess grace in its lowest or minimum degree if one wishes to judge the mysteries and the ways of union with God. Certain things can be understood only by those who have a spiritual affinity for those things. Hence the principle repeated so often by St. Thomas Aquinas: “Each one is wont to judge according to his own dispositions.” In the same sense Bányai wrote: “In identical circumstances he will be more learned in theology who possesses charity than he who does not possess it, because without charity one does not possess the gifts of the Holy Ghost united to faith, which illumines the mind and gives understanding to the little ones.”

Experience with souls

To one’s experience we must add the association with, and direction of souls. He who wishes to know the ways of God cannot be content with a theoretical study of the mystical life nor even with his own personal experience, though he be a saint of the first rank. Not all souls ascend to the height of perfection by the same path or with the same ascetic-mystical practices. It is not enough, therefore, to know one particular path; one must be conversant with the greatest possible number. And although this knowledge will necessarily be incomplete—for it is not possible to know the ways of all the souls that attain perfection—nevertheless, by a constant observation of the various ways by which God leads souls, the theologian will learn two important facts: 1) not to hold for particular ways or method as the only proven or possible ways of perfect union with God, and 2) to respect the initiative and movement of God, who leads each soul by a special way to the summit of perfection.

DIVISION

There is no more uniformity in the division of the theology of Christian perfection than there is in its terminology. But the confusion is understandable when one considers that the subject matter is so ineffable and there are so many questions that overlap. It is generally more difficult to establish the proper order of a practico-speculative science.

While we readily admit that the ascetical and the mystical phases are two distinct aspects of the spiritual life, as are the active and the passive phases, we deplore the division of spiritual theology into these two parts. In practice the life of the Christian striving for perfection usually oscillates between the ascetical and active phase and the mystical and passive phase; therefore, it seems to be more in keeping with the facts of reality not to make a division of the theology of Christian perfection along these lines.

Moreover, there is the danger of falling into the error of postulating two different perfections: the one ascetical and the other mystical. Therefore, in the desire to preserve and safeguard the unity of theology as well as the unity of the way to Christian perfection, we choose rather to present first the doctrinal principles upon which the theology of Christian perfection rests (Part I), then to consider Christian perfection itself (Part II), the negative aspect of growth in Christian perfection (the struggle against sin, the world, the flesh and the devil; Part III), the principal positive means of supernatural growth (Part IV), including the life of prayer (Part V), and certain secondary means, both internal and external (Part VI); we shall conclude our work with a discussion of mystical phenomena (Part VII).

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23Cf. In Epist. ad Heb., cap. 5, lect. 2.
24In lam, lect. 4, ad 2am confirmationem, arg. 2.
DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES
1: THE END OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The consideration of purpose is the first thing required in the study of any dynamic work. And since the Christian life is essentially dynamic and perfectible—at least during our present state of wayfarers upon earth—it is necessary that we should know where we are going and what is the end we hope to attain. For that reason St. Thomas begins the moral part of his *Summa theologiae*—man’s return to God—with a consideration of the ultimate end.

Two ends can be proposed for the Christian life or, if one prefers, one end with two distinct modalities: the absolute or ultimate end and the relative or proximate end. We shall examine each separately.

THE GLORY OF GOD

The classical definition of glory is *clara notitia cum laude*. This definition expresses something extrinsic to the one who is the subject affected by glory; yet in a less strict sense we can distinguish a double glory in God: the intrinsic glory which springs from his intimate divine life, and the extrinsic glory which proceeds from creatures.

The intrinsic glory of God is that which he procures for himself in the bosom of the Trinity. The Father, by way of an intellectual generation, conceives a most perfect idea of himself: his divine Son or his Word, in whom is reflected his life, his beauty, his immensity, his eternity and all his infinite perfections. As a result of their mutual contemplation, there is established between these two divine Persons—by way of procession—a current of indescribable love, an impetuous torrent of fire, which is the Holy Ghost. This knowledge and love of himself, this eternal and incessant praise which God showers upon himself in the incomprehensible mystery of his interior life, constitutes his intrinsic glory, which is rigorously infinite and exhaustive and to which no created being nor the entire universe can contribute absolutely anything. It is
the mystery of the inner life of God in which he finds an intrinsic glory that is absolutely infinite.

God is infinitely happy in himself and has no need whatever of creatures. But God is love, and love is communicative. God is the infinite good, and goodness tends to diffuse itself. As the philosophers say: Bonum est diffusivum sui. Here is the reason for creation. God desired to communicate his infinite perfections to creatures, thereby intending his own extrinsic glory. The glorification of God by creatures is therefore the ultimate reason and supreme finality of creation.2

The explanation of this could not be more clear, even to the light of reason deprived of the light of faith. It is a philosophical fact that every agent acts for an end, especially an intellectual agent. Therefore, God, the first and most intelligent of all agents, must always act for some end. But the attributes of God and all his operations are not distinct from his divine essence, they are identified with it. Therefore, if God had intended in the creation of the universe some end distinct from himself, he would have had to refer and subordinate his creative action to that end—for every agent puts its operation at the service of the end which is intended—and hence God himself would have subordinated himself to that end, since his operation is himself. Consequently, that end would have been above God; that is, God would not be God.

It is therefore absolutely impossible that God intended by his operations any end distinct from himself. God has created all things for his own glory; and creatures cannot exist but in him and for him.8

1 Cf. Jn. 4:16.

2 St. Thomas beautifully expresses how God, by his intrinsic and extrinsic glory, unites in himself the most perfect plenitude of all possible happiness: “Whatever is desirable in whatsoever beatitude, whether true or false, pre-exists wholly and in a more eminent degree in the divine beatitude. As to contemplative happiness, God possesses a continual and most certain contemplation of himself and of all things and as to that which is active, he has the governance of the whole universe. As to earthly happiness, which consists in delight, riches, power, dignity and fame . . . he possesses joy in himself and all things else for his delight; instead of riches, he has that complete self-sufficiency which is promised by riches; in place of power, he has omnipotence; for dignities, the government of all things; and in place of fame, he possesses the admiration of all creatures” (Summa, I, q. 26, a. 4).

3 Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 44, a. 4. In order to understand the finality of creation, it should be noted that God works for an end not only ex parte operis but also ex parte operantis; not, however, as creatures do, for the desire of some end or goal which they do not yet possess, but simply for the love of the end which he already possesses actually in himself, which is nothing other than his goodness identified with his own essence. For that reason, St. Thomas says (De potentia, q. 3, a. 15, ad 14) that the communication of goodness is not the ultimate end, but the divine goodness itself, for love of which God desires to communicate it; for God does not work for his goodness as desirous of that which he does not possess.

Thus the glory of God is the end and purpose of all creation. Even the incarnation of the Word and the redemption of the human race have no other finality than the glory of God: “And when all things are made subject to him, then the Son himself will also be subject to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). For that reason, St. Paul exhorts us not to take a single step which will not lead to the glory of God: “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). For we have been predestined in Christ in order to become a perpetual praise of glory for the Blessed Trinity: “As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in his sight. He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons, according to the purpose of his will, unto the praise of the glory of his grace, with which he has favored us in his beloved Son . . . for the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:4-6, 14). Everything must be subordinated to this finality. Even the soul’s salvation and sanctification must be sought for the greater glory of God. Our own sanctification and salvation cannot become our absolute ultimate end; even they must be

but as desirable of communicating that which he already possesses. He does not operate for the desire of the end, but for love of the end. “The entire universe with all its parts” says St. Thomas, “is ordained to God as to its ultimate end, in the sense that in all its parts it reflects the divine goodness by a certain limitation and for the glory of God” (Summa, I, q. 65, a. 2). Cf. also Ramirez, op. cit., I, nn. 932-38.

4 Cf. Summa, I, q. 44, a. 4; q. 19, a. 2, ad 3.
sought only because our happiness consists in the eternal praise of glory of the Blessed Trinity.⁸

Such is the ultimate and absolute end of the entire Christian life. In practice, the soul that aspires to sanctify itself must place as the goal of all its striving the glory of God. Nothing whatever should be preferred to this, not even the desire of one’s own salvation or sanctification, which must be considered in a secondary place as the most efficacious means of giving glory to God. One must seek to resemble St. Alphonsus Liguori in this, of whom it was said that he had in his head nothing else but the glory of God, and one must take as a theme or motto the standard of the Society of Jesus as enunciated by St. Ignatius Loyola: “Ad majorem gloriæ Dei.” All the saints adopted this attitude, following the teaching of St. Paul, who gave this axiom to the Corinthians: “Do all for the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31).

Hence the sanctification of one’s own soul is not the ultimate end of the Christian life. Beyond this is the glory of the Blessed Trinity, which is the absolute end of all that exists. And although this truth is so fundamental for those who comprehend the divine transcendence, it nevertheless does not appear to dominate the lives of the saints until rather late, when the soul is transformed through love in the unity of God, when in the transforming union the soul is fully identified with God. Only Christ and Mary, from the first moment of their existence, realized this glorification of God which is the terminus of all sanctity on this earth. Nothing should so preoccupy the soul which aspires to sanctity as the constant forgetfulness of self and the intention to do all for the greater glory of God. At the summit of the mount of perfection, St. John of the Cross has printed the words: “Here on this mount dwell only the honor and glory of God.”

⁸For a more ample explanation of this doctrine, see M. M. Philippon, O.P., The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity (Westminster, Md.: 1955).

Therefore, are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48); “called to be saints” (Rom. 1:7; 8:28; I Cor. 1:2); “for this is the will of God, your sanctification” (I Thes. 4:3).

But when we speak of man’s sanctification or perfection, we must necessarily make a distinction, because of the double state or condition of man. Since man’s sanctification and perfection are a participation in the divine sanctity and perfection, they will be measured by the degree of man’s union with God. But man’s union with God will be realized perfectly only in glory when, through the beatific vision, he possesses and enjoys forever the goodness, truth and beauty of the triune God. As a wayfarer here on earth, because of the soul’s obdial potency to an ever increasing influx of grace and charity, a man can grow in perfection indefinitely. Death alone will put a definitive limit to any further growth in grace and charity.

Man’s ultimate beatitude, says St. Thomas, is his supreme perfection.⁷ But when we apply the term “perfection” to a soul in glory and to a wayfarer, the term is an analogous one; and therefore the analogates are essentially diverse. Nevertheless, if we know what constitutes man’s union with God in glory, we can deduce what constitutes that union with God in the state that precedes glory, for the selfsame entity whereby man merits glory is the principle of his spiritual life here on earth.

The Angelic Doctor tells us that beatitude or perfection in glory requires two conditions: the total perfection of the one who is beatified and a knowledge of the good possessed.⁸ These conditions are actually verified in the happiness of the blessed because, as Pope Benedict XII declares: “The souls of the just see the divine essence by an intuitive, face-to-face vision, with no creature as a medium of vision, but with the divine essence immediately manifesting itself to them, clearly and openly.”⁹ And the Council of Florence stated: “Souls immediately upon entrance into heaven see clearly the one and triune God as he is, one more perfectly than another, depending on their merits.”¹⁰

But since the divine essence takes the place of the intelligible species for the intellect of the blessed, the intellect needs something over and above its own natural powers in order to enjoy the beatific vision. This is actually the light of glory (lumen gloriae), the need for which is upheld by the Council of Vienne, which condemned the opposite opinion.¹¹ The nature of the lumen gloriae is not defined, but according to Thomistic teaching it is a created quality divinely infused into the intellect whereby it is intrinsically created quality divinely infused into the intellect whereby it is intrinsically

⁷Cf. Summa, II-II, q. 3, a. 2 and ad 4.
⁸Cf. ibid., I, q. 26, a. 1.
⁹Constitution Benedictus Deus; Denz. 530.
¹⁰Decree for the Greeks; Denz. 693.
¹¹Cf. Denz. 475.
perfected and elevated. As infused charity vitalizes and supernaturalizes the will, so the *lumen gloriae* supernaturalizes and elevates the intellect, and both somehow arrive from sanctifying grace, which is infused into the essence of the soul.

**Perfection of wayfarer**

What, then, is the difference between the perfection of the wayfarer and the perfection of the blessed in glory? The union of the blessed with God in glory presupposes three distinct elements in the souls of those who enjoy the beatific vision: sanctifying grace, charity, and the light of glory. Here the two conditions for beatitude are fulfilled: by means of the light of glory, the soul knows the good that it possesses; by reason of the plenitude of its charity, it is completely transformed by grace. If, therefore, we wish to know the elements that are required for the perfection of the wayfarer, we need only ask which of the above-mentioned elements are common to both the just soul on earth and the blessed in heaven.

What remains for the perfection and sanctification of man as a wayfarer? Not the light of glory, but the other two elements: sanctifying grace and charity. Indeed, the soul is called just and perfect precisely because it participates to some degree in the very life of God through sanctifying grace and is able to be united with God in the bond of supernatural charity. In glory there is the clear and unobstructed facial vision of God, but here on earth the soul has only the dim (but supernatural) knowledge of faith and hope and the certain (but not infallible) confidence of hope. And since sanctifying grace, as we shall see, is the principle from which all our supernatural actions proceed, it is evident that sanctifying grace is, as St. Thomas states, the beginning of glory in us. And, finally, since St. Paul tells us that faith and hope will pass away but charity will not pass away, we can see that the elements which effect our union with God here on earth are other than those two realities which will last forever: grace and charity.

Since the theology of Christian perfection is concerned with the sanctification of man as a wayfarer and studies the supernatural organism of the spiritual life in order to discover the laws of growth in perfection, we shall now consider the supernatural organism and its faculties or powers and then proceed to investigate the nature of Christian perfection and the mystical state.

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**2: SANCTIFYING GRACE**

Man is a mysterious being, composed of body and soul, of matter and spirit, intimately united to form one nature and one person. It has been said of him that he is a little universe or microcosm, a synthesis of all creation. He has existence, as do inanimate things; he is nourished, reproduces and grows, as do plants; he knows sensible objects and is moved toward them by the sense appetite or passions and has locomotion, as do animals; and like the angels, but in a much lower degree, he can know the immaterial under the aspect of truth and his will can be drawn to the rational good. The mechanism and function of all these vital powers, in the triple order of vegetative, sensitive and rational, constitute the natural life of man. These three manifestations of his natural life are not superimposed one on the other by a kind of juxtaposition, but they complement each other, are coordinated and mutually complement one another, to lead to the one end or goal of the natural perfection of the whole man.

There is nothing in man's nature which postulates or exacts, either proximately or remotely, the supernatural order. The elevation to this order is a totally gratuitous favor of God which infinitely transcends all the exigencies of nature. Nevertheless, there is a close analogy between the natural and the supernatural orders, for grace does not destroy nature but perfects and elevates it. The supernatural order constitutes a true life for man and has an organism which is similar to the natural vital organism. As in the natural order we can distinguish four basic or fundamental elements in human life—the living subject, the formal principle of life, the faculties or powers, and the operations of those faculties—so also we find similar elements in man's supernatural organism. The subject is the soul, the formal principle of supernatural life is sanctifying grace, the faculties are the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the operations are the acts of those virtues and gifts. We have here in outline or summary the elements which we shall consider in the succeeding chapters.

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1Cf. St. Thomas, *Enn. i*. q. 12, a. 5, 7; *I-II*. q. 5, a. 6, ad 2.
2Cf. *ibid.*, *II-II*. q. 24, a. 8; *Suppl.*. q. 93, a. 3.
3Cf. 1 Cor. 13:10-13.

4Cf. *Denz. 1001-07, 1009, 1021, 1023, 1079, 1671.*
The human soul is a spiritual substance which is independent of matter in its being and its operations, although while it is in the body it makes use of bodily powers for the exercise of certain functions. But the soul is not a complete substance, nor can the soul alone properly be called a person. The ego or the person is not the body alone nor the soul alone, but the composite which results from the substantial union of the two.

We know from reason and from sound philosophy and also from the teaching of the Church that the soul is the substantial form of the body. By reason of this substantial informing of the body by the soul, man has the being of man, of animal, of living, of body, of substance, and the very fact of existence. Consequently, the soul gives to man his essential grade of perfection and communicates to the body the same act of being by which the soul itself exists. But the soul is not immediately operative. As a substance, it is given to us in the order of being, but not in the order of action or operation. Like every created substance, it needs faculties or powers for operation, and in the case of the human soul these powers are the intellect and the will, which emanate from the essence of the soul, although they are really distinct from the soul and from each other.

Such is the subject in which our supernatural life resides. Grace, which is the formal principle of that supernatural life, is rooted in the very essence of the soul in a static manner. The virtues and gifts, which are the dynamic elements in the supernatural organism, reside in the human faculties or powers precisely to elevate them to the supernatural order.

We have said that sanctifying grace is the formal principle of our supernatural organism, as the spiritual soul is the formal principle of our natural organism. As an accidental participation in the very nature of God, grace elevates us to the status of children of God and heirs of heaven. "We are sons of God," exclaims St. Paul. "But if we are sons, we are heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16-17). And in his famous sermon before the Areopagus he insists that we are of the race of God: "We are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). This same expression is re-echoed by St. Thomas when he comments on the words of St. John, ex Deo nati sunt: "This generation, since it is of God, makes us sons of God."

Sanctifying grace can be defined: a supernatural quality, inhering in the soul, which gives us a physical and formal participation, although analogous and accidental, in the very nature of God precisely as God. Let us examine more closely the elements of this definition.

A quality is an accident which modifies or disposes a substance. Four species of quality are usually distinguished: if a substance is disposed well or badly in regard to itself, we have the qualities of habit and disposition; if the substance is disposed for action or operation, we have the qualities of potency and impotence; if the substance is disposed to receptivity, we have the qualities of passion and possible quality; and if the substance is disposed to quantity, we have the qualities of form and figure.

It should be evident at once that sanctifying grace cannot pertain to any of the last three species of quality, for grace is not ordained directly to operation, as are potency and impotence, nor is it a bodily accident, as are passion, possible quality, form and figure. By elimination, therefore, sanctifying grace must pertain to the first species of quality, and within that species it pertains to habit and not to simple disposition, since it is a quality that of itself is permanent and difficult to remove.

Grace is clearly supernatural, as the formal principle of our supernatural life; it is that which elevates us and constitutes us in this order. As supernatural, it far excels all natural things, transcending all nature and making us enter into the sphere of the divine and uncreated. St. Thomas has said that the minimum degree of sanctifying grace in one individual is greater than the natural good of the entire universe.

That grace inheres in the soul is denied by those Protestants who hold for extrinsic justification, but it is a truth of faith defined by the Council of Trent. St. Thomas bases the distinction between human love and divine love on the theological principle: "The love of God infuses and creates goodness in things." In us, love is born of the good object, real or apparent; but God creates goodness in an object by the mere fact of loving it. And since love finds compliance in that which is similar to itself, the grace by

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3Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 76, a. 1.
4Council of Vienne; Denz. 481.
5This is thesis 16 of the 24 theses proposed by the Sacred Congregation of Studies as norms of sound doctrine. Cf. A.A.S., VI (1914), pp. 383 ff.
6Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 77, a. 1.
7Cf. ibid., aa. 1-3, 6.
8Comment. in Evang. Joan. 1:13.
9Cf. Summa, I-II, q. 113, a. 9, ad 2.
10Canon 11 on justification: "If anyone say that men are justified only by the imputation of the justice of Christ or simply by the remission of sins, thus excluding the grace and charity which are infused in hearts by the Holy Ghost and inhere in them, or that the grace by which we are justified is simply the favor or benediction of God, let him be anathema." Cf. Denz. 821.
11Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 20, a. 2.
which God loves us with the love of a friend elevates us in a certain manner to his level and deifies us, so to speak, by means of a formal participation in the divine nature. "It is necessary that God alone deify by communicating his divine nature through a certain participation of likeness."12 Briefly, God loves with an absolutely supernatural love the man who is pleasing to him, but since the love of God is the cause of that which he loves, it follows that he must produce in the man who is pleasing to himself the reason for that supernatural goodness, namely, grace.13

Participation is nothing other than the assimilation and inadequate expression in an inferior thing of some perfection existing in a superior thing. St. Thomas says in this regard that that which is totally a determined thing does not participate in that thing but is identified with it; that which is not totally a thing, but has something of that thing, is properly said to participate in it.14 Participation may be moral or physical. Physical participation is divided into virtual and formal, and formal participation may be univocal or analogous. The following examples should clarify the meaning of this division. The members of a corporation or association participate morally in its good or evil reputation; the moon participates physically in the light of the sun; flowers and fruits are virtually contained in the tree that will produce them and even in the seed from which the tree grows; animality is participated formally by men and brutes. If the physical participation refers to subjects that participate in the same thing and in the same way, as humanity is predicated of all men in the same sense, we have univocal participation; but if the participation refers to subjects in a different manner or proportionately, as being predicated of God, the angels, men, animals, plants and inanimate things, we have an analogous participation.

Bearing in mind the foregoing distinctions, we may say that sanctifying grace gives us a physical, formal, analogous and accidental participation in the divine nature. That it makes us participants in the divine nature is a truth constantly repeated in Sacred Scripture. St. Peter says, for example: "He has granted us the very great and precious promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). The liturgy also proclaims this fact when it sings in the Preface for the feast of the Ascension: "He ascended to heaven to make us participants in his divinity." And how persuasively St. Leo speaks of this truth when he says: "Recognize your dignity, O Christian, and having been made a participant of the divine nature, do not desire to return to the baseness of your former condition."15

But it is necessary to examine the manner in which sanctifying grace confers a participation in the divine nature. God is not like creatures, for he and he alone is being by his very essence, while all creatures are being by participation. Nevertheless, creatures are in some way similar to God, because as every agent produces something similar to itself, it is necessary that there be some likeness of the agent in the effect which it produces.16 But it cannot be said that creatures are like God by reason of a communication of form according to genus and species, but only according to a certain analogy, because God is being by essence, while creatures are being by participation.17 Hence there are three classes of creatures which imitate God analogically and are like him in some respect:

1) *Irrational creatures*, which participate in the divine perfection so far as they have being. This likeness is so remote that it is called a trace or vestige.18

2) *Rational creatures*, which, so far as they are gifted with intelligence, represent the perfections of God in a more express and determined manner. For that reason they are called the natural image of God.

3) *Souls in the state of grace*, which are united with God by the love of friendship and therefore imitate him in a much more perfect manner. For that reason they are called the supernatural image of God.

But in order to be perfect, does the image of God as author of the supernatural order require a physical and formal participation in the very nature of God? Undoubtedly yes. Apart from the fact that this is a truth which is verified in revelation, there are theological arguments to support it. First, the operations proper to a superior nature cannot become connatural to a lower or inferior nature unless the latter participates in some way in the former, because as a thing is, so it acts, and its effects cannot be greater than the cause. But some of the operations proper to God—such as the beatific vision, beatific love, etc.—are in some way connatural to man through grace. Therefore, it is evident that man, through grace, in some way participates physically and formally in the very nature of God.

Secondly, from grace springs an inclination to God as he is in himself. Now every inclination is rooted in some nature and reveals the condition of that nature. But an inclination to the divine order cannot be rooted in a nature of an inferior order; it must be rooted in a nature which is divine, at least by participation. Moreover, this participation must be physical and formal, since the inclination proceeds physically and formally from that participation.

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12Ibid., III, q. 112, a. 1.
13Ibid., q. 110, a. 1; De veritate, q. 27, a. 1.
14Cf. Metaphys., I, lect. 10.
16Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 4, a. 3.
17Cf. ibid., ad 3.
18Cf. St. Thomas, In I Sent., dist. 3, q. 2, aa. 1 f.
Thirdly, the infused virtues are the faculties of supernatural operations in us, but it is evident that, since operation follows being, a supernatural operation which proceeds from the soul presupposes in the soul the presence of a supernatural nature, and this can be nothing other than a physical and formal participation in the nature of God himself.

And let no one say that through the power of an actual grace a sinner can realize a supernatural act without the need of sanctifying grace in his soul. This objection does not invalidate our argument, since we are speaking of an act which proceeds from the soul concomitantly and without violence, and not of a forceful impulse to second act without passing through the proximate habitual dispositions.

It now remains for us to examine in what sense this physical and formal participation of the divine nature is accidental and analogous. Analogous participation signifies that the divine nature is not communicated to us univocally, as the Father transmits it to his Son by way of the natural eternal generation or as the humanity of Christ subsists in the divinity. Man does not become God through grace, neither by natural generation nor by the hypostatic or personal union nor by any pantheistic union of our substance with the divine substance, but by an analogous participation in virtue of which that which exists in God in an infinite manner is participated by the soul in a limited and finite manner. The iron cast into the furnace retains the nature of iron and merely takes on the properties of fire; the mirror which captures the image of the sun does not acquire the nature of the sun but merely reflects its splendor. In like manner, says St. Leo, "the original dignity of our race lies in the fact that the divine goodness shines in us as in a resplendent mirror." 18

The reason for the accidental participation of the divine nature through grace is clearly explained by St. Thomas: "Every substance constitutes either the nature of the thing of which it is the substance or it is a part of the nature, as matter and form are called substance. And because grace is above all nature, it cannot be a substance or a substantial form, but it is an accidental form of the soul. Hence what is substantially in God becomes accidental in the soul which participates in the divine goodness." 19

Moreover, the Council of Trent expressly teaches that habitual grace inheres in the soul of man, 20 but that which inheres in another is not a substance but an accident, as we learn in philosophy. Nor does this in any way lessen the dignity of grace, for as a supernatural accident, by its very essence it infinitely transcends all created or creatable natural substances. Let us not forget the words of St. Thomas, to the effect that the good of grace in one individual surpasses the good of nature in the entire universe. 21

Not all theologians admit that we share in the nature of God precisely as God, but it is the teaching of the best interpreters of the Thomistic school, such as Cajetan, Ledesma, del Prado. The principal arguments are as follows:

a) Grace is the constitutive principle of the operations which reach God himself under the formal aspect of deity. Therefore, grace, as the principle of these operations, must necessarily participate in the divine nature precisely as divine, that is, under the formal aspect of deity.

b) The antecedent of this argument is undeniable: all supernatural love and knowledge have God himself as their object under the aspect of his deity. Such is the case with faith, charity, the beatific vision; they are fixed directly on God as he is in himself, whether it be through the veil of faith or in the clear light of the facial vision. The consequence is a necessary conclusion from the fact that grace is the root principle of the theological virtues.

c) If the supernatural participation could not otherwise be distinguished from a merely natural participation. The natural participation in the divine nature is also a formal participation, because man, as an image of God, understands, loves, etc., and is intellectual by nature as it is God. Therefore, the divine, formally as such, must be the differential note between the natural and the supernatural.

c) In order to transcend all nature and constitute the supernatural, the supernatural form which is grace must be either God himself or something which touches God under the formal aspect of his deity, for this alone transcends all nature. But grace is not God himself, as is evident, and hence it must necessarily be something which touches God precisely under the formality of his deity. In other words, it is a participation of the divine nature precisely as divine.

These arguments seem to us to be entirely conclusive. Of course, one should not think that through grace we participate in the divine nature in such a way that it is communicated to us in the same way that it is communicated to the second Person of the Blessed Trinity by the Father, or as the humanity of Christ subsists in the divinity through the hypostatic union with the Word. Nor is the participation through grace to be understood in a pantheistic sense, for we are referring to a participation that is accidental and analogous. St. Thomas says that "grace is nothing other than a certain participated likeness of the divine nature." 22 Taking the intimate nature of God as an exemplar, sanctifying grace is a perfect imitation which is effected in us by divine infusion. In virtue of this infusion, anterior to any operation of the intellect or will, there is conferred on the soul a physical and formal perfection which is real and supernatural and which is formally in God in an eminent degree. In this way there is produced in the soul a special likeness to God which infinitely transcends that which is had in the purely natural order as an

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19Summa, III, q. 110, a. 2, ad 2.
20Canon 11 on justification; Denz. 821.
21Cf. Summa, I-II, q. 113, a. 9, ad 2.
22Ibid., III, q. 62, a. 1.
image of the God of nature. By reason of this intimate likeness to the divine nature as divine, man becomes an offspring, as it were, of God. He becomes God's son by adoption and forms a part of the family of God. Such is the sublime grandeur to which we are elevated by grace.

THE SUBJECT OF GRACE

This question must be resolved in view of another question concerning the distinction between grace and charity. The theologians who deny the distinction between grace and charity state that grace resides in the will as in its proper subject. Those who affirm the real distinction between grace and charity place charity in the will and sanctifying grace in the very essence of the soul. The following arguments are offered in proof of the second opinion.

a) The regeneration of man is effected by sanctifying grace. But regeneration primarily affects the essence of the soul rather than the faculties, because the generative action terminates in the essence. Therefore, grace resides in the essence of the soul.

b) Spiritual accidents which pertain to being inhere in the substance of the soul, while those which pertain to operation inhere in the faculties. But sanctifying grace confers on the soul a supernatural being, while charity is ordained to operation. Therefore, sanctifying grace should inhere in the very essence of the soul, and charity in one of the faculties, namely, the will.

c) "Every perfection of the faculties of the soul has the nature of a virtue." But sanctifying grace does not have the nature of a virtue nor is it ordained by its nature to operation. Therefore, sanctifying grace is not a perfection of the faculties of the soul but of the very essence of the soul. For this reason theologians speak of sanctifying grace as a static perfection and of the virtues as dynamic perfections in the spiritual life.

EFFECTS OF GRACE

Having examined the nature of sanctifying grace and the subject in which it inhere, it remains for us to discuss the effects of grace in the soul of the just. The first effect of sanctifying grace is to give us that participation in the divine nature of which we have already spoken. This is the root and foundation of all the other effects which flow from sanctifying grace.

Among the other effects, those three hold a place of pre-emminence which are mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans: "Now you have not received a spirit of bondage so as to be again in fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons, by virtue of which we cry: Abba! Father! The

Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God. But if we are sons, we are heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:15-17). Fortified by this sublime passage, let us examine the three principal effects produced by sanctifying grace.

1. Grace makes us adopted sons of God. To be a father, it is necessary to transmit to another being one's specific nature. The artist who makes a statue is not the father of the work but only the author. On the other hand, the "author of our days" is truly our natural father because he truly transmits to us, by way of generation, his own human nature.

Is it a natural filiation of God which is communicated to us by sanctifying grace? By no means. God the Father has only one Son according to nature: the eternal Word. Only to him is there transmitted eternally, by an ineffable intellectual generation, the divine nature in all its plenitude. In virtue of this natural generation the second Person of the Blessed Trinity possesses the selfsame divine essence of the Father and is God as fully as the Father is God. Therefore, Christ, whose human nature is hypostatically united with the Person of the Word, is not the adopted son of God, but the natural Son in all the rigor of the word.

Our divine filiation through grace is of a different kind. It is not a question of a natural filiation but of an adoptive filiation. But it is necessary to understand this truth correctly in order not to form a deficient concept of this great dignity. Adoption is the gratuitous admission of a stranger to a family. He is henceforth considered as a son and is given a right to inheritance of the family goods. Human adoption has three requisites: a) on the part of the subject there must be human nature, for there must be a likeness of nature with the adopting father; one cannot adopt a statue or an animal; b) on the part of the one adopting there must be gratuitous love and free election, for no one has the right to be adopted and no one has an obligation to adopt; c) on the part of the goods or possessions, there must be a true right to the inheritance of the adopting father—otherwise the adoption would be purely fictitious.

Now sanctifying grace confers on us a divine adoption which not only fulfills all these conditions but goes far beyond them. Purely human or legal adoption is ultimately reduced to a legal fiction, entirely extrinsic to the nature of the one adopted. It confers on the one adopted, before human society, the rights of a son, but without infusing in the adopted the blood of the family, and hence without causing any intrinsic change in the nature and personality of the adopted son. On the other hand, on adopting us as his sons, the one and triune God infuses sanctifying grace in us, which gives sons, the one and triune God infuses sanctifying grace in us, which gives

24For example, Peter Lombard, Henry Ghent, Scotus, Durandus, Bacon and Biel.
25For example, St. Thomas, Giles of Rome, Capreolus, Medinax, Soto, Suarez, Valencia, the Salamancares, and the majority of modern theologians.
26Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 110, a. 4, sed contra.
27Ibid., a. 4.
28Ibid., a. 3.
29Cf. St. Thomas, ibid., III, q. 23, a. 4.
30Cf. ibid., I, q. 45, a. 6; III, q. 23, a. 2.
us a mysterious real and formal participation in the divine nature itself. It is an intrinsic adoption which places in our souls, physically and formally, a divine reality which makes the blood of God circulate in our souls. (We speak metaphorically to capture a sublime truth.) In virtue of this divine infusion, the soul shares in the very life of God. It is a true generation, a spiritual birth, in imitation of natural generation, and it reflects, analogically, the eternal generation of the Word of God. As St. John says explicitly, sanctifying grace not only gives us the right to be called sons of God, but it makes us such in reality: "Behold with what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are." (I Jn. 3:1).

2. Grace makes us true heirs of God. This is an inevitable consequence of our divine adoptive filiation. St. Paul says expressly: "If we are sons, we are heirs also" (Rom. 8:17). How greatly this adoption through grace differs from legal and human adoption! Among men the sons inherit only at the death of the father, and the inheritance is less as the sons are more numerous. But our Father will live for all eternity, and we shall possess with him an inheritance which, in spite of the number of inheritors, will never diminish or lessen. For this inheritance is basically infinite. It is God himself, one in essence and three in persons, the principal object of our inheritance as adopted sons. "I am your shield; your reward shall be very great," God said to Abraham (Gen. 15:1), and he says the same to every soul in grace.

The beatific vision and the enjoyment of God which accompanies it are the principal part of the heritage which belongs, through grace, to the adopted sons of God. There will be communicated to them in addition all the riches of divinity, all that constitutes the happiness of God himself, a joy without end. Lastly, God will place at our disposition all extrinsic goods, such as his honor, his glory, his dominions. This will cause the soul ineffable happiness, which will completely satisfy all its aspirations and longings. And the soul will receive all these benefits and gifts under the title of justice. Grace is entirely gratuitous; but once possessed, it gives us the capacity to merit heaven under the title of justice. For the operation of a being follows its essence or nature, and the value of a work comes primarily from the dignity of the person who performs the work. And since grace is a divine form which inheres in the soul of the just, any supernatural action of which grace is the root and principle bespeaks an intrinsic relation to glory and carries with it a title to the same. Grace and glory are situated on the same plane and they are substantially the same life. There is between them only a difference of grade or degree. It is the same life in its initial or terminal stage. The child does not differ specifically from the mature man; he is an adult in potency. The same thing is true of grace and glory, and thus St. Thomas states that grace is nothing other than the beginning of glory in us.²²¹

3. Grace makes us brothers and co-heirs with Christ. This relation derives immediately from the two already mentioned. The reason, as St. Augustine points out, is that he who says "our Father" to the Father of Christ, what shall he say to Christ but brother?²²² By the very fact that sanctifying grace communicates to us a participation in the divine life which Christ possesses in all its plenitude, it necessarily follows that we become his brothers. He desired to be our brother according to his humanity, in order to make us his brothers according to his divinity, "that he might give us a share in his divinity."²²³ St. Paul states that God has predestined us "to become conformed to the image of his Son that he should be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). It is evident that we are not brothers of Christ in nature, nor are we sons of God by the same form that he is such. Christ is the firstborn among many brothers and also the only-begotten of the Father. In the order of nature he is the only Son; but in the order of grace and adoption he is our elder brother, as well as our Head and the cause of our salvation.

For this reason, the Father deigns to look upon us as if we were one thing with the Son. He loves us as he loves his Son; he looks on Christ as our brother and confers on us the title to the same heritage. We are co-heirs with Christ. He has the natural right to the divine heritage, since he is the Son who was constituted heir of all, for which reason he made the world.²²⁴ For that reason "it became him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, who had brought many sons into glory, to perfect through sufferings the author of their salvation. For both he who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all from one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: 'I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the church I will praise thee'" (Heb. 2:10-12). Therefore, the brothers of Christ must share with him the love and heritage of the heavenly Father. God has modeled us on Christ; with Christ, we are sons of the same Father who is in heaven. All this will be effected by realizing the supreme desire of Christ: that we be one with him as he himself is one with the Father.²²⁵

The foregoing are the three principal effects of grace, but they are not the only effects. The others are as follows:

4. Grace gives us supernatural life. The physical and formal participation in the very nature of God, which constitutes the essence of sanctifying grace, infinitely transcends the being and exigencies of every created nature, human or angelic. By it, man is elevated not only above the human plane but even

²²¹Ibid., II-II., q. 24, a. 3, ad 2.
²²²Cf. Heb. 1:2.
²²³Ibid., tr. 21, n. 3 (M.L. 35: 1565).
²²⁴Preface of the Ascension.
above the angelic nature. He enters into the plane of the divine, is made a member of the family of God, and begins to live in a divine manner. Grace, consequently, has communicated to him a new type of life, infinitely superior to that of nature; it is a supernatural life.

5. *Grace makes us just and pleasing to God.* As a physical participation in the divine nature, grace necessarily gives us a sharing in the divine justice and sanctity, since all the attributes of God are really identified with his own essence. Therefore, sanctifying grace is absolutely incompatible with mortal sin, which presupposes the privation of that justice and sanctity. Hence grace makes us just and pleasing to God, as he contemplates in us an irradiation of his divine beauty and a reflection of his own sanctity.

The Council of Trent teaches this when it states that the justification of the sinner through sanctifying grace "is not merely the remission of sins but also the sanctification and interior renovation of man by the voluntary reception of grace and the gifts, by which man is changed from unjust to just and from an enemy into a friend." A little farther on, the Council adds that the unique formal cause of that justification is "the justice and sanctity of Christ and the Church," the formal cause being the end for which the grace is granted.

6. *Grace gives us the capacity for supernatural merit.* Without sanctifying grace, the most heroic natural works would have absolutely no value toward eternal life. A man who lacks grace is a corpse in the supernatural order, and the dead can merit nothing. Supernatural merit presupposes radically the possession of the supernatural life. This principle is of the greatest importance in practical life. How much suffering and pain, which could have extraordinary value in the eternal life, are completely sterile and useless because the soul lacks sanctifying grace? While a man is in mortal sin, he is radically incapacitated for meriting anything at all in the supernatural order.

7. *Grace unites us intimately with God.* United as we are with God in the natural order through his divine conserving power, which makes him truly present to all creatures by his essence, presence and power, sanctifying grace increases this union to an ineffable degree and transforms it into an infinitely higher type of union. By reason of this new union, God is really present in the just soul as a friend, and not merely as creator and conservator, but as a mutual exchange of love and friendship between the soul and God and a kind of mutual transmutation of life. "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 Jn. 4:16). A more intimate union with God cannot be imagined, apart from the personal or hypostatic union which is proper and exclusive to Christ. The ultimate grades of development which grace can attain in this life and even the indissoluble union proceeding from the beatific vision in heaven are not substantially different from the union which is established between God and a soul that has been justified by grace even in its minimum degree. There is a difference of degree among these types of union, but they are all the same substantial order.

8. *Grace makes us living temples of the Trinity.* This is a consequence of what we have just said, and Christ himself revealed this truth to us when he said: "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (Jn. 14:23). It is the uncrowned reality, rigorously infinite, which sanctifying grace brings with it. We shall study this mystery of the indwelling of the Trinity in the following chapter. For the moment, having studied the static principle of our supernatural life, let us consider the role of actual grace in that life. It is not our intention to enter into the disputes which for centuries have divided the schools of theology concerning the nature and function of the various actual graces. We shall limit ourselves to a summary discussion of those points which pertain in a particular manner to spiritual theology.

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**ACTUAL GRACE**

*Actual graces may be defined as those which dispose or move in a transient manner for doing or receiving something in regard to eternal life. Ordained by their nature to the infused habits, they serve to dispose the soul to receive those infused habits when it does not yet possess them, or to put them into operation when it already possesses them. Actual graces are received into the faculties of the soul, sometimes elevating them so that they can produce indelicate supernatural acts—as happens with operating grace (gratia operans)—and at other times to produce them in a deliberate manner (co-operating grace—gratia co-operans).

Actual graces cannot be reduced to any determined species since they are transitory qualities communicated by God and impressed on the faculties of the soul after the manner of transient movements or passions. Each actual grace is reduced to the species of habit or act which it moves, for example, to faith, hope, etc. From these general notions we can readily discern the differences between actual and habitual grace:*

1) Habitual graces (sanctifying grace, the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost) are permanent qualities or habits which produce
effects in a continual and indefectible manner in the subject in which they reside, namely, the essence of the soul or the faculties of the soul. Actual graces are fluid and transient movements whose final effect is often frustrated.

2) Habitual graces are limited to disposing for action (radically or proximately, depending on whether one speaks of grace itself or the virtues and gifts). Actual graces prompt and produce the act itself.

3) The virtues and the gifts have a restricted area which affects determined faculties or determined objects and operations. Actual graces extend to the entire supernatural life and all its operations.

Necessity of Actual Grace

Actual graces are absolutely necessary in the dynamic supernatural order. It is impossible for a purely natural impulse to put the infused habits into operation, since the natural order cannot determine the operations of the supernatural order. Nor is it possible that the supernatural powers actuate themselves, because a habit can be actuated only by the power and action of the agent which caused it, and in regard to the infused supernatural habits only God who produced them can put them in motion. The action of God in this respect is as necessary as is the influence of a being already in act to reduce a potency to act. Absolutely speaking, God could develop and perfect sanctifying grace, which is infused into the essence of our soul, simply and solely through actual grace, without infusing any supernatural operative habits into the faculties. But this would be a kind of violence. On the other hand, God could not develop sanctifying grace without using the actual graces, although he has given us the infused supernatural habits, since those habits could not be reduced to act without the previous divine motion which in the supernatural order is nothing other than an actual grace. Every act of an infused virtue and every operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost presupposes a previous actual grace which has set that virtue or gift in motion, although not every actual grace infallibly produces an act of virtue (e.g., a sufficient grace rejected by a sinner). The actual grace is nothing other than the divine influence which has moved the infused habit to its operation.

Division of Actual Grace

Theologians through the centuries have drawn up lengthy lists of distinctions between the various actual graces. We list only the principal ones.

1) Operating grace and co-operating grace. Operating grace is that in which the movement is attributed only to God; the soul is moved but does not move itself. Co-operating grace is that in which the soul is moved and moves at the same time. This is the manner of speaking of St. Augustine and St. Thomas.

2) Gratia excitans and gratia adjuvans. The first impels us to act when we are dormant or static; the second assists or aids us in the act once we are moved to perform it.

3) Preventive grace, concomitant grace and consequent grace. The first precedes the act of man by disposing or moving the will; the second accompanies the act by concurring with man in producing the effect; the third bespeaks a relation to some anterior effect produced by some other grace.

4) Internal grace and external grace. The first intrinsically aids the faculty and concurs formally in the production of the act; the second influences only extrinsically, moving the faculty by means of the objects which surround it (e.g., by the examples of Christ and the saints).

5) Sufficient grace and efficacious grace. Sufficient grace impels us to work; efficacious grace infallibly produces the act itself. Without the first, we cannot act; with the second, we act freely but infallibly. The first leaves us without any excuse before God; the second is an effect of his infinite mercy.

As can be seen, these divisions of actual grace can easily be reduced to operating and co-operating grace. The gratia excitans and gratia prevenientes are really operating graces; gratia adjuvans and gratia consequens are co-operating graces; and sufficient grace and efficacious grace will be either an operating or a co-operating grace, depending on the particular situation in which they are given. But all these graces are transitory qualities which move the faculties of the soul to supernatural acts, either deliberate or indeliberate.

Actual graces have three functions: to dispose the soul for the reception of the infused habits of sanctifying grace and the virtues, to actuate these infused habits, and to prevent their loss. A word on each function.

We say that actual grace disposes the soul for the reception of the infused habits either when the soul has never possessed them or when the soul has lost them through mortal sin. In the latter case actual grace carries with it a repentance for one's sins, the fear of punishment, confidence in the divine mercy, etc.

Actual grace also serves to actuate the infused habits when they are already possessed, together with sanctifying grace (or without it, as in the case of unformed faith and hope). This actuation, presupposing the possession of which operation the soul is aware that it moves itself, with the help of God's grace. Under the influence of operating grace, on the other hand, which is proper to the gifts and eminently contains co-operating grace, the soul perceives that it is moved by God, letting itself be acted upon by him. Hence the relative passivity which is characteristic of the mystical state.

Cf. St. Thomas, ibid., I-II, q. 111, a. 3.
Cf. Salmanticensis, Carus theologici, De gratia, dist. 5, n. 180.
DOCTRINAL
PRINCIPLES

sanctifying grace, carries with it the perfecting of the infused virtues and, consequently, the increase and growth of the supernatural life.

The third function of actual grace is to prevent the loss of the infused habits through mortal sin. It implies a strengthening in the face of temptations, an awareness of special dangers, mortification of the passions, inspiration through good thoughts and holy desires, etc.

It is evident, therefore, that actual grace is a priceless treasure. It gives efficacy to sanctifying grace and the infused virtues and gifts. It is the impulse of God which places our supernatural organism in operation and prevents us from forgetting that our soul, in the state of grace, is the temple of the Blessed Trinity.

3: THE INDWELLING OF THE TRINITY

The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the soul of the just is one of the truths most clearly revealed in the New Testament,¹ which insists again and again on this sublime truth. This is evident from the following texts selected at random:

"If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (Jn. 14:23).

"God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God, and God in him" (I Jn. 4:16).

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (I Cor. 3:16-17).

"Do you not know that your members are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (I Cor. 6:19).

"For you are the temple of the living God" (II Cor. 6:16).

"Guard the good trust through the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us" (II Tim. 1:14).

Scripture uses various formulas to express the same truth, namely, that God dwells in the soul in grace. This indwelling is attributed to the Holy Spirit, not because there is any special presence of the Holy Ghost which is not common to Father and the Son,² but by reason of an appropriation, since this is the great work of the love of God, and the Holy Ghost is essential love in the bosom of the Trinity. The Fathers of the Church, and especially St. Augustine, have written beautiful tracts on the indwelling of the Trinity in the souls of the just.

¹Although there are certain vestiges of this revelation in the Old Testament, the full revelation of the mystery was reserved for the New Testament.

²Certain theologians (Lessius, Petau, Thomassinus, Scheeben, etc.) held this opinion, but the majority of theologians teach the contrary doctrine, which is deduced from the data of faith and the teaching of the Church. Cf. Denz. 281, 703; Froget, The Indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the Souls of the Just, pp. 58 ff.
THE INDWELLING

ITS NATURE

Theologians have written much and disputed much concerning the nature of the indwelling. We shall enumerate the principal opinions sustained by various authors, without attempting to settle a question which only secondarily affects the object and finality of our work.

1) According to Galtier, the indwelling consists formally in a physical and loving union between God and the soul. This union is effected by sanctifying grace, in virtue of which the one and triune God is given to the soul and is substantially and personally present to the soul, making it share in the divine life. Grace is like a seal on fluid matter, and for the permanence of the seal on such matter it is necessary that the seal be impressed constantly; so, in like manner, if grace—which is the assimilative impress of the divine essence in the soul—is to remain in the soul, it is necessary that this divine nature be physically present to the soul. This interpretation is rejected by many theologians because it does not seem to differentiate the indwelling from the common mode of God's existence per essentiam in all created things.

2) Other theologians have interpreted the teaching of St. Thomas as if he had placed the formal cause of the indwelling in supernatural knowledge and love, independently of the presence of immensity, that is, exclusively in the intentional presence. Suárez tried to complete this doctrine by that of the supernatural friendship which charity establishes between God and the soul and which demands, according to Suárez, the real presence and not only the intentional presence of God in the soul, and in such wise, he says, that by the power of this friendship God would really come to the soul even if he were not already there by any other title (e.g., the presence of immensity). But this explanation has not satisfied the majority of theologians, because friendship, since it pertains to the affective order, does not offer a sufficient explanation for the formal presence of the divine Persons. Love as such does not make the beloved to be physically present, for it is of the purely intentional order.

3) One branch of the Thomistic school, following John of St. Thomas, interprets St. Thomas in the sense that, presupposing the presence of immensity, sanctifying grace, through the operations of knowledge and love which proceed from faith and charity, is the formal cause of the indwelling of the Trinity in the souls of the just. According to this opinion, knowledge and love proceeding from faith and love do not constitute the presence of God in us but presupposing that God is already in the soul by the presence of immensity, the special presence of the divine Persons consists in supernatural knowledge and love or in the operations which proceed from grace. This theory, much more acceptable than the preceding, seems nevertheless to encounter an insuperable difficulty. If the operations of knowledge and love proceeding from grace were the formal cause of the indwelling of the Trinity, the indwelling would have to be denied to those baptized before the use of reason, to the just souls during sleep, to those who are not actually performing acts of knowledge and love, even though they be in the state of sanctifying grace. To this difficulty, the proponents of the theory reply that even in such cases there would be a certain permanent presence of the Trinity by reason of the possession of the virtues of charity and faith, which are capable of producing that presence. But this reply does not satisfy some theologians, because the possession of those virtues would give only the faculty or power of producing the indwelling and, as long as they were not actually operating, we would not have the indwelling properly speaking.

4) Other theologians propose a blending of the first and third theories to explain the divine indwelling. According to them, the divine persons are made present in some way by the efficacy and conservation of sanctifying grace, since this grace gives a formal and physical participation in the divine nature as such and therefore gives also a participation in the intimate life of God. Yet these theologians are careful to preserve the certain theological principle that in the works ad extra God works as one and not as triune. Since the Trinity is present to the soul in some way through sanctifying grace, the just soul enters into contact with the Trinity by the operations of knowledge and love which flow from grace itself. By the production of grace, God is united to the soul as principle; by the operations of knowledge and love, the soul is united to the divine Persons as the terminus of those same operations. Hence the indwelling of the Trinity is both an ontological and a psychological fact: ontological by reason of the production and conservation of grace, psychological by reason of supernatural knowledge and love.

Perhaps none of the theories offers an adequate explanation of the divine indwelling. But what is important for our purposes is not so much the nature or mode of the indwelling as the fact of the indwelling, and concerning this, all theologians are in accord.

Let us now investigate the finality or purpose of the divine indwelling, which is of much more importance in spiritual theology. There are three purposes for the indwelling of the Trinity in the souls of the just: 1) to make us share...
in the divine life; 2) to make God the mover and rule of our actions; 3) to make God the object of fruition by an ineffable experience. 7

When we say that God dwells in our souls as in his temple, we are expressing a truth which is supported by two famous passages in St. Paul, 8 but we must take care not to imagine that God’s presence in us is like that of the Eucharist in a tabernacle, inert and with only a spatial relationship to the tabernacle. The presence of God in the just soul is infinitely superior to this; we are living temples of God, and we possess the three Persons in a vital manner.

To acclimate ourselves to this mystery, it is well to recall that sanctifying grace is the “seed of God,” 9 which engenders us and makes us live a new life, the participated divine life by which we are called, and are, sons of God. 10 This doctrine of our divine filiation is constantly repeated in the pages of Scripture, as is that of the divine indwelling, to which it is closely related. What does God do when he dwells in a soul? Nothing other than to communicate himself to that soul, to engender it as his son, which is to give it a participation in his nature and his life. And that generation is not verified, as is human generation, by a transient action through which the son begins to be and to live independently of the father from whom he receives his origin, but it presupposes a continued act of God as long as the soul remains in his friendship and grace. If God were for one instant to withdraw his conserving action from all the things which he has created, they would at that same instant return to the nothingness from which they came. 11 Similarly, if God were for an instant to withdraw his conserving action from grace in the just soul, grace would cease to exist and the soul would cease to be a child of natural life, as the embryo in the womb of the mother is constantly receiving life from the mother. For this reason did Christ come into the world, that we might live by him, as St. John says, 12 and Christ himself says that he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. 13 Now we can see why St. Paul says: “It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

Hence our divine adoptive generation has some similarity with the eternal generation of the Word in the bosom of the Father, and our union with God.

through grace is somewhat similar to that which exists between the Word and the Father through the Holy Ghost. No theologian would ever have dared to say this, were it not for the sublime words of Christ, spoken at the Last Supper:

Yet not for these only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in me, that all may be one, even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me; that they may be perfected in unity, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. 14

The Son is one with the Father by the unity of nature; we are one with God by the formal and physical participation of his own divine nature, which participation is nothing other than sanctifying grace. The Son lives by the Father, and we live by participation in God. He is in the Father and the Father is in him; 15 we are also in God and God is in us.

Thus it is through grace that we are introduced into the life of the Trinity, which is the life of God, and God dwells in us and communicates his divine life to us. And it is the three Persons who dwell in us, since it is not the property of any one Person in particular to engender us as sons of God, but it is an action common to the Three. They are in the just soul, all three Persons, engendering that soul supernaturaly, vivifying it with their life, introducing it, through knowledge and love, to the most profound relationships. Here the Father engenders the Son, and from the Father and the Son proceeds the Holy Ghost, thus realizing in the soul the sublime mystery of the triune unity and the one Trinity, which is the inner life of God Himself.

Life is essentially dynamic and active. We know the existence of a vital form and its actuation as a form of the life of the Word in the bosom of the Father, in the soul of Christ and in the believer. This is the way grace acts in the believer as it acts in the bosom of the Father, where the Father engenders the Son.

This is precisely the function and finality of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as we shall see. Human reason and faith, which is the rule of the infused virtues, is a mover of relatively little power, a rule too lowly for the lofty operations which please God as he is in himself. It is true that the theological virtues have God as their immediate object, and God precisely as he is in himself, but as long as they are subject to the rule of reason (even reason enlightened by faith), they must be accommodated to the human mode which is necessarily impressed upon them, and hence they cannot develop fully the immense virtuality which is theirs. This is the reason invoked by St. Thomas of the indwelling.

12 Cf. I Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19.
14 Cf. I Jn. 3:1.
15 Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 104.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid. 20-23.
to prove the necessity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which perfect the infused virtues by communicating to them a divine modality and place them on a level which is strictly supernatural, as is required by the very nature of grace and the infused virtues. Under the influence of the gifts, human reason is more acted upon than acting, and the resultant acts are materially human but formally divine. Only in this way can we ultimately live in all its plenitude the divine life received through grace.

Whence it is evident that the divine motion of the gifts is very distinct from the divine activity found in the infused virtues. In the divine movement of the infused virtues, the full responsibility of the action is man's, as immediate cause and mover, and for that reason the acts of the virtues are entirely our own because they come from us, from our reason and free will. True, they are always under the motion of God as First Mover, without whom no act of any kind can proceed from a potency either in the natural or the supernatural order. But in the case of the gifts, the divine motion is utterly different. The unique mover is God, who places the gifts in operation, while man is limited to receiving the divine movement and seconding it with docility, without offering any resistance and without modifying it or changing its direction. Therefore, the acts which proceed from the gifts are divine in the way that the melody which a musician plays on his instrument is materially from the musician who plays it. Nor does this in any way diminish the merit of the soul which secures the divine motion by its docility; for in spite of the fact that the Holy Ghost is the unique mover, the soul adheres with all its power of free will to the divine motion, although passivity of the soul under the activity of the gifts is a relative passivity—the Holy Ghost. But once the divine motion is initiated, the soul reacts actively with which it is capable and with all its free will. Thus the divine initiative, the relative passivity of the soul, the vital reaction of the soul, the exercise of free will and the supernatural merit of the action are blended and mutually complement each other. Through the divine motion of the gifts, the Holy Ghost dwelling in the soul takes the reins of our spiritual life. It is no longer human reason which rules and governs but the Holy Ghost, who acts as the rule and mover of our acts, putting the entire supernatural organism in motion until it attains its full development.

It is a fact testified by the mystics that in the most profound center of their souls they experienced the august presence of the Blessed Trinity working intensely in them. "I used unexpectedly to experience a consciousness of the presence of God," says St. Teresa, "of such a kind that I could not possibly doubt that he was within me or that I was wholly engulfed in him." Again, she writes that the Trinity reveals itself, in all three Persons, and that the soul "perceives quite clearly, in the way I have described, that they are in the interior of her heart." The number of texts from the mystics could be multiplied indefinitely. This divine experience of contemplative souls is so clear that some of them, through this experience, came to know the mystery of the indwelling of the Trinity even before they had heard anything about it. Actually, the experience of the mystics is a verification of the lofty teachings of theology. St. Thomas, writing as a theologian, makes the following startling statement: "By the gift of sanctifying grace, the rational creature is perfected so that it can freely use not only that created gift but even enjoy the divine Person himself." And in the same place he writes: "We are said to possess only what we can freely use or enjoy; and to have the power of enjoying the divine Person can only be through sanctifying grace.”

Here in all its sublime grandeur is the most intimate purpose of the indwelling of the Trinity in our souls. God himself, one in essence and three in persons, becomes the object of an ineffable experience. The divine Persons are given to us that we may enjoy them, to use the amazing expression of the Angelic Doctor. And when this experimental joy reaches the culmination of the transforming union, the souls that have reached this summit are unable to, and do not wish to, express themselves in the language of earth. They prefer to taste in silence that which in no way could be explained to others. As St. John of the Cross says:

Wherefore the delicacy of the delight which is felt in this touch is impossible of true description, nor would I willingly speak of it lest it should be supposed that it is no more than that which I say. There are no words to express it.  

19Cf. St. John of the Cross, The Living Flame, Stanza 1, n. 3.  
20The Life, chap. 10.  
21The Interior Castle, Seventh Mansions, Chap. 1.  
23Cf. Philppion, op. cit., Chaps. 1 and 3.  
24Summa, I, q. 43, a. 3, ad 1.  
25Id., a. 3.  
26Cf. St. John is here speaking of the substantial touches of God, which is the culminating point in the mystical experience of the divine indwelling.
pound such sublime things of God as come to pass in these souls; the proper way to speak is for one that knows them to understand them inwardly and to feel them inwardly and enjoy them and be silent concerning them...  This alone can be said of it with truth, that it savors of eternal life. For although in this life we may not have perfect fruition of it, as in glory, nevertheless this touch, being of God, savors of eternal life.25

In these sublime heights, where the soul experiences the divine indwelling in an ineffable manner, what the soul knew and believed through faith it now experiences as if by sight and touch, as St. Teresa explains:

So that what we hold by faith the soul may be said here to grasp by sight, although nothing is seen by the eyes, either of the body or of the soul; for it is no imaginary vision. Here all three Persons communicate themselves to the soul and speak to the soul and explain to it those words which the gospel attributes to the Lord, namely, that he and the Father and the Holy Ghost will come to dwell with the soul which loves him and keeps his commandments.26

This experimental knowledge of God, although substantially the same, is infinitely superior in its mode to that which we have of him through reason enlightened by faith, St. Teresa exclaims: "Oh, God help me! What a difference there is between hearing and believing these words and being led in this way to realize how true they are"27 The reason for this inequality and difference between the knowledge of faith and experimental knowledge is clear:

The mystical or experimental knowledge of God has for its real object God himself, who is manifested to us through faith in an ideal manner, one in substance and three in persons. Faith tells us that there are three distinct persons in God as he is in himself, but this knowledge does not surpass the ideal object of faith and the object of experience are totally identified.

I have in mind a fruit which is said to be very tasty, but I have never eaten it. I know that it is a tasty fruit because he who told me does not ex audito. But I put the fruit to my mouth and begin to eat it, and then savor. This is God as known by mystical experience.28

The state of grace is a mystic in potency, and every potency begs to be reduced to act. If one does not yet experience the presence of God within his soul (and this is what constitutes the most characteristic phenomenon of the mystical state from a psychological point of view), it is not because he does not yet possess all the infused elements which are indispensable for this experience, nor because God prevents this passage to the mystical experience, but simply and solely because he has not yet totally detached himself from the things of earth, he has not yet overcome the obstacles which prevent this ineffable experience, he has not yet spread his wings to soar to lofty things, he has not yet given himself fully and unreservedly to God to let him work these marvels in the soul. This is precisely the teaching of St. Teresa:

Remember, the Lord invites us all; and since he is Truth itself, we cannot doubt him. If his invitation were not a general one, he would not have said: "I will give you to drink." He might have said: "Come, all of you, for after all you will lose nothing; and I will give drink to those to whom it pleases me." But since he said "all," without any condition, I am sure that none will lack living water unless they stop on the way.29

After such explicit testimony from St. Teresa, which is nothing less than a confirmation from the field of experience of the theological principles on the divine indwelling, would it not be ridiculous to ask whether all are called to the mystical state? Whether this enters into the normal development of grace? Whether it is licit to desire the mystical state? Whether there is one or many ways to union with God? A contemporary theologian points out:

This stupendous phenomenon (of the indwelling of the Trinity), whose reality is guaranteed by Sacred Scripture, is it something mystical or ascetical? Is it the patrimony of some few souls or the common heritage of all the children of God? How paty our divisions and distinctions appear in the face of these sublime realities which faith teaches! The fact of the mission of the divine Persons unifies all the phases of the Christian life from baptism to the spiritual matrimony... The gift of the divine Persons is not something peculiar to the ascetical or the mystical phase nor even to the higher stages of the mystical state (the awareness of the divine indwelling may be, but not the gift itself). The divine Persons are given to all who live in the state of grace.30

23The Living Flame, Stanza 2, n. 19.
24Interior Castle, Seventh Mansions, Chap. 1.
25Loc. cit.
26Menéndez-Reigada, op. cit., Chap. 1.
27The Way of Perfection, Chap. 19; cf. also St. John of the Cross, The Living Flame, Stanza 2.
28S. Lozano, O.P., Vida santa y ciencia sagrada (Salamanca: 1942), Chap. 6, pp. 68, 72; cf. also St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 43, aa. 5, 6.
4: THE INFUSED VIRTUES

There is a perfect analogy between man's natural organism and his supernatural organism. Man's soul is not immediately operative by its proper essence but operates through its faculties or powers of intellect and will, which emanate from the soul as from their proper root. The same thing occurs in regard to the supernatural organism. Sanctifying grace, which is, as it were, the soul or essence of the supernatural organism, is not immediately operative. It is not a dynamic but a static element, for it is not a perfection in the order of operation but in the order of being. The reason is that, although grace itself is an accident and not a substance, it nevertheless acts as a substance in the supernatural order and, like all substances, it requires faculties or powers in order to operate. These faculties or powers are infused by God in the soul together with grace itself, from which they are inseparable. Some of these supernatural powers are nothing other than the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

THE VIRTUES THEMSELVES

EXISTENCE AND NECESSITY

The existence and necessity of the infused virtues follows from the very nature of sanctifying grace. Grace is a divine seed which by its nature seeks growth and development until it reaches full perfection. But since sanctifying grace itself is not immediately operative (although it is so radically as the remote principle of all our supernatural operations), it follows that grace demands and postulates certain immediate principles of operation which flow from grace itself and are inseparable from it. If this were not the case, man would be elevated to the supernatural order only as regards his soul but not as regards his operative powers. And although, absolutely speaking, God could elevate our faculties to the supernatural order by means of continual actual graces, this would produce a violence in the human psychological structure by reason of the tremendous disproportion between the purely natural faculty and the supernatural act to be effected. And such violence could not be reconciled with the customary suavity of divine providence, which moves all things according to their natures. From this we deduce the necessity of certain supernatural operative principles so that man can tend to his supernatural end in a manner that is perfectly consonant and without violence.

As St. Thomas points out:

"It is not fitting that God should provide less for those he loves, that they may acquire supernatural good, than for creatures whom he loves that they may acquire natural good. Now he so provides for natural creatures that not merely does he move them to their natural acts, but he bestows on them certain forms and powers which are the principles of acts, in order that they may of themselves be inclined to these movements, and thus the movements whereby they are moved by God become natural and easy to creatures. ... Much more, therefore, does he infuse into those he moves toward the acquisition of supernatural good certain forms or supernatural qualities whereby they may be moved by him sweetly and promptly to acquire eternal good."

The infused virtues may be defined as operative habits infused by God into the faculties of the soul to dispose them to function according to the dictates of reason enlightened by faith.

"Operative habits" is the generic element of the definition, common to all natural and supernatural virtues. From the psychological point of view, an operative habit is a quality, difficult to remove, which disposes the subject to function with facility, promptness and delight. It gives the subject facility for operation because every habit is an increase of energy in relation to its corresponding action; it gives promptness because it constitutes, so to speak, the second nature in virtue of which the subject quickly gives himself to action; and it causes delight in the operation because it produces an act which is prompt, facile and consonant.

"Infused by God" is a radical difference between the infused and acquired virtues. The natural or acquired virtues are engendered in man by means of repeated acts. The only cause of the supernatural or infused virtues is the divine infusion; hence their name, "infused virtues." And we say that they are

\[\text{Summa, I-II, q. 110, a. 2.}\]
\[\text{Cf. St. Thomas, ibid., I-II, q. 55.}\]
\[\text{Cf. ibid., q. 63, a. 4, sed contra ad 3.}\]
infused by God into the faculties of the soul because we are speaking of operati
habitats that are immediately ordained to action. Their purpose is to super
naturalize the faculties by elevating them to the order of grace and making
them capable of performing supernatural acts. Without them, or without the
actual grace which supplies for them (as in the case of the sinner before justifi,
ction), it would be impossible for man to perform an act of superno
natural virtue, as it is impossible for an animal to perform an act of intelligen
t. Here again is evident the close similarity and analogy between the natural
organism and the supernatural organism. As St. Thomas says: "As from the
essence of the soul flows its powers, which are the principles of deeds, so like
wise the virtues, whereby the powers are moved to act, flow into the powers
of the soul from grace." 6

The principal element of specific differentiation between the acquired and
the infused virtues is that by reason of the formal object. The infused virtues
depose the faculties to follow the dictate or command, not of simple reason,
as do the acquired virtues, but of reason illumined by faith. The motives of
operation for the acquired virtues are simply and solely natural motives; the
motives for the operation of the infused virtues are strictly supernatural motives.
Hence the great abyss that separates the one from the other set of virtues by
reason of the formal object, which is the most characteristic element of the
specific difference in the definition.

But how are the infused virtues united with the natural faculties or powers
to constitute with them one principle of operation? To answer this question
it is necessary to bear in mind that the infused virtues are meant to perfect
the natural faculties or powers by elevating them to the supernatural order. Con
sequently, the supernatural virtuous act will proceed from the union of the
natural faculty with the supernatural virtue which perfects it. As a vital act, it
has its radical power in the natural faculty, which the infused virtue essen
tially completes by giving it the power for a supernatural act. Hence every
supernatural act springs from the natural faculty or power precisely as in
formed with the supernatural virtue, or from the natural faculty which has
been raised to the supernatural order. The radical power, for example, is the
intellect or will; the formal proximate principle of action is the corresponding
infused virtue.

The teaching of St. Thomas is that the infused moral virtues are essentially
distinct, by reason of their formal object, from the acquired moral virtues.
These latter virtues, however heroic and perfect, could grow indefinitely and
indefinitely without the formal object of the infused virtues. There is an infinite dif
ference between temperance according to Aristotle, regulated by right reason
alone, and Christian temperance, which is regulated by reason enlightened
by faith and by supernatural prudence. The magnificent article on this point
in the Summa theologicae manifests the lofty idea which St. Thomas has of the
infused virtues as compared with the acquired virtues. 7

The infused virtues are inspired and regulated by the teaching of faith
concerning the consolations of original sin and our personal sins, the infinite
grandeur of our supernatural end, the necessity of loving God more than self,
the need to imitate Christ, which leads us to self-abnegation and renunciation.
None of this is attained by pure reason, even by a Socrates, an Aristotle or a
Plato. With good reason does St. Thomas say that the specific difference
between the acquired and infused virtues is evident by reason of their formal
objects:

The object of every virtue is a good considered as in that virtue's proper
matter; thus the object of temperance is a good with respect to the pleasures
connected with the concupiscence of touch. The formal aspect of this object is
from reason, which fixes the mean in these concupiscences. Now it is evident
that the mean that is appointed in such concupiscence according to the rule
of human reason is seen under a different aspect from the mean which is
fixed according to the divine rule. For instance, in the consumption of food,
the mean fixed by human reason is that food should not harm the health of
the body nor hinder the use of reason; whereas according to the divine rule
it behooves man to chastise his body and bring it under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27)
by abstinence in food, drink, and the like. It is therefore evident that infused
and acquired temperance differ in species; and the same applies to the other
virtues. 8

Nor does it change matters to object that habits are known by their acts
and the act of infused temperance is identical with that of acquired temperance
(namely, the moderation or control of the pleasures of touch) and that there
fore there is no specific difference between them. St. Thomas answers this
objection by conceding the identity of the material object but insisting on the
specific and radical difference by reason of the formal object: "Both acquired
and infused temperance moderate desires for pleasures of touch, but for different
reasons as stated, wherefore their respective acts are not identical." 9 Therefore,
according to the teaching of St. Thomas, the infused virtues differ from the
acquired virtues, not only by reason of their entitative elevation, but also by
reason of their formal object, which makes them substantially superior to the
acquired virtues. 10

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6Ibid., q. 63, a. 4.
7Loc. cit.
8Ibid., ad 2. The identity of the acts is purely material and not formal, as St.
Thomas insists: "Although the act of the acquired and the infused virtue is
materially the same, it is not the same formally" (In III Sent., dist. 33, q. 1, a. 2).
9For further study on this point, see Garrigou-Lagrange, The Three Ages, I, pp.
57-65; Froget, The Indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the Souls of the Just, pp.
10Ibid., q. 110, a. 4, ad 1.
Let us now see into what category we are to place the infused virtues. Are they potencies or habits? Properly speaking, the infused virtues do not fit exactly into either category, although they are more habits than they are potencies. They have something of a potency so far as they give a power in the dynamic supernatural order, but they are not potencies strictly and formally speaking. And this for various reasons:

1) the potencies can be moved to their acts and can acquire habits, and if the infused virtues were true potencies, they would be able to acquire new habits, which is a contradiction, for they would then be acquired and infused at the same time;
2) the potencies are indifferent to good and evil, but virtues cannot act evilly;
3) the potencies as such do not increase in intensity (for example, the intellect, as a potency or power, does not itself increase, although its knowledge may increase), but the infused virtues do admit of an increase of intensity.

Hence the infused virtues belong more to the category of habits than to potencies.

But the infused virtues also lack something of the perfect definition of habits, since they do not give complete facility in operation, which is characteristic of true habits. They confer, it is true, an intrinsic inclination, ease and promptness for good, but they do not give an extrinsic facility because they do not remove all the obstacles to good, as is evident in the case of the converted sinner who experiences great difficulty in the performance of good because of his past acquired vices, in spite of the fact that he has received, together clearly between the facility which proceeds from custom and that which proceeds from the strong inhesion regarding the object of virtue. The first is not conferred by the infused virtues from the first instant of their infusion into the soul, but they confer the second. "Facility in performing the acts of virtue can proceed from two sources: from custom (and the infused virtue does not give object of the virtue, and this is found in the infused virtue at its very beginning)."

The reason why the infused virtues do not fit exactly into either of these categories—potencies and habits—is because supernatural entities cannot properly kind of participation. Nevertheless, they can be reduced more or less and by a certain analogy to natural categories. Thus sanctifying grace, as a spiritual and permanent accident, is reduced to the species of quality as an entitative habit, and the principles of supernatural operation are reduced to the species of quality as operative habits, although they do not have all the characteristics of these habits.12

The principal differences between the natural and supernatural, or the acquired and infused virtues are the following:

By reason of their essence. The natural or acquired virtues are habits in the strictest sense of the word. They do not give the power to act (for the faculty has that already), but they give facility in operation. The supernatural or infused virtues give the power to act supernaturally (without them it would be impossible, apart from an actual grace), but they do not always give facility in operation.

By reason of the efficient cause. The natural virtues are acquired by our own proper acts; the supernatural virtues are infused by God together with sanctifying grace.

By reason of the formal object. In the natural virtues it is the good according to the dictate and light of natural reason which is the rule or formal object; in the supernatural virtues it is the good according to the dictate and supernatural light of faith or conformity with the supernatural end.

From the foregoing distinctions it is evident that the infused virtues are specifically distinct and extraordinarily superior to the corresponding acquired or natural virtues.

There are four properties which the infused virtues have in common with the acquired natural virtues: 1) they consist in the mean or medium between the two extremes (except for the theological virtues, and even these do so by reason of the subject and mode); 2) in the state of perfection they are united among themselves by prudence (and the infused virtues by charity also); 3) they are unequal in perfection or eminence; 4) those which imply no imperfection endure after this life as to their formal elements.13

Besides these characteristics, let us review the characteristics or properties which are exclusive to the infused virtues.

12Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, III, q. 63, a. 3.
13Cf. ibid., qq. 64-67.
1) They always accompany sanctifying grace and are infused together with grace. This doctrine is common among the theologians, although it is not exactly defined by the Church.

2) They are really distinct from sanctifying grace. It suffices to recall in this respect that grace is an effetive habit infused into the essence of the soul, while the infused virtues are operative habits infused into the potencies, which are really distinct from the soul. 16

3) They are specifically distinct from the corresponding acquired natural virtues. This has been demonstrated above.

4) We possess the supernatural virtues imperfectly. We shall explain this more fully in the tract on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This particular characteristic has great importance in solving the question of the mystical state and Christian perfection. 18

5) They increase with sanctifying grace. This is clear from Scripture and the teaching of the Church. St. Paul writes to the Ephesians: "Rather are we to practice the truth in love, and so grow up in all things in him who is the head, Christ" (Eph. 4:15). To the Philippians he says: "And this I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and discernment" (Phil. 1:9). And he prays for the Romans "that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13). St. Peter writes: "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). Following the lead of the apostles, the Church asks in the liturgy for an "increase of faith, hope and charity." 21

6) They give us the intrinsic power for supernatural acts but not the extrinsic facility for those acts. We have already seen this fact, which explains why the repentant sinner experiences great difficulty in the practice of the virtues opposed to his former vices. It is necessary that these difficulties be overcome by the infused virtues, aided by the acquired virtues. The acquired virtues cannot assist the infused virtues intrinsically, of course, because the natural habit of the acquired virtues is absolutely incapable of intrinsically perfecting the supernatural habit of the infused virtues. But they can render such assistance extrinsically by removing the obstacles or the perverse inclinations and the disordered concurrence. When these obstacles are removed, the infused virtues begin to work promptly and delightfully. 18

7) They all disappear, except faith and hope, by mortal sin. The reason for this is that the infused virtues are like properties flowing from sanctifying grace. Hence when grace is destroyed they also are destroyed. Only faith and hope can remain, and they in an unformed and imperfect state, as the last effort of the infinite mercy of God so that the sinner may be more easily converted. 18 But if a man sins directly against either of these two remaining virtues, they also are destroyed, and the soul is then deprived of every trace of the supernatural.

8) They cannot diminish directly. This diminution could be caused only by venial sin or by the cessation of the acts of the corresponding virtue, for mortal sin does not diminish but destroys the infused virtues. But they cannot be diminished by venial sin because this, a deviation from the path which leads to God, leaves intact the tendency to the supernatural ultimate end which is proper to the infused virtues. Nor can they be diminished by the cessation of the acts of the virtues, for as infused virtues they were not acquired by the repetition of acts, and they cannot be lessened or diminished by the cessation of acts. Nevertheless, the infused virtues may be diminished indirectly by venial sins so far as these sins stifle the fervor of charity, impede progress in virtue, and predispose to mortal sin. 20

DIVISION OF THE INFUSED VIRTUES

Some of the infused virtues ordain the faculties to the end or goal, and others dispose them in regard to the means. The first group are the theological virtues; the second group are the moral virtues. The first correspond, in the order of grace, to the principles of the natural order which direct man to his natural end; the second correspond to the acquired virtues of the natural order which perfect man in regard to the means. Once again the close similarity and analogy between the natural and the supernatural orders are evident.

The existence of the theological virtues seems to be clearly stated in Sacred Scripture, as is evident from several texts of St. Paul. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5); "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6); "there abide faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Cor. 13:13). In the Council of Trent, the Church stated in equivalent formulas that man receives with sanctifying grace the other gifts of faith, hope, 19

Cf. Council of Trent, canon 28 on justification (Denz. 838); also see Denz. 1407, St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 1, a. 4.

Cf. St. Thomas, De virtutibus in communi, a. 10, ad 14.

Cf. ibid., q. 110, a. 4, ad 1.
18Cf. ibid., q. 68, a. 2.
19Cf. Collect, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.
18Cf. St. Thomas, De virtutibus in communi, a. 10, ad 14.
charity, etc. 21 Since the acts are not infused, it must be concluded that reference is here made to permanent habits or the infused virtues. Nevertheless, the question as to whether this doctrine has been expressly defined by the Church is disputed among theologians. Vega, Ripalda, Suárez and Pope Benedict XIV say that the doctrine has been defined, and they refer to the Council of Trent for verification; but Soto, Medina and Bátiz hold that Trent did not expressly define the doctrine, although it did state the doctrine equivalently. Consequently, this doctrine is at least a truth proxima fidei. Billet says that it is a most certain theological conclusion. As to the rest of the theologians, no ancient or modern theologian has ever denied the existence of the theological virtues except Peter Lombard. The Master of the Sentences erred in this matter; he identified charity with the Holy Ghost and thus destroyed it as a virtue.

The existence of the theological virtues is postulated by the very nature of sanctifying grace. Since grace is not immediately operative, it requires operative principles to grow and develop to perfection. Among these principles, some must refer to the supernatural end (theological virtues), and others must refer to the means which lead to that end (moral virtues). This argument takes its force principally from the suavity of the workings of divine providence, made known to us through revelation.

Nature

The theological virtues are operative principles by which we are directed and ordained directly and immediately to God as our supernatural end. They have God himself as their material object and one of his divine attributes as their formal object. Since they are strictly supernatural, only God can infuse them into the soul, and their existence can be known only through revelation. 22

Number

There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. The reason for this number is that by these three immediate union with God is realized perfectly. Faith enables us to know and unites us with God as First Truth; hope makes us desire him as the Supreme Good for us; charity unites us to him by the love of friendship, so far as he is infinite goodness in himself. There are no other aspects of union with God, for although the divine perfections of truth (by the intellect) and goodness (by the will). And only this latter admits of a twofold aspect, namely, good for us (hope) and goodness in itself (charity).

That the theological virtues are distinct among themselves is something beyond doubt, since they can actually be separated. Faith can subsist without hope and charity (as in one who commits a mortal sin of despair without losing his faith); charity will perdure eternally in heaven, separate from faith and hope, which will have disappeared; 23 finally, in this life faith and hope can subsist without charity, as always happens when one commits a mortal sin which is not directly opposed to faith or hope. It is evident that in all these instances faith and hope remain in the soul in an unformed or non-vital state, since charity is the form of the virtues, and for that reason they lack the proper and true reason of virtue. 24

One can distinguish two orders: the order of generation and the order of perfection. 25 By the order of generation or of origin the first is to know (faith), then to desire (hope), and lastly to attain (charity). 26 Although this gradation is by reason of acts, that by reason of the habits is the same: faith precedes hope and hope precedes charity, since the intellect precedes the will and imperfect love precedes perfect love.

According to the order of perfection, charity is the most excellent of the theological virtues ("And the greatest of these is charity"—I Cor. 13:13) because it is the one that unites us most intimately with God and the only one of the three that endures in eternity. As to the other two, Medina and Bátiz say that in se, as a theological virtue, faith is more excellent than hope because it bespeaks a relation with God in himself while hope presents God to us as a good for us, and also because faith is the foundation of hope. On the other hand, hope is more closely related to charity, and in this sense it is more perfect than faith.

According to the doctrine of St. Thomas, which is held by the majority of theologians, faith resides in the intellect, and hope and charity in the will. 27 Among the mystics, St. John of the Cross, in spite of the fact that he is Thomistic in his doctrine, places the virtue of hope in the memory. This is undoubtedly because he followed the division used by many of the ancient mystical theologians who spoke of a threefold spiritual faculty: intellect, memory and will, and more especially because this was a convenient division for explaining the purification of the memory in the mystical state.

The existence of the infused moral virtues was denied by numerous ancient theologians (Scotus, Durandus, Bieil), but today it is admitted by almost all theologians, in accordance with the doctrine of St. Augustine, St. Gregory and St. Thomas. The basis of this doctrine is to be found in Scripture. Thus, in the Book of Wisdom we are told that nothing is more useful in the life of a man, than temperance, prudence, fortitude and justice. "If one loves justice, the fruits of her works are virtues, for she teaches moderation and prudence, justice and fortitude, and nothing in life is more useful for men than these".

21 Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 65, a. 4.
22 C. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 62, a. 1.
23 C. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 62, a. 1.
24 C. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 62, a. 1.
26 C. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 62, a. 1.
27 C. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 62, a. 1.
are superior in perfection to the moral virtues. They are considered in themselves, cannot be excessive, and in this sense they do not consist in the mean or medium as do the moral virtues, but they can nevertheless go to excess in the manner of our operation, and it is that manner or mode which falls under the moral virtues. So it is that the moral virtues must be numerous, because there are so many ways in which the faculties can operate and these must be regulated in view of man's supernatural end.

St. Thomas establishes a fundamental principle of distinction for the moral infused virtues: “For every act in which there is found a special aspect of goodness, man must be disposed by a special virtue.” Accordingly, there will be as many moral virtues as there are species of honest objects which the appetitive faculties can discover as means leading to the supernatural end. St. Thomas studies and discusses more than fifty moral virtues in the Summa theologica, and perhaps it was not his intention to give us a complete and exhaustive treatment.

However, since ancient times it has been the custom to reduce the moral virtues to four principal ones, namely, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. They are expressly named in Sacred Scripture, as we have already seen, and are called the virtues most profitable for man in this life. They were also known to the ancient philosophers—Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Plotinus, Cicero, etc. Among the Fathers of the Church, St. Ambrose is apparently the first to call them cardinal virtues. The scholastic theologians unanimously subdivided the moral virtues on the basis of the four cardinal virtues.

28Cf. ibid., q. 58, a. 3; q. 66, a. 6.
29Cf. ibid., q. 64, a. 4; II-II, q. 17, a. 5, ad 2.
30Cf. ibid., II-II, q. 109, a. 2.
31The classification of the infused moral virtues made by St. Thomas in his Summa is surprisingly similar to the classifications of the acquired natural virtues which were made by the ancient philosophers such as Socrates, Aristotle and Plato. The philosophers deduced their classifications from a close and penetrating analysis of human psychology. The theologians base their classification on two fruitful principles, namely, that grace does not destroy nature but perfects and complements it, and that God can have no less providence in the supernatural order than in the natural order. As a result, they establish almost a perfect parallelism between the natural and the supernatural orders. This does not mean, however, that there cannot be more infused moral virtues than those which have been enumerated by the theologians.
32Cf. Wisd. 8:7. “Moderation” is called “temperance” explicitly in the Douay version.
33Expositio in Lucam (M.L. 15:1738).
The name "cardinal" virtues is derived from the Latin word *cardo*, the hinge of a door. The reason is that on these basic virtues hang all the moral life of man. St. Thomas maintains that these virtues can be called cardinal from two points of view: in a less proper sense, because they are certain general conditions or characteristics necessary for any virtue (in every virtue should shine forth prudence, justice, fortitude and moderation); more properly, so far as they pertain to the special matters in which principally shines forth the general material of the given virtue.  

Hence the cardinal virtues are in fact special virtues, not merely genera of virtue which contain or comprise all the other virtues. Consequently, they have their own proper matter, which is constituted by those objects in which those general conditions of all virtue shine forth to a maximum degree. It is true that all the virtues should participate in some way in those four general conditions, but it does not follow from this that every type of discretion will be produced by prudence, all rectitude by justice, all firmness by fortitude and all moderation by temperance. These virtues are those which effect those conditions in a principal manner and, as it were, by antonomasia, but they do not do so exclusively. Other virtues also share in these qualities, although to a lesser degree.

The principality of the cardinal virtues is demonstrated precisely in the influence which they exercise over their neighboring and subordinated virtues, which are like participations derived from the principal virtues, which communicate to the other virtues their mode, their manner of being and their is to function in secondary matters, reserving the principal matter for the corresponding cardinal virtue. The influence of the principal virtue is manifest in the subordinated virtues: he who has conquered the principal difficulty will more easily conquer the secondary one.

In this sense each one of the cardinal virtues can be considered as a genus which contains beneath itself the integral parts, the subjective parts and the potential parts. The integral parts refer to those useful or necessary complements which ought to concur for the perfect exercise of the virtue. Thus patience and constancy are integral parts of fortitude. The subjective parts are the various species subordinated to the principal virtue. Thus sobriety and chastity are subjective parts of temperance. The potential parts are those other virtues which do not have the full force and power of the principal virtue or are ordained to secondary acts. Thus the virtue of religion is annexed to justice because it has to do with rendering to God the cult that is due, although this cannot ever be done perfectly, because one cannot realize in this matter the condition of equality which is required for strict justice.

But does the principality of the cardinal virtues over the other virtues pertain also to their intrinsic excellence? Evidently not, for religion and penance are more excellent virtues than justice, since their object is more noble. Humility pertains to temperance, but is a more excellent virtue as a removers prohibens for all the other virtues.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to preserve the principality of the cardinal virtues as hings of the others, and they perform their function in a more perfect manner than do the other virtues. Thus commutative justice has more of the reason of justice than do religion or penance; the matter or object of any annexed virtue may be more excellent than that of the principal or cardinal virtue, but the mode of the cardinal virtue is always more perfect.

That there are precisely four cardinal virtues can be proved by various arguments:

*By reason of the object.* The good of reason, which is the object of virtue, is found in four ways: essentially in reason itself and by participation in the operations and passions, while among the passions there are those which impel to acts contrary to reason and others which withdraw from what reason dictates. Hence there should be a virtue which safeguards the good of reason itself (prudence), another which rectifies external operations (justice), one which goes against the passions which depart from the dictate of reason (fortitude), and one which restrains the disorderly impulses of passion (temperance).

*By reason of the subject.* There are four potencies of man capable of being subjects of the moral virtues, and in each one of them there should be a principal virtue: prudence in the reason, justice in the will, fortitude in the inascible appetite, and temperance in the concupiscible appetite.

*As a remedy against the four wounds of original sin.* Thus against ignorance of the intellect is placed prudence; justice is necessary against the malice of the will; against the weakness of the inascible appetite fortitude comes into play; and for the disorder of the concupiscible appetite is the remedy of temperance.

We reserve for a later discussion the treatment of the virtues in particular. For the time being, however, we offer the following schemata of the moral virtues, as treated in the *Summa*, grouped around the principal or cardinal virtue to which they are related. We shall also point out in passing the gift of virtue to which they are related. The Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the beatitude which corresponds to the various virtues, and the vices which are opposed to the various virtues.
PRUDENCE (II-II, q. 47)

A) INTEGRAL PARTS

a) considered in itself
   - regarding the past: memory (q. 49, a. 1)
   - regarding the future: understanding (a. 2)
   - regarding others: docility (a. 3)

b) in its predispositions
   - regarding self: sapacity (a. 4)
   - reasoning (a. 5)
   - regarding the end: foresight (a. 6)

c) its right use
   - regarding circumstances: circumspection (a. 7)
   - regarding obstacles: caution (a. 8)

B) SUBJECTIVE PARTS OR SPECIES

a) for governing oneself: monastic prudence
   - in a ruler: regenerative prudence (q. 50, a. 1)

b) for governing others (prudence of government)
   - in the subjects: political prudence (a. 2)
   - in the family: domestic prudence (a. 3)
   - in war: military prudence (a. 4)

C) POTENTIAL PARTS (q. 57, a. 6)

a) for right counsel: ebullia (q. 51, aa. 1-2)

b) for judging according to common rules: synesis (a. 3)

c) for rightly departing from common law: gnome (a. 4)

Justifying Gift of the Holy Ghost: counsel (q. 52, aa. 1-3)

Contrary Vices

a) manifestly contrary (q. 53)
   - imprudence (aa. 1-2)
   - negligence (q. 54)

b) false prudence (q. 55)
   - prudence of the flesh (aa. 1-2)
   - craftiness (a. 3)
   - excessive solicitude (aa. 6-7)

68

JUSTICE (II-II, q. 58)

A) INTEGRAL PARTS (q. 79)

a) do good (i.e., the good due to another)

b) avoid evil (i.e., the evil harmful to another)

B) SUBJECTIVE PARTS OR SPECIES

a) toward the community: legal justice (q. 58, aa. 5-6)

b) individually
   - (particular justice)
     - of ruler to subjects: distributive justice

C) POTENTIAL PARTS (q. 80)

- toward God: religion (q. 81; also penance after sin)
- toward parents: piety (q. 101)
- toward superiors: observance (q. 102)
- obedience (q. 104)
- for benefits received: gratitude (q. 106)
- for injuries received: just punishment (q. 108)

- in promises
  - fidelity (q. 110, a. 3, ad 5)
  - regarding truth: veracity (q. 109)
  - in word and deed:
    - simplicity (q. 109, a. 2, ad 4; q. 111, a. 3, ad 2)

b) lack of strict debt:

- association with others: affability (q. 114)
- for moderating love of wealth: liberality (q. 117)
- for departing for just cause from letter of the law: equity (q. 120)

Corresponding Gift of the Holy Ghost: piety (q. 121, a. 1)

Corresponding Beatitude: meekness (a. 2)
### VICES CONTRARY TO JUSTICE

#### A) Against justice in general: injustice (q. 59)

#### B) Against distributive justice: respect of persons (q. 63)

#### C) Against commutative justice:

##### a) in deed

- against persons: murder (q. 64)
- mutilation (q. 65, a. 1)
- flagellation (a. 2)
- imprisonment (a. 3)

- against things: theft and robbery (q. 66)
- on the part of judges (q. 67)
- on the part of the accused (q. 68)
- on the part of the guilty (q. 69)
- on the part of witnesses (q. 70)
- on the part of lawyers (q. 71)
- contumely (q. 72)
- defamation (q. 73)
- murmuring (q. 74)
- derision (q. 75)
- cursing (q. 76)

##### b) in word

- outside of judgment
- fraud (q. 77)

##### c) in voluntary exchanges
- usury (q. 78)

#### D) Against the potential parts of justice:

- superstition (q. 92)
- undue worship (q. 93)
- idolatry (q. 94)
- divination (q. 95)
- vain observance (q. 96)
- tempting God (q. 97)
- perjury (q. 98)
- sacrilege (q. 99)
- simony (q. 100)

##### a) against religion

- impiety (q. 101, prologue)
- excessive love (q. 101, a. 4)

##### b) against piety

- excessive love (q. 101, a. 4)

##### c) against obedience: disobedience (q. 105)

##### d) against gratitude: ingratitude (q. 107)

##### e) against just punishment

- excessive indulgence (q. 108, a. 2, ad 3)

##### f) against truth

- lying (q. 110)
- simulation and hypocrisy (q. 111)
- boasting (q. 112)
- treachery (q. 113)

##### g) against friendship

- avarice (q. 115)
- spirit of contradiction (q. 116)

##### h) against liberality

- prodigality (q. 119)

##### i) against equity: legal plunder (q. 120, a. 1, ad 1)

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### FORTITUDE (II-II, q. 123)

#### A) ITS PRINCIPAL ACT: martyrdom (q. 124)

#### B) NO SUBJECTIVE PARTS (q. 128) because of its determined matter.

#### C) INTEGRAL AND POTENTIAL PARTS*

##### a) regarding action

- as to the end: magnanimity (q. 129)
- as to means: magnificence (q. 134)

- against present evils
- patience (q. 136, aa. 1-4)
- longanimity (a. 5)

- in the exercise of virtue
- perseverance (q. 137, aa. 1, 2, 4)
- constancy (a. 5)

#### CORRESPONDING GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST: fortitude (q. 139, a. 1)

#### CORRESPONDING BEATITUDE: hunger and thirst for justice (a. 2)

### CONTRARY VICES

#### a) to fortitude itself

- timidity or cowardice (q. 125)
- impollissibility (q. 126)
- audacity or rashness (q. 127)
- presumption (q. 130)
- ambition (q. 131)
- vainglory (q. 132)
- pusillanimity (q. 133)
- meanness or niggardliness (q. 135, a. 1)
- wastefulness (a. 2)

#### b) to patience

- insensibility
- impatience

#### c) to perseverance

- inconstancy (q. 138, a. 1)

#### d) to perseverance

- pertinacity (a. 2)

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*These are the same: integral parts pertain to dangers of death; potential parts pertain to lesser dangers.
5: THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

In general usage, a gift signifies anything that one person gives to another out of liberality and with benevolence.¹ We say "out of liberality" to signify that on the part of the giver a gift excludes any notion of debt or obligation, not only in justice but in gratitude or any other kind of debt. And we say "with benevolence" to signify the intention of the giver to benefit him who receives the gift gratuitously.

The exclusion of all debt of justice or gratitude is necessary by reason of the gift; otherwise there would be no way of distinguishing between a gift and a reward or recompense. Likewise, there should be no need of any compensation or recompense incurred on the part of the one who receives the gift. We are not treating here of a do ut des situation but of a completely gratuitous bestowal which exacts nothing in return. A gift is something unreturnable, as St. Thomas says, quoting Aristotle.² Nevertheless, the notion of a gift does not exclude gratitude on the part of the one receiving the gift; even more, it sometimes demands the good use of the gift, depending on the nature of the gift and the intention of the giver, as when one gives something in order that the receiver be perfected by its use. Such are the gifts which God bestows on his creatures.

The first great gift of God is the Holy Spirit, who is the very love by which God loves himself and loves us. It is said of the Holy Ghost in the liturgy of the Church that he is the Gift of God.³ The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the first gift of God, not only as substantial love in the intimate life of the Trinity, but as he dwells in us through the divine mission.

From this first gift proceed all other gifts of God. In the last analysis, whatever God gives to his creatures, both in the supernatural and in the natural order, is nothing more than a completely gratuitous effect of his liberal and benevolent transfer of the ownership of something to another person.⁴

¹According to A. Gardell, O.P., in his article on the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, a gift is "the gratuitous and benevolent transfer of the ownership of something to another person."

²Cf. Summa, I-II, q. 68, a. 1, obj. 3.

³Cf. Venti Creator.
infinite love. In a wide sense, whatever we have received from God is a "gift of the Holy Ghost," but this expression may have various specific meanings:

1) In a wide sense, the gifts of the Holy Ghost are all those gifts of God which do not include that first gift which is the Holy Spirit himself; for example, the natural gifts given by God to his creatures.

2) In a less wide sense, they are the gifts which, without necessarily including that first gift not presupposing that the soul must be in the state of grace and charity, pertain nevertheless to the supernatural order. Such gifts are principally the gratae gratis datae, actual prevalent graces, servile fear of God, supernatural attention and uniformed faith and hope.

3) In a more proper sense, they are gifts of the Holy Ghost which include the first great gift of God and presuppose or place the soul in the state of grace and friendship with God. For example, sanctifying grace, charity, faith and hope informed by charity, the infused moral virtues, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

4) In the formal and most proper sense, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are those which we are now to study in particular, namely, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

THE GIFTS THEMSELVES

EXISTENCE

The existence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost can be known to us only through revelation, since they are supernatural realities which completely transcend the light of natural reason. St. Thomas begins with this supposition in the treatise on the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the Summa theologica, and says that in the doctrine on the gifts we should follow the mode of speaking as found in Sacred Scripture, where they are revealed to us. Let us first investigate the scriptural foundation for the existence of the gifts, and then we shall briefly examine the doctrine of tradition, the magisterium of the Church, and the teaching of theologians.

Sacred Scripture

The classical text of Isaias is usually quoted as the scriptural foundation for the doctrine on the gifts of the Holy Ghost: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord." (Is. 11:1-3). This text is clearly Messianic and properly refers only to the Messiah. Nevertheless, the Fathers of the Church and the Church herself have extended the meaning to the faithful of Christ in virtue of the universal principle of the economy of grace which St. Paul enunciated: "For those whom he has foreknown he has also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29).

From this it is inferred that whatever perfection is found in Christ, our Head, if it is communicable, is found also in his members united to him through grace. And it is evident that the gifts of the Holy Spirit pertain to communicable perfections, if we bear in mind the need we have of them. Hence, since grace is so prodigal in supplying for those things which are necessary, and as least as prodigal as nature itself, we may rightly conclude that the seven spirits which the prophet says descended and rest upon Christ are also the patrimony of all those who are united to him in charity.

In addition to this text, which the Fathers and the Church have interpreted as a clear allusion to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, authors are wont to cite other texts from the Old and New Testament. We shall omit them, not only because it is not our task here to investigate the true meaning of these texts, but because it seems evident that the use of most of these scriptural texts can lead to nothing but conjectures. It must be admitted that the doctrine on the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Sacred Scripture rests almost exclusively on the text from Isaias, although that text, explained, confirmed and clarified by

*The text from Isaias offers no few exegetical problems. P. F. Ceupens, O.P., made a study of this problem and offered the following conclusions: 1) The gifts really exist and proceed from Yahweh, for the spirit of Yahweh in the Old Testament is not the person of the Holy Ghost but God himself. But since in the New Testament the work of grace is ascribed in a special manner to the Holy Ghost, it is acknowledged as the author of the gifts. 2) The gifts were conferred on Christ after the manner of habits, but so much is mentioned in Isaias of the conferment of these gifts on the members or the faithful of Christ. 3) Although the real distinction between the gifts and the infused virtues is nowhere mentioned in Isaias, nevertheless a vestige of the distinction may perhaps be found in the repetition of the word "spirit." 4) It is not explicitly taught either in Isaias or in any other place in Scripture that there are seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. This doctrine was only perfectly expounded in the time of the Scholastics. Cf. Angelicum, VI (1928), pp. 525-38.

These are the principal texts cited: Old Testament—Gen. 41:38; Exod. 31:3; Num. 24:2; Deut. 34:9; Judg. 6:34; Ps. 31:29; 32:9, 118:120, 144, 142:10; Wis. 7:28, 7 and 22, 9:17, 10:10; Sirach 15:5; Is. 11:2, 6:1; Mich. 3:8. New Testament—Lk. 12:12, 24:25; Jn. 3:8, 14:17, 26; Acts 2:2, 38; Rom. 8:14, 26; I Cor. 12:10, 12:8; Apoc. 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6.
the Fathers of the Church, the magisterium of the Church and scholastic theologians, gives us a firm foundation for the existence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, not only in Christ, but in each of the faithful in the state of grace. Some theologians believe that the double existence of the gifts is formally revealed in Scripture; others maintain that it is at most a certain conclusion which is *proxima fidei*.

Fathers of the Church

Both the Greek and the Latin Fathers have treated extensively of the gifts of the Holy Ghost under various titles. Among the Greek Fathers the outstanding names are St. Justin, Origen, St. Cyril, St. Gregory Nazianzen and Didymus. Among the Latins, the primacy in this question goes to St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great, and to a lesser degree to St. Victorinus, St. Hilary, St. Ambrose and St. Jerome. In St. Thomas we find a synthesis and complete summary of their teaching.

Magisterium of the Church

Only one council of the Church speaks expressly of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, affirming them of Christ: the Roman Synod held in 382 under St. Damasus. Whether or not the Council of Trent referred to the gifts is still disputed and nothing can be said for certain.

The teaching of the Church is much clearer in the liturgy. In the hymn *Veni Creator* reference is made to the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost: *Tou sepiansmum diuegits paterna* decretae. In the Sequence of the Mass for Pentecost the Holy Ghost is asked for: his seven gifts: *Da tuis fidelibus in te confidentibus sacram septenarium.* In the hymn for Matins of the same feast we read: *Solemnis urgeth dies* quo *mystico septemplici orbis volutus septies signat beatu tempora.* And in Vespers another reference is made to the gifts: *Te nunc Deus piasime vultu precosum ceruus illapsi nobis caelis largire dona Spiritus.*

In the administration of the sacrament of confirmation the bishop prays with hands extended over the faithful to be confirmed: *Emite in eos septiformem Spiritum Sanctum Paracletum de caelis.* Amen. *Spiritum sanctum inter Iesus et fortitudinis. Amen. Spiritum sanctum.*

4P. Aldama, S.J., believes that the existence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is not a conclusion elaborated from one premise of faith and another premise of reason, but that it is a conclusion which follows from two formally revealed truths, namely, the existence of the gifts in Christ as the Messias (Is. 11:1-2) and the fact that these are *in plenitude* (Jn. 1:13-14). (Cf. "Los dones del Espiritu Santo," Revista Espanola de Teologia, XI [1949], p. 5.)


GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

et pietatis. Amen. Adimple eos spiritu timoris tua. . . . 11 Hence the Church, in the solemn moment of the administration of a sacrament, recognizes and applies to each of the faithful the famous Messianic text from Isaiah.

The *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, which enjoys great authority among theologians, says that "from these gifts of the Holy Ghost . . . we derive the rules of Christian living, and through them are able to know whether the Holy Ghost dwells in us." In all the Catholic catechisms throughout the world there is a section which treats of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Lastly, Pope Leo XIII, in his admirable Encyclical *Divinum Iudicium Munus*, of May 9, 1897, recalls and makes his own the testimony of Catholic tradition on the existence, necessity, nature and marvelous effects of the gifts:

More than this, the just man, that is to say, he who lives the life of divine grace and acts by the fitting virtues as by means of faculties, has need of those seven gifts which are properly attributed to the Holy Ghost. By means of these gifts the soul is furnished and strengthened so as to be able to obey more easily and promptly his voice and impulse. Wherefore these gifts are of such efficacy that they lead the just man to the highest degree of sanctity; and of such excellence that they continue to exist even in heaven, though in a more perfect way. By means of these gifts the soul is excited and encouraged to seek and attain the evangelical beatitudes which, like the flowers that come forth in the springtime, are signs and harbingers of eternal beatitude.

On the question of the existence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the teaching of theologians interests us only as a witness to the tradition of the Church, since they could not create a doctrine which treats of supernatural realities. The theology of the gifts underwent a slow and laborious development through the centuries, but its existence was always universally admitted by all, except for rare exceptions. Today there is no theologian who denies the existence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, although there is still great discussion concerning their nature and function.

In general, we may conclude with respect to the existence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, backed by the solid support of Scripture and the testimony of tradition, that we can be absolutely certain of the existence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in all souls in the state of grace. Even more, there are some theologians of great authority who maintain that the existence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is an article of faith. 14 Although the Church has not expressly

11Rituale Romanum, c. 9, n. 3.
14Among them, John of St. Thomas, the greatest of the commentators on the doctrine of Aquinas on the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He says that it is not only *de fide* that these gifts were in Christ and were supernatural, but that it is *de fide* also that these gifts are given to us and are supernatural. Cf. *Cursus theologici*, in I-II, disp. 18, a. 2, n. 4 (Paris: 1885), VI, p. 583.
defined this point, if we consider the constant teaching of the Fathers of the Church through the centuries, the mind of the Church in her liturgy and in the administration of the sacraments, the unanimous consent of theologians, and the sense of all the faithful throughout the world, it would seem that one has sufficient basis for saying that this is a truth of faith proposed by the ordinary magisterium of the Church. Those who would not dare to say this much will at least affirm that it is a theological conclusion that is most certain and _proxima fidel._

**NUMBER OF THE GIFTS**

This is another question which is greatly disputed among exegetes and theologians. There are two principal difficulties involved: 1) in Sacred Scripture the number seven is classically interpreted to signify a certain indefinite plenitude; 2) in the Masoretic text of Isaias only six gifts are enumerated, for the gift of piety is not mentioned.

Modern exegetes are inclined to think that the text of Isaias refers to an indefinite plenitude. It is the plenitude of the qualities of government which pertain to the Messiah as King. The Fathers and the scholastic theologians, however, insist on the number seven, and on the basis of the sevenfold gift they establish their classifications and parallelisms with the infused virtues. St. Thomas dedicates an ingenious article in his _Summa theologica_ to justify this number.

What are we to think of all this? In our opinion, one should conclude as follows. First of all, it is true that in Scripture the number seven is often used to designate an indefinite plenitude, and perhaps this is the meaning of the passage in Isaias. But one cannot draw from this any conclusive argument against the fact that there are seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. Actually, plenitude may be completely undetermined, and thus an indefinite number which is not known exactly; or it may be restricted to a definite number of the possible realities. According to the interpretation of the Fathers, the teaching of the Church (in her liturgy, in the administration of the sacraments, and in papal encyclicals), and the unanimous consent of theologians, the plenitude expressed by Isaias should be taken in this is to be found the plenitude of the graces which God grants to men _ex opere operato_, so the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as seven distinct habits, comprise the plenitude of the movements of the divine Spirit which are communicated to us through those gifts.

Secondly, as regards the Masoretic text which enumerates only six gifts, nothing can be concluded against the existence of the gift of piety. Various explanations have been offered for this omission in the text, but whatever the reason, it is certain that the gift of piety is mentioned in the Vulgate (which is substantiated by a declaration of the Church which states that there are no dogmatic errors in this version), in the version of the Septuagint, in patristic tradition, in the official teachings of the Church, and in the unanimous teaching of theologians. To prescind from this enormous weight of authority because of certain textual obscurities in the Masoretic text would seem to be excessive. Many things formally revealed in Sacred Scripture did not appear in their fulness except through the interpretations of the Fathers and the magisterium of the Church. Such seems to be the case with the gift of piety. Whatever the text of Isaias, St. Paul marvelously describes that reality which theology recognizes as the gift of piety when he writes to the Romans: "For whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage so as to be again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by virtue of which we cry: 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14-16).

St. Thomas studies the metaphysical nature of the gifts of the Holy Ghost by asking whether they are habits, in order to determine the proximate genus in the essential definition of the gifts. The reply is in the affirmative, and theologians of all schools hold for the same response, with a few notable exceptions. Hugh of St. Victor says that the gifts are like seeds of virtue, a certain preparation for them, after the manner of first movements and aspirations of the soul. Vázquez says that the gifts are actual movements and not habits. Cardinal Billot, who introduced so many innovations in his treatise on the infused virtues, instead of admitting that the gifts are habits, identifies them with actual graces which do not necessarily presuppose the presence of habits in the soul and can be received even by sinners.

Against all these opinions, and in accordance with the doctrine of St. Thomas, we hold the following proposition: The gifts of the Holy Ghost are strictly supernatural or per se infused habits.

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12Cf. _Summa, I-II, q. 68, a. 4._
13This explanation is proposed by Aldana in the _Revista Española de Teologia, art. cit., p. 26_, and in _Sacrae Theologiae Summa_ (Madrid: 1956), III, p. 730.
That they are strictly supernatural or infused per se is evident. Their intimate nature (the formal quod and formal quo objects in scholastic terminology) transcends completely (simpliciter) the powers of nature, so that they cannot be acquired by human efforts. Therefore, either the gifts do not exist or they are necessarily infused by God. The arguments are as follows:

From the teaching of Sacred Scripture. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Lord stated: "He will dwell with you, and be in you" (Jn. 14:17). But the Holy Ghost is not in men without his gifts; the gifts also dwell in men, and hence they are not acts or transitory movements but true habits.

By analogy with the moral virtues. The moral virtues dispose the faculties of the soul to follow the rule of reason; therefore, they are habits. The gifts of the Holy Spirit dispose the faculties of the soul to follow the movement of the Holy Ghost; therefore, they also are habits. The gifts of the Holy Ghost fill the same role with respect to the Holy Ghost as the moral virtues do with respect to reason.

By reason of the necessity of the gifts for salvation. The gifts are necessary for salvation; therefore, they must be in the soul permanently, and hence they are habits. That they are necessary for salvation is demonstrated by St. Thomas, as we shall see later. That gifts of this kind are habits is proved by the authority of St. Gregory, who says: "By those gifts without which one cannot obtain life the Holy Ghost always dwells in all the elect, but he does not always dwell by his other gifts."

Psychological argument. The dispositive qualities by which men are habitually moved or can be moved by a principal mover are the habits. But the gifts by definition are dispositive qualities by which man is habitually moved or can be moved by the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the gifts are habits. The major is clear; it expresses the difference between a habit and a simple disposition. The minor follows from the very nature of that kind of motion which is an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which is proper and characteristic of the gifts.

Against this doctrine, which is of capital importance in the Thomistic synthesis, various difficulties can be raised. Their solution will enable us to see more clearly the nature of the gifts.

There is no reason to multiply things without necessity. But for a man to be moved by the inspiration or instinct of the Holy Ghost an actual grace suffices. Therefore, the gifts are not habits but actual graces.

Response. We concede the major but distinguish the minor. Actual grace is sufficient on the part of the principal mover, we concede; it is sufficient on the part of the soul, we subdistinguish: actual grace suffices where the motion is not produced in the manner of a habit, we concede; it suffices where the motion is produced after the manner of a habit, we deny. Therefore, in virtue of these distinctions, we deny the consequence and nexus. We explain as follows: The movement of grace can be considered in two ways: 1) so far as it proceeds from the Holy Ghost, and thus every movement of the Holy Spirit in man can be called and is an actual grace; 2) so far as this movement is received in the soul, and this requires another distinction: a) so far as it is a certain impulse or illumination generically considered which could be granted even to sinners; b) as a special movement so that the soul must have some disposition to receive it and to be moved promptly and easily under its influence. And this again can happen in two ways: i) to be moved in a human manner, according to the rule of reason enlightened by faith (and for this we have the infused virtues); ii) to be moved in the manner of the movement itself, that is, in a divine or superhuman manner, and for this we need the habits of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

From this it can be seen that Billot incorrectly identifies the movement of the gifts with actual grace. With all due respect, we must reject his theory for the following reasons:

1) Actual grace is required for every act of virtue, even the most imperfect; but the movement of the gifts is not required for every act of virtue. Therefore, they are two distinct things.

2) Actual grace is given even to sinners so that they will be converted; but the movement of the gifts presupposes the state of grace, from which the gifts are inseparable. Therefore, the two cannot be identified.

The ultimate disposition already corresponds to the form; but the ultimate disposition to receive the movement of the Holy Spirit corresponds to the movement itself. Therefore, the gifts are not required as habits.

Response. It is necessary to distinguish. The ultimate disposition for receiving the movement of the Holy Spirit will correspond with the movement itself in actum secundo, we concede; in actum proximo primo, we subdistinguish: the disposition produced by the Holy Ghost will be possessed in the form of a habit by infusion, we concede; in the form of an act, we deny. And we explain: Potency bespeaks a relation to act in four ways:

1) radicadamente, and in this sense it is nothing other than the nature itself of the subject-agent—in our case the human soul—in which the power or faculty is rooted;

2) as ordered to the first remote act (actus primo remoto), and this is the nature endowed with the potency or faculty (for example, the soul endowed with intellect and will);

3) as ordered to the first proximate act (actus primo proximo), and this is the nature, not only endowed with the power or faculty, but also with...
the habits and dispositions, acquired or infused, to work promptly, with ease and with delight; 4) as ordained to the second act (actus secundus), and this is the very operation or movement of the faculty in question.

Now the disposition for this last operation is certainly bestowed by the movement itself, and is the last disposition. Only in this sense is it said that the ultimate disposition corresponds to the form. In the objection, 3) and 4) were confused. Whence, one can see how violent would be the motion of the Holy Spirit without the habits of the gifts. It would be absolutely possible, but it would be a violent movement for the soul because the soul would have to leap from the actus primum remotus (2) to the actus secundus (4) without passing through the actus primum praemunis (3).

When the motor power of the agent is infinite, no previous disposition is required for movement; but the motor power of the Holy Spirit is infinite. Therefore, previous habits are not necessary in the soul for it to be moved by the Holy Ghost.

Response. We have already admitted that, absolutely speaking, the Holy Spirit could directly move the powers of the soul without the necessity of the habit of the gifts. But this is not the ordinary manner of divine providence, which always works slowly and desires that men dispose themselves freely to receive the divine inspirations and movements. This question must be resolved on the basis of the fact that the gifts exist—a fact we believe established beyond all doubt. It is not a question of what the Holy Ghost could do, but of what he has done in reality.

The reason for the infusion of the supernatural habits is to make the divine movements conatural, as it were, to the Sons of God. God does not wish that the acts of the virtues of the supernatural order be less perfect even in the mode of their production—than the works of the natural order which proceed from the acquired habits. Let us not forget that man, though moved by God in the supernatural order, is also moved by his own free will; and even though under the movement of the gifts of the Holy Spirit he is led in a much more passive manner than under the influence of the infused virtues, he always remains endowed with free will and never ceases entirely to be an agent, even under the action of the Holy Ghost. For that reason also he must be perfected by the habitual qualities of the gifts.

Man receives from the gifts of the Holy Ghost a perfection which renders him readily moved by the same Spirit; but so far as he is moved by the Holy Ghost, man is converted, in a certain way, into a mere instrument of the it is not fitting for an instrument to be perfected by a habit but only the principal agent.

Response. This reason is valid for the instrument that is completely inert, which does not move itself, but is moved (as a brush or hammer). But man is not such an instrument; he is moved by the Holy Spirit in such wise that he also moves himself, so far as he is endowed with free will. Therefore, he does need a habit. Whence it follows that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are not purely active habits nor purely passive habits, but rather passive-active. In relation to the divine movement they are receptive or passive habits, but with respect to the vital reaction of the soul they are active habits. To summarize, as man by the acquired virtues is disposed to be readily and easily moved by the dictate of simple natural reason for his naturally good acts, and by the infused virtues to be moved by reason enlightened by faith to supernatural acts in a human mode or manner, so by the gifts of the Holy Ghost the just man is connaturalized, so to speak, for the acts to which he is moved by a special instinct or impulse of the Holy Ghost in a divine or superhuman manner.

Until the time of St. Thomas it was not settled whether the gifts were really distinct from the infused virtues or whether there was only a rational distinction between them. But thanks to the marvelous synthesis of Aquinas, the real, specific distinction between the virtues and the gifts has been established. It is true that some theologians will still raise a discordant note, especially among the Scotists, but there are few exceptions in modern theology that it can be said that the opinion is now unanimous among theologians.

In spite of certain variations in expression, the doctrine of Aquinas is the same in all his writings. He begins by listing certain erroneous opinions and answering them. 1) The gifts are not distinguished from the virtues. But if this be so, why are certain virtues called gifts and others not? 2) The gifts perfect reason; the virtues perfect the will. That would be true if all the gifts were intellectual and all the virtues were affective; but such is not the case. 3) The virtues are ordained to good operations; the gifts are ordained to resist temptation. But in fact the virtues also offer resistance to temptations. 4) The virtues are ordained simpliciter to operation; the gifts are ordained to conform us with Christ, and especially in his passion. Yet Christ himself impels us to be conformed to him in humility, meekness and charity; and these are virtues, not gifts.

Having rejected the errors, St. Thomas proceeds to explain the positive doctrine. In the first place he cites St. Gregory, who distinguishes perfectly...
DOCTINAL PRINCIPLES

the seven gifts of the theological and cardinal virtues. The gifts are represented by the seven sons of Jove; the theological virtues are represented by his three daughters; and the cardinal virtues are represented by the four corners of the house. The exegesis of St. Gregory may be dismissed as ingenious, but there can be no doubt of his conviction that the gifts are distinct from the virtues—the point St. Thomas wished to prove. St. Thomas then states that, if we consider simply the name "gifts," we cannot find any difference between the infused virtues and the gifts because they are all gifts received gratuitously from God:

For that reason, in order to distinguish between the gifts and the virtues, we must be guided by the manner in which Sacred Scripture expresses itself, for we find that the term used there is "spirit" rather than "gift." For it is written thus (Is. 11:2-3): "The spirit of wisdom and of understanding shall rest upon him"; from which words we are clearly given to understand that these seven are there set down as being in us by divine inspiration, and inspiration denotes motion from without.

But it must be noted that in man there is a twofold principle of movement: one within him, namely, the reason, and the other extrinsic to him, namely, God. Now it is evident that whatever is moved must be proportionate to its mover; and the perfection of the mobile as such consists in a disposition whereby it is disposed to be well moved by its mover. Hence the more exalted the mover, the more perfect must be the disposition whereby the mobile is made proportionate to its mover. Thus we see that a disciple needs a more perfect disposition in order to receive a higher teaching from his master. Now it is evident that human virtues perfect man according as it is natural for him to be moved by his reason in his interior and exterior actions. Consequently, man needs yet higher perfections whereby he can be moved by God. These perfections are called "gifts," not only because they are infused by God, but also because by them man is disposed to become amenable to the divine inspiration, according to Is. 50:5: "The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist. I have not gone back," since there is no need to take counsel according to human reason, but only to follow their inner promptings, since they are moved by a principle higher than human reason. This, then, is what some say, namely, that the gifts perfect man for acts which are higher than acts of virtue.31

Differences

There is no need to add any commentary to this clear exposition of the doctrine, but we shall investigate further the reasons for the specific difference between the virtues and the gifts. To do this, we need only list the common characteristics of the virtues and the gifts and then point out their differences.

The principal common properties are the following:

1) They are generically the same because both are operative habits.
2) They have the same efficient cause, namely, God, and therefore they are both infused per se and are totally supernatural.

3) They have the same subject in quo: the human faculties.
4) They have the same material object (materia circa quae): all moral matter.
5) They have the same final cause (remote end): the supernatural perfection of man, incipient in this world and consummated in the world to come.

The following are the differences between the virtues and the gifts:

1) By reason of the motor cause. As habits, the gifts and the virtues have the same efficient cause, namely, God, the author of the supernatural order. But the motor cause or principle is completely distinct. In the virtues it is human reason (for the infused virtues, reason illumined by faith and under the previous motion of God through an actual grace). The gifts, on the other hand, are under the motor principle of the Holy Ghost, who moves the habit of the gifts as his direct and immediate instruments. For that reason the habits of the infused virtues can be used when we please, presupposing an actual grace, but the gifts of the Holy Spirit are actuated only when he wishes to move them.

2) By reason of the formal object. As is known, the formal object is that which properly specifies an act or a habit. Habits and acts may have in common the same two extrinsic causes (efficient and final) and even the same material cause (which is a generic element and not specific), but if they differ by reason of their formal object, the habits must be classed as specifically distinct, though they agree in all other respects. This is precisely what happens with the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. They have, as we have seen, the same efficient cause, final cause and material cause, and yet their specific difference is evident by reason of the distinction between their formal objects.

The formal object may be considered under a double aspect: a) that by which the act is constituted in its proper nature and is distinct from every other act by reason of a determined aspect or reason (objectum quod: ratio sub quae); b) that which is a terminus of the act or habit under the precise aspect of being (objectum quod). For example, the act of seeing has for its formal constitutive object (objectum quod) the taking of something which is another's—it is this which is its formal cause and essentially constitutes this act an act of seeing. The formal terminative object of this act (objectum quod) is the object taken, the thing of another as such. Let us now apply these notions to the questions of the gifts and the infused virtues.

The terminative formal object (objectum formale quod). The terminative formal object of human acts, considered as moral, is the honest good, in contradistinction to the useful or delightful good which, as such, cannot be a norm of morality. Under this aspect the gifts do not differ...
from the virtues, for both tend to the honest good. But this honest good has two aspects, depending on whether it comes under this dictate of reason illuminated by faith or the rule of the Holy Ghost. But this aspect falls into the area of the formal quod object or the ratio sub quod, which is the properly differentiating element and specifying element.

The constitutive formal object (objectum quod). The formal object quod or ratio sub quod is totally distinct in the infused virtues and in the gifts. In the infused virtues the proximate and immediate rule is human reason enlightened by faith, so that an act is good if it is in accord with this dictate and evil if it departs from it. In the gifts, on the other hand, the proximate and immediate rule of action is the Holy Spirit himself, who directly governs and moves the gifts as his instruments, impressing on them his direction and causing the acts to be produced for divine reasons which surpass even the level of reason illuminated by faith.

Thus the acts of the gifts proceed from a formal motive which is completely distinct. This argues for a specific distinction between the gifts and the virtues, for habits are specified by their acts and acts are specified by their formal objects. Hence specifically distinct objects evoke specifically distinct acts, and these latter correspond to specifically distinct habits.

3) By reason of the human and divine mode. This difference necessarily follows from the foregoing. An operation must be of the same mode as the motor cause which impels it and the norm or rule to which it is adjusted. Since the infused virtues have man as their motor cause and reason illuminated by faith as their rule, they necessarily impress their acts or operations with a human mode. On the other hand, and for the same reasons, since the gifts have as their motor cause and as their rule norm the Holy Ghost, their acts must be vested with a mode which corresponds to their motor cause and norm, namely, a divine or superhuman mode.

From this third difference flow two conclusions of exceptional importance in ascetical and mystical theology: 1) the radical imperfection of the infused virtues by reason of the human mode of their operation and the inevitable necessity that the gifts come to their aid to give them a divine mode of operation, without which the infused virtues can never reach full perfection; 2) the impossibility of an operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a human mode or manner, whereas their divine mode is precisely an element of specific differentiation between the virtues and the gifts. An operation of the gifts modo humano would be a contradiction.

4) By reason of human will and divine will. We can use the infused virtues when we wish, but the gifts of the Holy Spirit operate only when he wishes. These latter habits are not under our control as regards use, and the reason is clear. All the habits which are under the control of reason are subject to our will as to their exercise because they are our acts in every sense of the word. But the gifts are habits which confer on the soul the only facility to be moved by the Holy Ghost, who is the unique motor cause in those operations; the soul can do no more than cooperate in these operations or movements, though it does so consciously and freely, by not placing any obstacle and by seconding the impulse of the Holy Spirit with its own docility.

In the actuation of these habits, we do no more than dispose ourselves (for example, by restraining the tumult of the passions, affection for creatures, distractions and phantasms which impede God's action, etc.), so that the Holy Ghost can move us as and when he pleases. In this sense we may say that our acts are the dispositive causes for the actuation of the gifts. That is what St. Teresa of Avila means when she says: "The first kind of prayer I experienced which seems to me supernatural I should describe as one which cannot, in spite of all our efforts, be acquired by industry or diligence; but we can certainly prepare for it, and it must be a great help if we do." It is therefore necessary that the subject dispose himself so that the gifts may operate in him, not by a proper and formal disposition (for that is conferred by the gifts themselves), but by ridding oneself of the impediments (seunt removens prohibent or cause per accidents) to the end that this docility to the Holy Spirit can become real by passing into action and not be merely potential by the simple possession of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, in a certain sense our actions can also be a meritorious cause for the actuation of the gifts, although in a remote manner, in the sense that by our supernatural acts we can merit the increase of grace, of the infused virtues, and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as habits. And in the measure that the gifts of the Holy Ghost grow in perfection, they will be more readily activated and will operate with greater intensity and will, in turn, conquer and resist more easily the obstacles or impediments, much as fire more quickly consumes dry wood than wet wood. But however great the degree of habitual perfection which the gifts may attain in us, their actuation will always be entirely beyond the scope of our powers and free will. The Holy Spirit will actuate them when and as he wishes, and we shall never do so of our own account.

5) By reason of activity and passivity. This difference also follows from the first difference between the virtues and the gifts. In the exercise of the infused virtues, the soul is fully active; its acts are produced in a human manner or mode, and the soul is fully conscious that it works

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22It goes without saying that our actions are always under the divine preemption, and in the case of the infused virtues an actual grace is required for their exercise.

Cf. Spiritual Relations, Relation V.
when and how it pleases. The soul is the motor cause of its own acts, through always under the general divine motion of an actual grace. The exercise of the gifts is entirely different. The Holy Spirit is the unique motor cause of the gifts, and the soul passes to the category of a simple recipient, though conscious and free. The soul reacts vitally on receiving the motion of the gifts, and in this way we preserve freedom and merit under the operation of the gifts, but the soul merely secounds the divine motion, whose initiative and responsibility belong entirely to the Holy Ghost. And the action of the gifts will be the more pure and perfect as the soul succeeds in seconding the divine motion with greater docility, without trying to divert it by movements of human initiative, which would be to impede or obstruct the sanctifying action of the Holy Ghost.

It follows from this that the soul, when it feels the action of the Holy Ghost, should repress its own initiative and reduce its activity to seconding the divine movement. It is passive only in relation to the divine agent; but it can be said that the soul works also that which is worked in it, it produces what is produced in it, it executes what the Holy Spirit executes in it. It is a question of active reception of an absorption of the natural activity by a supernatural activity, of a sublimation of the faculties to a divine order of operation. And this has absolutely nothing to do with the sterile inactivity of Quietism.

Such are the principal differences between the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The first two establish the radical and specific differences between the virtues and the gifts; the other three are no more than logical consequences of the first two.

**Mode of Operation**

The next question which merits our attention is the possibility of a double mode of operation in the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The question has been answered in the affirmative by a few theologians who oppose the common theological teaching. The only reason we treat of the matter is because some have tried to quote the authority of St. Thomas as holding for the double mode of operation.

The thought of St. Thomas on this question is clear: he has repeatedly affirmed that one of the most characteristic notes of difference between the virtues and the gifts is their distinct mode of operation. The distinct mode of operation is necessitated intrinsically by the distinct formal objects and the distinct rules or measures which are followed. The virtues operate in a human manner or mode, following the rule of reason enlightened by faith; the gifts operate in a divine manner or mode under the impulse of the Holy Ghost. How, then, could anyone affirm on the authority of Aquinas that the gifts could also operate in a human manner or mode?

But even prescinding from the authority of St. Thomas, which is definitive in spiritual theology, and examining the matter objectively, it seems clear to us that it is impossible to defend a human mode of operation in the gifts of the Holy Ghost. In the first place, it would be superfluous and would multiply things without necessity. Why should we postulate a human mode of operation for the gifts when we have at our disposal the activity of the infused virtues? Are they not supernatural quoad substantiam and do they not operate modo humano? Then why multiply entities without necessity?

Moreover, the fact that the gifts have a formal object and a motor cause which are divine makes it impossible for the gifts to operate in a human mode. St. Thomas states clearly: "The mode of a thing is taken from its measure. Hence the mode of operation is taken from the rule or measure of the action. Therefore, since the gifts are meant to operate in a divine mode, it follows that the operations of the gifts are measured by another rule than the rule of human virtue, which is the divinity participated by man in such a way that he does not operate humanly but as God by participation. Therefore, all the gifts share in this measure of operation."

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28 Especially in his Commentary on the Sentences, St. Thomas insists on this fundamental distinction: "The gifts are distinguished from the virtues in this, that the virtues perform their acts in a human mode and the gifts in a superhuman mode" (In III Sent., dist. 34, q. 1, a. 1). "(The gifts are above the virtues so far as they act in a superhuman mode)"(ibid., ad 1). "The virtues are more perfect than the virtues as regards all conditions, but according to their mode of operation which is above the human mode" (ibid., dist. 35, q. 2, a. 3).

29 The gift transcends the virtue in this, that it operates in a superhuman mode, which mode is caused by a higher measure than the human measure" (ibid., dist. 36, q. 2, a. 3). Cf. also ibid., q. 1, a. 2 and 3.

30 As to the objection that St. Thomas wrote his Commentary on the Sentences as a young man and therefore this does not necessarily represent his mature thought, the same doctrine is taught in the Summa theologicae. De Gratia contended that St. Thomas changed his teaching, but he was answered definitively by Carvajal-Lagrange. Cf. F. Jollie, in Bulletin Tholomis, I (1925), pp. 245-248. For St. Thomas' teaching in the Summa, see III, q. 69, a. 2, ad 1; II, q. 139, a. 1, to, a. 3; De universo, a. 2, ad 17.

88 Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 52, a. 2, ad 1.
The reason for the error on the part of those who favor a human mode of operation for the gifts is their belief that the mode of the gifts' operation is something accidental and does not affect their intimate nature. They do not seem to realize that it is a question of an essential mode, imposed by the formal constitutive object of the very essence of the gifts, which is the divine rule to which they are accommodated. Consequently, to deprive the gifts of this essential divine mode is to destroy the gifts. If the formal reason of being of the gifts is the adjustment to the divine rule or measure, one cannot deprive the gifts of this mode of operation without incurring a contradiction. Either the operation of the gifts is adjusted to this divine rule or it is not. If it is adjusted, we have the divine mode of operation; if it is not adjusted, it cannot be an act of the gifts, because it lacks the formal constitutive (objectum formale quo or ratio sub quibus) for the gifts.

In the second place, if the gifts of the Holy Spirit could have an operation in the human mode, this operation would be specifically distinct from its operation in the divine mode. But it is elemental in philosophy that two specifically distinct operations argue by ontological necessity for two specifically distinct habits, for habits are distinguished by their operations and these latter are distinguished by their objects. But if the gifts are habits, and could have an operation in the human mode specifically distinct from the operation in a divine mode, it would inevitably follow that one and the same habit had two acts that are specifically distinct. To admit this, it would be necessary to reject the most fundamental principles of philosophy.

The reason for the confusion in this second argument is the inability to distinguish between the material object and the formal object of a habit. It is true that one and the same habit may treat of many material objects which are specifically distinct. For the act of theft it is immaterial whether one steals a loaf of bread, a watch or a sum of money. These things are specifically distinct, but they all constitute the same material object of the act. The materiality of these things, that which specifically constitutes theft, is that they are the property of another. Thus one and the same habit may produce many acts which are materially distinct if considered in their physical entity, but are not at all distinct if considered in their moral entity and formally. The formal object must always be one because it is the formal object which specifies a habit. To give food to the hungry or to clothe the naked are materially distinct acts, but formally they are both the result of the one habit or virtue of mercy. The material object does not bespeak any relation to the habit, but only the formal or constitutive object.

As a final argument, let us reduce the contrary position to a practical conclusion. Any actuation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which would destroy the nature and finality of the gifts is theologically absurd. But the actuation of the gifts in a human mode would destroy the nature and finality of the gifts. Therefore, it is theologically absurd.

According to the doctrine of St. Thomas (and this is a point admitted by all the schools of theology) the gifts of the Holy Spirit are supernatural habits which, moved by the direct and immediate impulse of the Holy Ghost as his instruments, have as their finality the perfection of the infused virtues. There is no disagreement or discussion among theologians on this point. But the operation of the gifts in a human mode would destroy the supernatural nature and finality of the gifts.

First, it would destroy their nature, for if the gifts of the Holy Spirit could operate in a human mode, it would follow logically and inevitably that in that human modality we could actuate the gifts at will, with the help of ordinary grace; for the human mode of operation, even when it touches the supernatural, is consonant to us; it does not transcend the rule of reason enlightened by faith. But if a habit with two specifically distinct operations is unintelligible in philosophy, an actuation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit produced by man himself with the aid of ordinary grace would be a monstrosity in theology. All theologians admit the impossibility of our actuation of the gifts at our own good pleasure; in each case there is required a special impulse of the Holy Spirit independent of all human initiative. This requires that the gifts be direct and immediate instruments of the Holy Ghost.

But there is more. If the gifts could operate in a human mode, in that human modality they would cease to be direct instruments of the Holy Spirit and would become instruments of man or of the soul in grace, as are the infused virtues.

Secondly, according to St. Thomas the gifts have as their finality the perfection of the acts of the infused virtues. But an operation of the gifts modo humano would be completely incapable of attaining this end, especially as regards the theological virtues, in whose perfect development Christian perfection consists. For the theological virtues, as St. Thomas teaches, are in themselves more perfect than the gifts, and if they need the gifts to attain full perfection, the reason lies in the fact that, since all the infused virtues are actuated modo humano, it is necessary for this human element to disappear and be replaced by the divine and totally supernatural mode conferred by the

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4th. St. Thomas, loc. cit.
4th. A diversity of objects according to species causes a diversity of acts according to species and consequently a diversity of habits (St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 54, a. 1, ad 1).
4th. In the distinction of potencies or habits the object is not to be considered materially but in its formal aspect as differing specifically or even generically (St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 54, a. 2, ad 1).
4th. St. Thomas, ibid., a. 4.
4th. Summa, I-II, q. 66, a. 8.
gifts, the mode which enables the virtues to operate mystically. Only then will the infused virtues produce perfect acts, completely divine, as befits their supernatural nature. But if the gifts worked in a human mode, they would contribute nothing to the perfection of the virtues. Their acts would continue to be imperfect and in a human mode. Hence, however we look at the question, it is evident that the gifts of the Holy Spirit do not have and cannot have anything but a superhuman and divine mode of operation. This their nature demands as direct and immediate instruments of the Holy Ghost.

NECESSITY OF THE GIFTS

We shall here establish three propositions of which the first is the most important in mystical theology.

First proposition.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary for the perfection of the infused virtues.

The general argument is simple and clear. The gifts are necessary for the perfection of the infused virtues, if these have certain defects which cannot be corrected by themselves but only under the influence of the gifts. But this is precisely the case with the infused virtues. Therefore, the gifts are necessary for the perfection of the infused virtues.

The major premise is evident. If the virtues cannot of themselves correct certain imperfections which accompany them and if these imperfections disappear under the activity of the gifts, it is evident that the gifts are necessary for the perfection of the infused virtues. What must be proved is the minor premise.

Above all, we should not forget that the infused virtues are habits, and it is necessary to examine the types of imperfect which can be found in habits and see which of these, if any, are found in the infused virtues. There are five principal sources of imperfection in any given habit:

1) When a habit does not attain its complete material object. Such is the case of the student of theology who has not yet studied certain tracts. He knows something of theology and he has the habit of theology, but incompletely and imperfectly.

2) When the habit lacks the intensity by which it should attain its object. E.g., the student who has gone over an entire assignment, but superficially and carelessly.

3) When the habit is weakly rooted in the subject (e.g., through lack of sufficient use).

These three imperfections are found in the infused virtues but can be corrected by the virtues themselves. They do not need the influence of the gifts to be extended to new objects, to increase in intensity, or to multiply their acts.

4) By reason of an intrinsic imperfection, essential to the habit itself. This occurs, for example, in the habit of faith (de non visa) and hope (de non possenti). Neither the virtues themselves nor the gifts can correct these imperfections without destroying the virtues themselves.

5) Because of the disproportion between the habit and the subject in which it resides. This is precisely the case with the infused virtues. The infused virtues are supernatural habits, and the subject in which they are received is the human soul, or, more exactly, its powers and faculties. But according to the axiom, quid quoddam recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur, the infused virtues, on being received into the soul, are degraded, so to speak, and acquire our human mode of operation, because of their accommodation to the psychological operations of man. This is the reason why the infused virtues, in spite of being much more perfect in themselves than the corresponding acquired virtues, do not give us the facility in operation which we obtain from the acquired virtues. This is clearly seen in the sinner who repents and confesses after a life of sin; he could easily return to his sins in spite of having received all the infused virtues with grace.

Now it is evident that if we possess imperfectly the habit of the infused virtues, the acts which proceed from them will also be imperfect unless some superior agent intervenes to perfect them. This is the purpose of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Moved and regulated, not by human reason, as are the virtues, but by the Holy Ghost, they bestow on the virtues, and especially the theological virtues, that divine atmosphere which they need in order to develop all their supernatural virtuality.

This necessity is also seen from the formal motive which impels the act of the infused virtues. As long as the object or motive does not surpass human reason, even enlightened by faith, it will always be an imperfect motive—even though materially the act is the same as that of the gift of the Holy Ghost. This does not mean that the infused virtues are imperfect in themselves; on the contrary, they are most perfect realities, strictly supernatural and divine. In fact, the theological virtues are more perfect than the gifts of the Holy Ghost. But we possess them imperfectly by reason of the human modality which inevitably attaches to them, because of their accommodation to the natural psychological functions under the control of simple reason enlightened by faith. Hence the imperfection of the infused virtues is not in themselves, but in the imperfect mode with which we possess them. From this flows the necessity for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to come to the aid of the infused virtues, disposing the faculties of our soul to be moved by a superior agent, the Holy Ghost, who will actuate them in a divine mode, in a mode completely proportioned to the most perfect object of the infused virtues. Under the influence of the gifts, the infused virtues will be, so to speak, in their proper milieu.

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"Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 68, a. 2.
"Cf. loc. cit."
Of all the infused virtues, those which most need the aid of the gifts are
the theological virtues, in which Christian perfection essentially and principally
consists when they have reached their full development. By their very nature
demand the divine mode of the gifts. These virtues give us a participation in
the supernatural knowledge which God has of himself (faith) and of his
very love of himself (charity), and make us desire him for ourselves as our
supreme good (hope). These lofty objects, absolutely transcendent and divine,
are necessarily constrained to a modality that is human as long as they remain
under the rule and control of reason, even though enlightened by faith. They
demand, by their own divine perfection, a regulation or rule which is also
divine—that of the gifts. This is the argument used by St. Thomas to prove
the necessity of the gifts for salvation: "But as regards the supernatural end,
to which reason moves man so far as it is somehow and imperfectly informed
by the theological virtues, the notion of reason does not suffice unless it receive
in addition the prompting or motion of the Holy Spirit, according to Rom.
8:14: 'Whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' "

This argument is also valid for the infused moral virtues. Although they
do not transcend the rule of reason as regards their immediate objects (since
they do not refer immediately to the supernatural end but to the means to the
end), they are ordered to a supernatural end and receive from charity their
form and life in that transcendental order. Therefore, to be perfect, they
must receive a divine mode which will adapt and accommodate them to this
orientation to the supernatural end. Therefore, the gifts embrace all the matter
of the infused virtues, both theological and moral.

We shall complete this proposition by answering the principal objections.

First objection:
How can the gifts perfect the theological virtues when they are inferior to
the theological virtues?

Response: They cannot perfect the theological virtues intrinsically and
formally but only extrinsically, by remedying the imperfection of the sub-
plane in which the virtues reside. The gifts elevate the subject to the divine
perfect possession of them. They eliminate the human mode of operation and
as such, but the faculties in which those virtues reside. It follows from this
infused virtues, especially the theological, could develop in all their virtuosity
of the virtues, but because of the subject in which they reside. In this sense
the theological virtues have a special need of the corresponding gifts, because
their inherent moral perfection demands a divine modality which only
the gifts can bestow.

Second objection:
In order that the infused virtues be developed and perfected, it is sufficient
that their acts be produced with ever increasing intensity. But this can be
affected by an actual grace, independent of the gifts. Therefore, the gifts are
not required for the perfection of the virtues.

Response: Actual grace, accommodating itself to the human mode of the in-
fused virtues, will make them develop in the line of this human modality, but
for them to rise above this human modality (which will always be an imperfect
mode) and to acquire the divine modality which corresponds to the essence
of the infused virtues, there is required a new habit capable of receiving
directly and immediately the movement of the Holy Ghost. This human reason
can never achieve even under the impulse of an actual grace.

Third objection:
But cannot the Holy Spirit directly produce in the infused virtues the divine
mode of operation without recurring to the gifts?

Response: If we admit that the Holy Ghost would exert violence on the
rational creature and make it depart from its natural mode of action without
first bestowing on it the necessary dispositions for receiving a higher modality,
the answer is yes. But if otherwise, the answer is no. This is the reason so
often alleged by St. Thomas to prove the necessity of the infused virtues:
the suavity and facility of divine providence, which moves all things according
to their proximate dispositions, natural or supernatural. For the rest, this
objection has to be answered in view of the doctrine on the existence of the
gifts of the Holy Ghost, which we have already demonstrated.

We conclude, therefore, that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary in
order that the infused virtues reach their full perfection and development,
and this opinion is commonly admitted by all the schools of Christian spiritual-
ity. Now let us consider the second proposition, which is much more difficult
to prove, although of less importance for mystical theology.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are necessary for salvation.

The Angelic Doctor expressly asks this question and answers in the affirm-
ative. In order to prove his answer, he emphasizes the imperfection with which
we possess the infused virtues, as we explained in the preceding proposition.
The gifts are perfections of man by which he is disposed to be amenable
to the promptings of God. Hence in those matters where the promptings of
reason is not sufficient and there is need for the prompting of the Holy Spirit, there is consequently a need for a gift.

Now man’s reason is perfected by God in two ways: first, with its natural perfection, namely, the natural light of reason; secondly, with a supernatural perfection, the theological virtues. And though this latter perfection is greater than the former, the former is possessed by man in a more perfect manner than the latter; for man has the former in its complete possession, but he possesses the latter imperfectly, because we know and love God imperfectly. But it is evident that anything that possesses a nature or a form or a virtue perfectly can of itself work according to them (although not excluding the operation of God, who works internally in every nature and in every will), but that which possesses a nature or form or virtue imperfectly cannot of itself perfectly, can shine of itself; but the moon, which has the nature of light imperfectly, sheds only a borrowed light. Again, a physician who knows the medical art perfectly can work by himself, but his disciple, who is not yet fully instructed, cannot work by himself unless instructed by him.

Accordingly, in matters subject to human reason and directed to man’s natural end, man can work through the judgment of his reason; and if a God, it will be out of God’s superabundant goodness. Therefore, according to the heroic or divine virtues, but in matters directed to the supernatural end, by the theological virtues, the movement of reason does not suffice, unless This is in accord with Rom. 8:14: “Whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they shall lead me into the right land,” because no one can ever receive the in the Holy Ghost. Therefore, in order to accomplish this end, it is necessary to many theologians this doctrine has seemed excessive, but that because they confuse the question de jure with the question de facto. As a matter of fact, many are saved without any operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but never without the habits of the gifts. But this is completely per accidents of the Christi. life the actuation of the gifts, more or less intense, is morally and sometimes physically necessary in order to preserve grace, and in this sense the actuation of the gifts would be necessary for salvation. Such is the case of the martyr; either he makes a heroic act of fortitude in giving his life for his faith (which can scarcely be realized without the help of the gift of fortitude to make this most difficult act possible), or he commits a mortal sin by apostatizing. There are many other cases in which one must perform a heroic act of virtue or lose sanctifying grace. The reason is given by St. Thomas: the insufficiency of human reason, enlightened by faith, to lead us to the supernatural end without obstructions.

But there is still another reason, based on the corruption of human nature as a consequence of original sin. The infused virtues do not reside in a sound nature but in a nature inclined to evil, and although the virtues have sufficient power to conquer all temptations opposed to them, they cannot de facto overcome some of them without the help of the gifts, especially those violent temptations which arise unexpectedly. In those circumstances in which resistance or a fall are a decision of the moment, a man cannot depend on the slow deliberation and discours of reason but must act quickly, as if by a supernatural instinct, that is, under the influence and movement of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Without this movement of the gifts, a fall is almost certain, granted the vicious inclination of human nature wounded by original sin. It is true that these situations are not usually frequent in the life of a man, but it does not follow from this that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not necessary for salvation, even though they may not be necessary for each and every salutary act.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are not necessary for each and every salutary act. This question seems to have arisen in modern times by reason of a false interpretation of the doctrine of St. Thomas as stated in the Summa, I-II, q. 68, a. 2, ad 2. There are some who hold for the necessity of the gifts for every salutary act, and they base their opinion on the citation which follows: By the theological and moral virtues man is not so perfected in relation to the supernatural end that he does not always need to be moved by the instinct of the Holy Ghost. But what St. Thomas seems to mean here is that man is sometimes insufficiently perfected by the theological and moral virtues, that he does not need, at times, to be inspired by the interior Master. The word semper can have two meanings: always and in every instant (semper et pro semper), and always but not in every instant (semper sed non pro semper). Undoubtedly, St. Thomas is using the word in the second sense. We admit that the text is obscure and difficult to translate, but the thought of the Angelic Doctor is clear if we keep in mind the general context of the article as a whole and the doctrine of the Summa. The following are the proofs of the proposition as stated:

Among the authors who hold for the necessity of the gifts for every salutary act are Lehmkul, Cardinal Manning, Guzme and Pierrot.
1) St. Thomas says in this article that the gifts are necessary because without them we know and love God imperfectly. Then without the gifts we do know and love God—even though imperfectly. Therefore, the gifts are not necessary for every salutary act.

2) Without the gifts, human reason cannot avoid all folly, ignorance and other defects (cf. loc. cit., ad 3). But the fact that it cannot avoid all defects implies that human reason can avoid some. Therefore, the gifts are not necessary for every act of virtue. On the other hand, it is certain that one can perform a supernatural act of faith with the help of an actual grace and without any help from the gifts. Such is the case of a Christian in the state of mortal sin, who has lost the gifts of the Holy Spirit together with sanctifying grace and charity and can nevertheless make acts of supernatural faith under the impulse of an actual grace.65

We conclude, therefore, that the gifts are not necessary for each and every salutary act, but they are necessary in the general course of life for perfect acts and to conquer certain grave and unexpected temptations which could put one's salvation in jeopardy.

### RELATIONS OF THE GIFTS

**AMONG THEMSELVES**

St. Thomas studies the mutual relations of the gifts in three articles of his *Summa*, in which he asks whether the gifts are conveniently enumerated in the famous text of Isaias;66 what is the connection of the gifts;67 and what is the order of dignity or excellence among the gifts.68

Basing his answers on the authority of Isaias 11:2, St. Thomas finds the enumeration of the gifts a fitting one. In the body of the article he sets up a parallelism between the moral virtues and the gifts and concludes that in all the faculties of man which can be principles of human acts the gifts of the Holy Spirit must correspond with the virtues. It should be noted, however, that St. Thomas changes his mind in the II-II when he treats of the classification of the first four gifts,69 and also assigns corresponding gifts to the theological virtues, something he had not done in the I-II, where the classification is made only by analogy with the intellectual and moral virtues.60 His definitive classification is as follows:

- to penetrate the truth: understanding
  - in reason: of divine things: wisdom
  - of created things: knowledge
  - of practical conduct: counsel

- in the appetitive power
  - in relation to others (God, parents, country): piety
  - against fear of danger: fortitude
  - against disorderly concupiscence: fear of the Lord

St. Thomas proves there is a connection among the gifts of the Holy Spirit by pointing out that, as the virtues perfect the faculties of the soul to enable them to be governed by reason, so the gifts perfect those faculties to enable them to be governed by the Holy Ghost. But as the Holy Spirit is in us through sanctifying grace and charity, it follows that he who is in charity possesses the Holy Ghost together with his gifts. Therefore, all the gifts are connected with charity, as the moral virtues are all united in the virtue of prudence. Without charity, it is not possible to possess any of the gifts; nor is it possible to lack them if one has charity.

As it appears in the Vulgate, the enumeration of the gifts is as follows: 1) wisdom; 2) understanding; 3) counsel; 4) fortitude; 5) knowledge; 6) piety; 7) fear of the Lord. St. Thomas says that Isaias places wisdom and understanding as the first *simpliciter*, but counsel and fortitude are placed before the others because of the matter which they treat and not because of their principles and their acts. By reason of their proper acts, the gifts would be classified as follows:

- in the contemplative life
  - wisdom
  - understanding
  - knowledge
  - counsel

- corresponding to the intellectual virtues

- in the active life
  - piety
  - fortitude
  - fear of the Lord

- corresponding to the moral virtues

66On this question see A. Cardeilh, O.P., in the article "dons" in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, col. 1779.
70*Cf.* q. 8, a. 6, where St. Thomas expressly states that he has changed his opinion.

60This does not mean that in the I-II the gifts are not considered to be related to the theological virtues; on the contrary, St. Thomas expressly states that "all the gifts pertain to these three virtues, like certain derivations from the aforesaid virtues" (q. 68, a. 4, ad 3), but he proceeds from them in making his classification. For that reason he corrects himself in the II-II.
As regards the matter treated, the ordering is that of Isaiah, with the following distribution:

regarding arduous things
- wisdom
- understanding
- counsel
- fortitude

regarding common things
- knowledge
- piety
- fear of the Lord

In Article 7 which follows the treatment of the relations among the gifts themselves, St. Thomas inquires whether the virtues are to be preferred to the gifts. He answers with a distinction. The gifts are more perfect than the intellectual and moral virtues, but the theological virtues are more perfect than the gifts. His argument is simple. With respect to the theological virtues which unite man to the Holy Ghost, his mover, the gifts are what the moral virtues are with respect to the intellectual virtues, which perfect reason as the motor principle of human acts. Consequently, as the intellectual virtues are more perfect than the moral virtues which they regulate and govern, so the theological virtues are more perfect than the gifts which they regulate. But if we compare the gifts with the other virtues, intellectual and moral, the gifts are more perfect, for they perfect the faculties of the soul to follow the impulse of the Holy Spirit, while the virtues perfect the human reason or the other faculties to follow the impulse of reason. It is manifest that to the more perfect motor principle correspond more perfect dispositions in the one moved.

The following conclusions follow from this particular article:

1) The gifts are to the theological virtues what the moral virtues are to the intellectual virtues.

2) The theological virtues are more perfect than the gifts because they have God himself as their immediate object, while the gifts refer only to docility in following the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. But the gifts are superior to the intellectual and moral virtues because through them we are ruled by the Holy Spirit, whereas through the virtues we are ruled by reason.

3) By the gifts the faculties of the soul are perfectly prepared and disposed to follow the impulses of the Holy Ghost.

4) The intellectual and moral virtues precede the gifts in the order of generation or disposition, because if man is well disposed to follow the dictates of reason, he is prepared and disposed to receive the divine motion of the gifts.

St. Thomas studies the beatitudes and the fruits of the Holy Ghost at great length, but we shall limit ourselves to summary observations. This will suffice for our purpose, but not on that account is the reader dispensed from a careful study of the beautiful text in the Summa. We shall first consider the fruits, which are more perfect than the gifts but not as perfect as the beatitudes.

When the soul corresponds with docility to the interior movement of the Holy Ghost, it produces acts of exquisite virtue which can be compared to the fruit of a tree. Not all the acts which proceed from grace have the characteristic of fruits, but only those which are mature and exquisite and possess a certain purity or sweetness. They are simply acts which proceed from the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

They are distinguished from the gifts as the fruit is distinguished from the branch and the effect from the cause. They are also distinguished from the beatitudes in the degree of perfection, the beatitudes being more perfect and more finished than the fruits. Therefore, all the beatitudes are fruits, but all the fruits are not beatitudes. The fruits are completely contrary to the works of the flesh, since the flesh tends to sensible goods, which are beneath man, while the Holy Spirit moves us to those things which are above.

As regards the number of the fruits, the Vulgate enumerates twelve. But in the original Pauline text only nine are mentioned: charity, joy, peace, longanimity, affinity, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. St. Thomas says, in full agreement with St. Augustine, that the Apostle had no intention of enumerating all the fruits but wished only to show what type of fruits are produced by the flesh and what are produced by the Spirit; hence he mentions some of them by way of example. Nevertheless, St. Thomas adds, all the acts of the gifts and the virtues can in some way be reduced to the fruits enumerated by the Apostle.

Still more perfect than the fruits are the beatitudes. They signify the culmination and definitive crown of the Christian life on earth. Like the fruits, the beatitudes are acts and not habits. Like the fruits, they flow from the virtues and the gifts, but they are such perfect acts that we must attribute them to...
more to the gifts than to the virtues. In spite of the rewards which accompany them, they are an anticipation of eternal beatitude here on earth.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord reduces the beatitudes to eight: poverty of spirit, meekness, tears, hunger and thirst for justice, mercy, purity of heart, peace and persecution for justice' sake. We may also observe that the number is a mystical number which indicates something without limits. St. Thomas dedicates two articles to the exposition of the eight beatitudes and their corresponding rewards. The following is a brief summary and schema of the relationship among the virtues, gifts and beatitudes as set down by St. Thomas.

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<tr>
<th>Virtues</th>
<th>Gifts</th>
<th>Beatitudes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Peacemakers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theological</td>
<td>Faith</td>
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<td>Hope</td>
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<td>Those who weep</td>
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<td>Poor in spirit</td>
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<td>Prudence</td>
<td>Counsel</td>
<td>The meek</td>
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<td>Moral</td>
<td>Justice</td>
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<td>Fortitude</td>
<td>Hunger and thirst</td>
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<td>for justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temperance</td>
<td>Fortitude</td>
<td>Fears (secondarily)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The eighth beatitude (persecution for justice' sake) is not listed because, as the most perfect of all, it contains and embraces all the others amidst the greatest difficulties and obstacles.

The question is whether the gifts terminate with this life or whether they remain in glory. St. Thomas answers the question with a distinction. Considered in their essence, that is, so far as they perfect the faculties of the soul to follow the movements of the Holy Ghost, the gifts remain in glory in a most perfect manner, since in heaven we shall be completely docile to the movements of the Holy Spirit and God will be our all in all, as St. Paul says. But if we consider the matter of the gifts, it will disappear in part, because in heaven there no longer exists such matter nor is there any reason for it to exist. For example, the gift of fear will be changed to reverential fear before the greatness and immensity of God, and the same thing, mutatis mutandis, will happen to those gifts which pertain to the active life, which will have ceased in heaven.

From this article we should note especially: 1) Man is moved more perfectly by the gifts as he more perfectly subjects himself to God. In glory we shall be moved most perfectly by the gifts because we shall be most perfectly subjected to God. 2) The active life terminates with the life on earth; therefore, the works of the active life will not be matter for the operations of the gifts in heaven, but all of those gifts will be preserved in their proper acts as referring to the contemplative life, which is the life of the blessed.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are seven supernatural habits, really distinct from the infused virtues, by which man is disposed fittingly to follow in a prompt manner the direct and immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit in a mode which is superior to the human mode of operation and toward an object or end which the virtues (fide et virtus) cannot attain by themselves. For this reason the gifts are necessary for salvation. The gifts are not the intellect and moral virtues but not as perfect as the theological virtues from which they are derived and by which they are regulated. They are connected among themselves and with charity in such wise that he who possesses charity possesses all the gifts, and he who does not have charity cannot possess any of the gifts. The gifts will perdure in glory in a most perfect manner. The gifts of wisdom and understanding are the most perfect. The others can be ordered in various ways, according to whether one attends to their proper acts or the matter which they treat. The habitual and perfect rule of the gifts prevails when the soul is habitually and perfectly subject to God. The gifts produce certain exquisite acts called the fruits of the Holy Ghost and certain works which are still more perfect and are called beatitudes.

We reserve a detailed study of each of the gifts for a later part of this work, where we shall be able to give it a more practical and concrete orientation. It suffices here to point out that with the gifts the supernatural organism is complete. Sanctifying grace is the principle and foundation of this organism, the infused virtues its faculties or powers, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost are instruments of perfection in the hands of the divine Artist.

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102
103
St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 68, a. 6.
St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 68, a. 6.
St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 68, a. 6.
6: SUPERNATURAL GROWTH

Leaving for a later treatment the discussion of the particular means for growing in perfection, we shall here discuss the fundamental laws of the growth of the supernatural organism of sanctifying grace, the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Can sanctifying grace increase and develop in us? What is the efficient cause of this increase? What are the laws which govern the growth of the supernatural organism? How is this growth effected? We shall answer these questions in the form of definite conclusions.

FIRST CONCLUSION

Sanctifying grace is meant to increase and develop in our souls.

The proof of this conclusion can be stated simply. Sanctifying grace is, according to St. John (I Jn. 3:9), the seed of God. This seed is sown in the soul in the sacrament of baptism. Therefore, by its very nature, sanctifying grace is meant to increase and develop in the soul.

SECOND CONCLUSION

God alone is the efficient cause of the increase of our supernatural life.

Any living thing that has not yet reached its full perfection and development can, under normal circumstances, grow and increase until it attains that perfection. In the natural order our bodily organism increases and grows by its own proper development, that is, it evolves by its natural powers and is increased by the incorporation of new elements of the same order. Our supernatural life cannot grow in this way. Grace is by its nature static and inert, and it must grow in the way in which it was born. But grace is born in us through a divine infusion; therefore, it cannot increase except by new divine infusions. Our natural powers would strive in vain to increase grace; they are completely impotent to effect any increase, even with the help of actual grace. Only from without can the soul receive new degrees of that divine being which is grace, and only God can produce those degrees of grace in the soul.

We can see the same truth from another point of view. Habits cannot be actuated—and consequently they cannot develop and be perfected—except by the same principle that caused them. But grace, the infused virtues and the gifts are supernatural habits caused by God alone. Therefore, only God can actuate them and increase them.

Hence the action of God is the principal efficient cause of the growth of the supernatural life. The soul in grace can merit that increase under certain specified conditions, as we shall see, but as to the increase itself, only God can cause it. It is clear that the action of God as the direct and immediate cause of the increase of the infused habits is not arbitrary, but is subject to the laws and conditions which the divine will has designed to determine and establish.

3) Ordinarily, the increase of grace is produced in two ways: ex opere operato by the sacraments, and ex opere operantis by supernatural meritorious acts and by the impetratory efficacy of prayer.

Let us examine each of these elements separately: the sacraments, merit, and prayer.

THE SACRAMENTS

It is a truth of faith that the sacraments instituted by Christ confer grace ex opere operato, that is, by their own intrinsic power, independently of the subject. The Council of Trent specifically states: “If anyone says that through the sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred ex opere operato, but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices to obtain grace, let him be anathema.”

Let us recall briefly the theological doctrine on the sacraments. It is of faith that the sacraments of the New Law contain and confer grace on all those who receive them worthily. As the Council of Trent says: “omnia non potestibus obicem.” Baptism and penance confer the first infusion of grace; the other five sacraments confer an increase of grace already possessed. For that reason

1Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 92, a. 1, ad 1.
2On the sacraments, see the Council of Florence, Decree for the Armenians (Denz. 695 and 698) and the 6th canon on the sacraments of the Council of Trent (Denz. 849); on good works, the Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, Chap. 10 (Denz. 803) and canons 24 (Denz. 834) and 32 (Denz. 842); on prayer, see St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 83, a. 15-16.
3It is understood, of course, that this is true as long as no obstacle is placed to the reception of grace (cf. Council of Trent, Sess. VII, canons 6 and 7; Denz. 849-50). In other words, the subject must have the proper dispositions for the worthy and fruitful reception of a sacrament. The sacraments of the living require the state of grace; the sacraments of the dead require supernatural attrition.
4Sess. VII, canons 8 (Denz. 851).
5Loc. cit.
the first two sacraments are called sacraments of the dead; the other five are called sacraments of the living, since they presuppose supernatural life in the soul. Nevertheless, at times the sacraments of the dead may produce an increase of grace per accidens, and the sacraments of the living may sometimes confer the first infusion of grace per accidens. This would happen in the case of those who receive the sacraments of baptism or penance when they are already justified by charity or perfect contrition, or in those who, in good faith and with supernatural attirion, receive a sacrament of the living without knowing that they are in mortal sin.

In equal circumstances, the sacraments produce a greater or less infusion of grace according to the greater or less dignity of the sacrament. The reason for this is that a more noble cause produces a more noble effect. We say "under equal conditions," however, because an inferior sacrament received with a greater intensity of fervor may produce a greater grace than a sacrament of greater dignity received with little devotion. One and the same sacrament will produce the same degree of grace in all who receive it with identical dispositions, but will produce greater grace in those who have better dispositions.

The last two conclusions are very important in practice. Sometimes too much insistence is placed on the ex opere operato effect of the sacraments, as if that were the only effect or as if everything depended on that exclusively. One should not lose sight of the fact that in the reception of a sacrament the effect ex opere operato is conjoined with the effect ex opere operantis or with the dispositions of the one who receives the sacrament. Therefore, in practice it is of great importance that the recipients of the sacraments make a careful preparation and cultivate an intensity of fervor. The example of the vessel and the fountain is classical. The amount of water contained in the vessel depends not only on the fountain but also on the size of the vessel. The vessel of our soul is widened by the intensity of our fervor or devotion.

SUPER NATURAL MERIT

This is a most important question in the spiritual life. St. Thomas studies it at great length in various parts of his works, and in the Summa theologiae he dedicates an entire question (III, q. 114) of ten articles to the subject. We shall summarize his doctrine here.

Merit signifies the value of an act which makes it worthy of a reward. "Actio qua efficiatur ut ei qui agit, sit justum aliquid dari." There are two types of merit: condign meriti (de condigno), which is based on reasons of justice, and congruous meriti (de congruo), which is not founded on justice or even pure gratitude, but on a certain fitness by reason of the act and a certain liberality on the part of him who recomposes. Thus the agent has a strict right (de condigno) to the wage which he has meritied by his act, while the person who has done us a favor is entitled (de congruo) to our grateful recompenne. Condign merit is further divided into merit in strict justice (ex tuto rigore justitiae) and not of strict justice (ex condignitate). The first requires a perfect and absolute equality between the act and the reward, and in the supernatural order this type of merit is proper to Jesus Christ exclusively. The second presupposes only an equality of proportion between the good act and the reward, but because God has promised to recompose those good acts, the reward is owing in justice. Moreover, some theologians further divide congruous merit into fallible congruous merit (if it bespeaks an order to a reward solely on the title of fitness) and infallible congruous merit (if to this fitness is added a promise by God to bestow the reward). Man cannot, by his natural powers alone, produce acts that are meritorious for eternal life. No one can merit supernaturally except in virtue of a free gift of God; hence merit presupposes grace. But so far as it proceeds from...
grace, the meritorious act bespeaks an order to eternal life through a merit based on justice. It is of faith that the just man can by his good works merit an increase of grace and, consequently, an increase of the infused habit (the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit) which accompany grace, as well as eternal life and an increase of glory. Thus canon 32 of the Decree on Justification of the Council of Trent expressly states: “If anyone say that the good works of the justified man are the gifts of God in such a way that they are not also the good merits of him who is justified; or that, by the good works which are done by him through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ (whom his living member he is), the one justified does not truly merit increase of grace, eternal life and the attainment of that eternal life (if he dies in grace), and even an increase of glory: let him be anathema” (Denz. 842).

Merit always presupposes liberty, and where there is no freedom there can be no merit or demerit. But a free act, if ordered to God, can be meritorious. “Our acts,” says St. Thomas, “are meritorious so far as they proceed from free will moved by God through grace. Whence every human act that falls under the freedom of the will, if related to God, can be meritorious.”

It does not matter for merit—at least per se—what type of act is performed; what matters is the motive and manner of doing it. Whence it follows that a materially insignificant act performed with ardent charity solely to please God is of itself much more meritorious than a great deed realized with less charity or for a less perfect motive. For that reason supernatural merit is especially evaluated by the virtue of charity. The intensity of the love of God with which an act is performed determines the degree of merit. The merit of the other virtues depends on the greater or less influence which charity has in the production of their acts. “Eternal life consists in the fruition of God. But the movement of the soul toward the fruition of the divine good is the proper act of charity, through which all the acts of the other virtues are ordained to this end, since all the other virtues are impetened by charity. Therefore, the merit of eternal life pertains in the first place to charity and secondarily to the other virtues so far as their acts are impetened by charity.”

There is yet another reason: the acts performed under the impulse of charity are more voluntary because they proceed from love. For that reason they also are more meritorious. “It is likewise evident that we do out of love we do with the greatest voluntariness. Whence also on the part of the voluntariness which is required for merit it is evident that merit pertains especially to charity.”

In order that the actual growth or increase of charity be effected, a more intense act is required than the habit which is actually possessed. “Charity does not actually increase by any act of charity whatever. But any act of charity disposes for an increase of charity, so far as by an act of charity a man becomes more prompt to continue working through charity, and as this disposition increases, the man breaks forth in a more fervent act of charity through which he strives to grow in charity, and then charity is actually increased.”

This more intense act logically presupposes a previous actual grace which is also more intense.

Notice the practical importance of this doctrine. If properly understood, it is one of the most efficacious means of combatting slothfulness and tepidity in the service of God. Without acts which are constantly more fervent, our supernatural life can become practically paralyzed (at least on the score of supernatural merit, since other laws govern the sacraments) even when we live in the state of grace and perform many good works, but with tepidity and indifference. An example will clarify this point. With the increase of grace and the other infused habits, something occurs which is similar to an increase on the scale of a thermometer. If a thermometer, which now registers 72 degrees, is to register 76 or 78 degrees, it is necessary that the surrounding air or water rise to that degree. If there is no rise in the surrounding element, the thermometer will not register an increase. The same thing occurs in regard to the increase of the habits. Since this increase is nothing more than a greater radication in the subject, it is impossible that an increase be effected without a more intense act. To use another simile, this more intense act is like the more powerful stroke of the hammer which drives the nail of the habit more deeply into the soul.

But must we then conclude that remiss acts, those performed with tepidity, indifference and with less intensity, are of no value whatever in the supernatural life? We must answer with a distinction. As regards the essential increase of the degree of grace which is actually possessed and of the degree of essential glory in heaven, those acts are completely sterile and useless. The degree of grace does not increase nor does the degree of glory in heaven, which corresponds to the degree of grace on earth. Nevertheless, these acts serve two purposes: first, the soul will not become cold and thus predispose itself for mortal sin which would rob it of grace, and secondly, the soul gains.

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18Cf. ibid., a. 3.
19Ibid., II-II, q. 2, a. 9.
20Cf. St. Thomas, De veritate, q. 24, a. 1, ad 2: “Opus meritorium non distat in quid agere, sed in quaelibet agere.”
21St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 114, a. 4.
DOCTRINAL
PRINCIPLES

Objects
of merit

by them in heaven an increase of accidental glory, which is, as Báñez says, the reward of a created good and not of an infinite good. 22

No one can merit the first grace for himself, nor final perseverance, nor the grace to rise again from a serious fall. 22 But one can merit the first grace for another, although only by a merit de congruo. 24 The reason for the first three assertions is based on the theological axiom that the principle of merit does not fall under merit. This is evident as regards the first assertion, because without grace one cannot merit grace; otherwise the natural would have a claim on the supernatural, which is absurd and heretical. 25 As to final perseverance, it is an infallible effect of predestination to glory, which is totally gratuitous. And the third assertion is also evident, because the nature of merit depends on the supernatural divine motion, which would be cut off by the grace sin. The reason why one can merit the first grace for another is pure congruence. Since the just man and friend of God does God's will, it is reasonable, according to the laws of friendship, that God should comply with man's desire for the salvation of another.

No one, however just and perfect, can merit for himself the actual efficacious graces by a strict or condign merit, but we can all merit them by congruous merit: infallibly by prayers which have the proper qualifications, and fallibly by good works. The reason for the first statement is the famous axiom cited (the principle of merit does not fall under merit), for the actual graces conservative of grace pertain to the same grace as a principle of merit. 26 The reason for the second statement is the divine promise to grant us infallibly whatever is necessary for our salvation if we ask for it in prayer that is humble, confident and persevering. 27 Our simple good works do not have this special promise, given in view of prayer, and for that reason their merit is only congruous and fallible. If God grants it, it will be out of pure mercy, since the works do not merit it of themselves, nor has he promised to give it to us in view of good works.

The difficulty encountered in the performance of a work does not increase the merit of the work, except perhaps indirectly and per accidens as a sign of greater charity in undertaking the work. Merit is determined by the goodness of the work in itself and by the motive which impels us to perform the work. As St. Thomas points out: "The good is of much greater importance for the basis of merit and virtue than is the difficult. Whence it does not follow that whatever is more difficult is more meritorious, but only that which, besides being more difficult, is also better. 28 The reason is that the principle of merit is in charity. Therefore, it is more meritorious to perform easy works with a great degree of charity than to accomplish very difficult works with a lesser degree of charity. Many lukewarm souls carry a great cross with little merit, while the Blessed Virgin, with her ardent charity, merited more by her simplest and smallest acts than all the martyrs together in the midst of their torments.

Temporal goods can also be merited de condigno, so far as they are useful for gaining eternal life. 29

The necessary conditions of merit are outlined below:

Necessary conditions

On the part of the work

- A positive act 30
- A morally good act
- A free act (without freedom the act would not be human and voluntary)
- A supernatural act (proceeding from grace and charity)

On the part of the one meriting

- That he be a wayfarer (in the next world one cannot merit)
- That he be just and a friend of God
- The acceptance of the work for the reward which he has promised

Strict—same as above

Broad—same as above, except

1) State of grace
2) Promise on part of God as rewar더 32

Cf. In Iam Hac, q. 24, a. 6.
Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, III, q. 114, a. 5, 9, 7.
Cf. ibid., a. 6.
Cf. the condemnation of the contrary assertions of Bælus (Denz. 1021, 1023, 1024, 1026), Frohschammer (Denz. 1671), etc.
Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, III, q. 114, a. 9. In this regard John of St. Thomas says: "Principium meriti non potest cadere sub meritum; sed auxilia et motu interrupto per peccatum tenet se ex parte principii meritum quia auxilium et motu non potest cadere sub meritum." "Conservatio est continuatio primae productionis consequens meretur ipsum continuatio principii gratiae, seu perseveramentum, quod se tenet ex parte Dei motoris ad conservandum... Quod probet non est conservativa gratiae quae est principium meritum." Cf. Cursus theologiae, in III.
Cf. Matt. 7:7; Jn. 16:23.

22 Cf. Summa, II-II, q. 27, a. 8, ad 3; cf. III, q. 114, a. 4, ad 2; II-II, q. 123, a. 12, ad 2; q. 155, a. 4, ad 2; q. 183, a. 2, ad 1; q. 184, a. 5, ad 6.
Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, III, q. 114, a. 10.
Cf. ibid., q. 71, a. 5, ad 1: "Meritum non potest esse sine actu sed peccatum pessimum esse sine actu." The omission of an evil act is not meritorious as such.
Cf. St. Thomas, Supplementum, q. 14, a. 4.
This promise is necessary for merit which is infallible, but not for merit de congruo which is fallible.
Merits which are destroyed by mortal sin revive and are of value for an eternal reward when the sinner is restored to sanctifying grace. But according to the more probable opinion, merit does not always revive in the same degree as was possessed before the mortal sin, but according to the actual dispositions of the subject when he recovers sanctifying grace, and this will be either in an inferior, an equal or a greater degree.\(^{33}\)

Note well the great practical importance of this doctrine. It is a pure illusion, besides being a grave imputation, for the sinner who sins with the greatest of ease to think that after the sin he can recover everything he has lost by means of penance. Apart from the fact that God could deny him the grace of repentance (without which it would be absolutely impossible for him to leave his state of sin), it is likely that he will rise from his sin with a degree of sanctifying grace which is less than he previously possessed. It is very difficult for one to make a more intense act of repentance with powers that have been weakened by sin. This presupposes an actual grace which is more intense than that by which he made himself unworthy through the commission of sin.

PRAYER

St. Thomas assigns four distinct values to prayer: satisfactory, meritorious, imperatorial and a certain spiritual delight. While we are most interested in pointing out the imperatorial value of prayer, we must first say a word about the other three values.

EFFECTS

The satisfactory value of prayer is evident. It is clear not only from the fact that it always presupposes an act of humanity and subjection to God, whom we have offended by our sins which are rooted in pride, but also because prayer springs from charity, the source of all satisfaction for sin. Finally, a prayer well made is of itself a difficult task for imperfect souls, by reason of the attention and firmness of will which it requires; hence it is also satisfactory as regards the difficulty involved.\(^{34}\) The Council of Trent expressly mentions the satisfactory value of prayer.\(^{35}\)

Like any other act of supernatural virtue, prayer receives its meritorious value from charity, from which it springs by means of the virtue of religion, of which it is a proper act. As a meritorious act, prayer is subjected to the conditions for any other virtuous act and is ruled by the same laws. In this sense prayer can merit de consilii whatever can be merited in this way as long as the proper conditions are fulfilled.\(^{36}\)

The third effect of prayer is a certain spiritual delight of the soul. This effect is produced by the mere presence of prayer—as St. Thomas says, prae- sentiātė ēffectī.\(^{37}\) But in order that prayer actually produce this spiritual delight, attention is absolutely necessary; spiritual delight is incompatible with distractions, voluntary or involuntary. For that reason, ecstatic prayer, in which the attention of the soul is the greatest possible by reason of the concentration of all one’s psychological energies on the object contemplated, carries with it the greatest delight that can be attained in this life. And it is natural that this should be so. Prayer nourishes our intellect, arouses our sensibility in a holy manner, and stimulates and strengthens our will. It is truly a rectio meritis which by its very nature is meant to fill the soul with sweetness.

But it is the imperatorial value of prayer which interests us most as an element of increase and development of the Christian life independent of merit. Let us first see the principal differences between the meritorious and imperatorial aspects of prayer. As a meritorious act, prayer implies a relation of justice in regard to a reward; its imperatorial value implies a relation simply to the mercy of God. As meritorious, it has an intrinsic efficacy for obtaining a reward; as imperatorial, its efficacy rests solely on the promise of God. The meritorious efficacy is based above all on charity; the imperatorial value is based primarily on faith. The object of merit and of imperation is not always the same, although sometimes these two aspects may coincide. Let us now examine the question of the infallible efficacy of prayer.

Prayer, when it fills the requirements, infallibly obtains what is asked in virtue of the promises of God.

This thesis is definitely de fide, based as it is on innumerable significant scriptural texts:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened (Matt. 7:7-8). And all things whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you shall receive (Matt. 21:22). And whatever you ask in my name, that will I do, in order that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it (Jn. 14:13-14). If you abide in me, and if my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done to you (Jn. 15:7). Amen, amen I say

\(^{33}\) Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, III, q. 89, a. 5 and ad 3.

\(^{34}\) Cf. ibid., II-II, q. 83, a. 12.

\(^{35}\) Cf. Sess. XIV, can. 13; Dens. 923.

\(^{36}\) Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 83, a. 7, ad 2; a. 15.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., a. 13.
DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES

First condition

The reason that one must pray for himself is that the granting of a divine grace always demands a subject who is properly disposed, and it may be that one's neighbor is not disposed to receive that which is asked in prayer. On the other hand, he who prays for himself, if he does it fittingly, is by that very fact disposed to be heard. If it were otherwise, his prayer would not be true prayer at all. This is not to say, however, that prayer for others is always inefficacious. On the contrary, it often obtains what is asked; but we cannot have infallible certainty of an answer because we cannot be certain of the dispositions of the person for whom we pray. We may ask God that He dispose our neighbor for a certain effect through His infinite mercy, but God has not promised this to anyone and therefore we cannot obtain it infallibly.

One must pray for those things necessary for salvation. This means anything at all which in any way is necessary or useful for salvation. As such it falls under the infallible impetration of prayer. Hence, we can implore by prayer the growth or increase of the infused virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and even those things which cannot in any way be merited. It is evident from this that the area of impetration is much wider than that of merit, to fall into a grave sin or to perform some salutary act or even the gift of final perseverance which is infallibly connected with eternal salvation. The Church, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, frequently begs in the liturgy for these graces which no one can merit in the strict sense of the word.

Second condition

One must pray piously, and by this word St. Thomas refers to all the conditions which are required on the part of the individual who prays—humility, confidence, attention and petition in the name of Christ. Some authors include all these subjective conditions under the heading of the state of grace, without which, they say, no one can pray piously. But they are mistaken. St. Thomas

SUPERNATURAL GROWTH

Fourth condition

Consequently, although the state of grace is undoubtedly most fitting for the infallible efficacy of prayer, it is not absolutely necessary. It is one thing to demand a wage that is due in justice, but it is something quite distinct to beg for an alms. In the second case, no other titles are necessary but one's need. What is always necessary, however, is the previous impulse of an actual grace, which can be given and actually is given to sinners.

The prayer must be made with perseverance. The Lord repeated time and again the necessity of perseverance in prayer until we obtain what we ask. Recall the parable of the friend who came to beg for bread (Luke 11:5-13), of the evil judge and the importunate widow (Luke 18:1-5), and the moving episode of the woman of Cana who insisted in spite of an apparent rebuff (Matt. 15:21-28), and the sublime example of Christ Himself, who frequently spent the whole night in prayer and in Gethsemane prayed in great anguish to His heavenly Father (Luke 6:12; 22:44).

Such are the conditions for the infallible efficacy of prayer. In practice, however, we obtain many things from God without fulfilling all these conditions because of the superabundance of the divine mercy. But if we do fulfill all the conditions, we shall infallibly obtain, by reason of the divine promise, even those graces which we could not merit in an absolute sense.

GROWTH OF THE SUPERNATURAL ORGANISM

FIFTH CONCLUSION

By the worthy reception of the sacraments, by the performance of works which are supernaturally meritorious, and by the impetratory efficacy of prayer, the infused habits all increase at the same time, and this increase is effected by a greater increase or radication in the subject.

The reason for the simultaneous increase of all the supernatural habits—sanctifying grace, the virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit—is that they all have an intimate connection with grace and charity. For that reason, the in...
crease of grace effects a corresponding increase in the entire supernatural organism. As St. Thomas says, it is comparable to the simultaneous growth of the fingers of the hand.40

The reason why this increase consists in the greater radicating of these habits in the subject is that the very nature of grace, the virtues and the gifts require it. As inherent forms or supernatural habits, they can increase only in intensity. The subject participates more and more in this form by a greater radicating of the form, which results in a greater facility and intensity in the operations which proceed from it.41

Two important conclusions follow from this doctrine. The first is the impossibility that an infused virtue could be perfect by itself alone, that is, without others being perfect also. United as they are among themselves and rooted in grace, from which in a certain manner they flow and to which they are ordained, and having charity as their form, when some of them increase by a more intense act, they draw with them the entire supernatural organism. In other words, there is an increase in grace, which is the principle of the virtues, in charity, which is the form of the virtues, and in all the other virtues and gifts which are inseparably connected with grace and charity.

However, although the increase of one virtue is accompanied by an increase in all the other supernatural habits, it does not follow that there is likewise effected an increase in the facility in the use of those other virtues or gifts. The facility depends on the repetition of the acts proper to a particular virtue. The other virtues, although perfectly developed as supernatural habits, will find in practice (or at least can find in practice) certain difficulties which proceed from extrinsic impediments or contrary dispositions remaining in the subject because of former evil actions.42 For that reason a saint may encounter a certain resistance and difficulty in the practice of a virtue which he never had the occasion to exercise, in spite of the fact that he possesses the supernatural habit of the virtue perfectly.43

The second conclusion, derived from the first, is that for the growth of the habit of the virtues it is not necessary to practice all of them. Even those virtues which are not exercised because of the lack of opportunity are increased by the exercise of the other virtues. For example, a mendicant saint cannot practice the virtue of magnificence, for this requires the expenditure of great wealth in the service of God or for the benefit of one's neighbor for the glory of God. Nevertheless, he can and does possess the habit of this virtue in a perfect state and is disposed to practice it at least in preparatione animi, as the theologians say, if the possibility should arise.

We terminate this brief review of the development of the Christian life by distinguishing between that which is ordinary or normal and that which is extraordinary or abnormal in this development. We understand by the normal development of sanctifying grace the evolution of its intrinsic virtualities, the expansion and increase of its dynamic elements (the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost) under the corresponding divine motion. Whatever the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit can attain by their simple actuation under the divine movement evidently pertains to the normal development of sanctifying grace. On the other hand, that must be considered abnormal and extraordinary which by its very nature is not contained in the intrinsic virtualities of grace under its double aspect of static and dynamic.

Such, it seems to us, is the sense in which ascetical and mystical authors, whatever the school to which they belong, should understand these expressions. Those who deny the universal call to the mystical state allege, in proof of their opinion, that the mystical state is outside the exigencies of grace, whereas whatever would be within the exigencies of grace would be completely ordinary and normal in its development.

But for the time being we are interested simply in defining our terminology. Later we shall demonstrate that the mystical state does fall perfectly within the exigencies of grace and is for that reason the normal and ordinary path to sanctity for all souls in grace.

40Cf. ibid., I-II, q. 65; q. 66, a. 2; q. 68, a. 5. Notice the singular importance of this doctrine in ascetical and mystical theology. The growth of grace and charity as habits, it is therefore impossible that charity should reach a state of relative with greater frequency and intensity, so that the soul is normally introduced into the full mystical state.
41Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 52, a. 2; II-II, q. 24, a. 5.
42Cf. ibid., I-II, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2.
43Cf. ibid., ad 3.
1: CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Having examined the nature and organism of the supernatural life and having defined the fundamental laws of its growth to perfection, let us now see in what perfection consists. After a brief introduction on the concept of perfection in general, we shall explain the nature of Christian perfection, its obligation for all Christians, its principal degrees, its possibility, and its relationship with the difficult problem of predestination. At the same time we shall examine complementary questions.

The word "perfection" comes from the Latin word *perfectio*, which means "to make completely," "to terminate," or "to finish." From this comes the word "perfect," which signifies "that which is completed or finished," and the word "perfection," which signifies the quality of being perfect. A thing is said to be perfect when it has all the being, all the reality which is due to it according to its nature. A blind man is physically imperfect because he lacks the use of a faculty which is due to human nature; but the lack of wings does not signify any imperfection in man, because man by his nature is not meant to fly.

The etymological meaning of the word perfection gives us a clue to the authentic real definition. The very word "perfection" is an analogous term, and this allows for the true use of the word in several different senses. It could not be otherwise, because perfection is a transcendental concept which can be applied to all things that exist, in view of the philosophical axiom, "a thing is perfect so far as it is in act" (unumquodque in tantum est perfectum in quantum est in actu). But an analogous concept derives its ultimate meaning and significance, not from its lowest application, but from its primary and principal analogate. The reason for this is, as St. Thomas points out,\(^1\) that in the concrete order the analogy of proper proportionality virtually contains the analogy of attribution. In other words, the analogy by which being is predicated of God and of creatures is formally the analogy of proportionality and

\(^1\)In *Ethic.*, lect. VII, in fine.
virtually the analogy of attribution.² The important conclusion which follows from this is that in the concrete order all analogous perfections imply either a dependence upon the one source of an ordering to the one goal and, moreover, analogous perfections admit of degrees of more or less which are essentially dependent on one another. Thus God, who is pure act, is being in all its actual plenitude and is perfection by essence. In reality he is the only absolutely perfect being; all other perfections are denominated by his perfection; and all other perfections are in some way or other a participation in his absolute perfection.

Although the term “perfection,” taken in the abstract, is an analogous and transcendental concept, as soon as we speak of a particular type of perfection or descend to the concrete order, we immediately leave the realm of the transcendental and arrive at that of the predicamental. Hence as soon as we begin to discuss Christian perfection, we are dealing with a predicamental perfection. And that is not all. Analogous terms are predicable of things that are essentially diverse and only accidentally the same. This means that when we define Christian perfection, we must break the term down into its elements and find the one to which the term most properly refers. We shall, therefore, review St. Thomas’ division of perfection as he applies it to the spiritual life, in order to discover the nature of Christian perfection properly speaking, and the way in which the term “perfection” applies to the various aspects of Christian perfection.

St. Thomas states that anything is perfect insofar as it is in act and imperfect insofar as it is in potency.³ Then, in his commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics,⁴ he says that there are three different ways of using the term “perfection”: when a thing lacks nothing due to its nature; when there is neither excess nor defect as regards its powers of operation; and when it has attained its proper goal or end. He further clarifies this division when he states that perfection is threefold: 1) when a thing is constituted in its proper being (perfectum in esset); 2) when it also possesses the faculties required for its perfect operation (perfectum in operatione); and 3) when it attains to something else as its end or goal (perfectum in assecutione finit).⁵ Again, he sometimes speaks of perfection in slightly different words, specifying as “first perfection” that according to which a thing is substantially perfect by reason of its form, and as “second perfection” the attainment of the end. But the end or goal which constitutes second perfection may be either an operation as such (as the end of the violinist is to play the violin) or something distinct that is attained through an operation (as the end of a builder is to construct a house). But the first perfection is the cause of the second because the form of a thing is the principle of its operation.⁶

From what we have seen thus far as regards perfection, it is apparent that first perfection is identical with substantial perfection or perfection in esset; second perfection may be either the operation itself or the attainment of some goal distinct from the agent. Note that St. Thomas does not place perfection in operatione as a middle state between perfection in esset and perfection in assecutione finit; he states only that sometimes perfection consists merely in an operation and sometimes it consists in the attainment of an extrinsic goal. Nor does this mean that both types of perfection may not be found in one and the same agent. Thus man’s formal beatitude consists in the perfection in operatione which is the beatific vision; and man’s objective beatitude consists in the perfection in assecutione finit which is God. We can see from the foregoing why St. Thomas maintains that beatitude and perfection are synonymous terms.⁷

But we have not yet finished with the divisions of perfection. In the first chapter of his treatise, De perfectione vitae spiritualis, as well as in the Summa,⁸ St. Thomas divides perfection into perfection simpliciter and perfection secundum quid. The former comprises that which belongs to the very nature of a thing (an animal is perfect simpliciter if it possesses all that is required for its animal life); the latter perfection is accidental in relation to the formal and substantial perfection (an animal is perfect secundum quid as regards its blackness or whiteness, its size, etc.). Lastly, St. Thomas speaks of that which constitutes perfection essentially or per se and that which constitutes perfection instrumentally, depending upon whether perfection consists in charity operating according to the precepts or according to the evangelical counsels.⁹

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

We are now in a position to apply the various members of the division of perfection to Christian perfection, but before doing so, it is necessary to recall that the term “perfection” is an analogous term and will not apply to each

²According to J. Ramírez, O.P., in the concrete order every analogy of proportionality is annexed per accidentem et in obliquo to an analogy of attribution. Cf. De alogia, p. 75.
³Summa, I, III, q. 3, a. 2.
⁴Cf. lib. V, cap. 18.
⁵Summa, I, q. 6, a. 3.
⁶Ibid., q. 73, a. 1.
⁷Cf. ibid., q. 26; I-II, q. 3, aa. 1-2.
⁸Ibid., II-II, q. 184, a. 1, ad 2.
⁹Ibid., a. 3.
and every element of the division with equal rigor. This should be evident from the division itself as well as from the notion of analogy.

From the various distinctions already given, we can list three general headings under the notion of Christian perfection: 1) perfection simpliciter (the perfection due a Christian as raised to the supernatural order); 2) perfection secundum quid (the perfection which is accidental to the proper perfection of the Christian); and 3) instrumental perfection. Under perfection simpliciter we have first perfection (which is also called perfection in esse or substantial perfection) and second perfection (which consists either in an operation or in the attainment of an end).

It now remains to identify the various elements of Christian perfection according to the foregoing division of perfection. As regards first perfection (perfection in esse; substantial perfection), it is common teaching that it consists in sanctifying grace, since sanctifying grace is the very soul of the supernatural life and is therefore due to a Christian in the supernatural order. As to second perfection, we have the testimony of Scripture as well as common theological teaching that second perfection in operatione is charity, either in its elicited act or as imparting the other virtues. Second perfection in assicutio finis is likewise charity, since charity is the virtute which unites us directly with God as our supernatural end. Perfection secundum quid comprises the elicited acts of the supernatural virtues other than charity, and instrumental perfection is found in the evangelical counsels. Let us now amplify these statements by stating and explaining the theological conclusions which logically follow from them.

FIRST CONCLUSION

Christian perfection consists especially in the perfection of charity.

We do not mean to say that Christian perfection consists integrally and exclusively in the perfection of charity, but that charity is its principal element, its most essential and characteristic element. In this sense we must say that the measure of charity in a man is the measure of his supernatural perfection, in such wise that he who has attained the perfection of the love of God and of neighbor can be called perfect in the truest sense of the word (simpliciter), while he may be only relatively (secundum quid) perfect if he is perfect only in the supernatural order, granted the connection of the infused virtues with grace and charity. Understood in this way, the present conclusion seems to many theologians to be a conclusion which is proxima fidei because of the evident testimony of Sacred Scripture and the unanimous consent of tradition.13

From Sacred Scripture. This is one of the truths which is most often repeated in Scripture. Christ himself tells us that upon the love of God and of neighbor depends the whole Law and the prophets (Matt. 22:35-40; Mk. 12:28-31). The texts from St. Paul are very explicit and abundant. Here are a few of them: "But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfectio" (Col. 3:14); "love is the fulfillment of the Law" (Rom. 13:10); "so there abide faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. 13:13). Even faith, according to St. Paul, receives its value from charity: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any avail, nor uncircumcision, but faith which works through charity" (Gal. 5:6). The other virtues are nothing without charity (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

From the magisterium of the Church. This same doctrine has been amply commented upon and developed by the Fathers of the Church14 and has been sanctioned by the magisterium of the Church. In the bull Ad condicionem of John XXII, one reads the following words: "Since the perfection of the Christian life consists principally and essentially in charity, which is called the bond of perfection by the Apostle (Col. 3:14) and which unites others joins man in some way to his end..."15

Theological argument. The proof given by St. Thomas is that the perfection of a being consists in the attainment of its ultimate end, beyond which there is nothing more to be desired. But it is charity which unites us with God, the ultimate end of man. Therefore, Christian perfection consists especially in charity.16

The fundamental reason which St. Thomas gives is clarified by an examination of the nature and effects of charity. Charity alone unites us entirely with God as the ultimate supernatural end. The other virtues prepare or initiate that union, but they cannot terminate and complete it, since the moral virtues are limited to the removal of the obstacles which impede us in our progress toward God and they bring us to him only indirectly, by establishing the proper order in the means which lead us to God.17 As regards faith and hope, they certainly unite us with God, since they are theological virtues, but they do not unite us with God as the absolute ultimate end or as the Supreme Good who is infinitely lovable in himself—the perfect motive of charity. They

14Cf. J. de Guibert, S.J., Enchiridion asceticium (ed. 3), nn. 89, 687, 734, 787, 789, 1262, 1514, etc.
15Cited by J. de Guibert, S.J., Documenta ecclesiastica christianae perfectionis studium spectantia (Rome: 1931), n. 266.
16Cf. Summa, II-II, q. 184, a. 1.
17Cf. ibid., III, q. 63, a. 3, ad 2.
unite us with God as the First Principle from whom there come to us the knowledge of the truth (faith) and perfect happiness (hope). Charity regards God and unites us to him as the end; faith and hope regard God and unite us to him as a principle. Faith gives us a knowledge of God which is necessarily obscure and imperfect (de non visus), and hope is also radically imperfect (de non possis), while charity unites us with God in a perfect manner even in this life by giving us a real possession of God, and by establishing a current of mutual friendship between himself and ourselves. For that reason, charity is inseparable from grace, while faith and hope are compatible, but only in a way, even with mortal sin (uniformed faith and hope). Charity presupposes faith and hope, but it surpasses them in dignity and perfection. Beyond all doubt, therefore, charity constitutes the very essence of Christian perfection; it presupposes and includes all the other virtues—without charity, these are lacking in value, as St. Paul expressly teaches.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand this doctrine correctly in order not to fall into lamentable error and confusion. From the fact that Christian perfection consists especially in charity, it does not follow that the role of the other virtues is purely accidental or that they do not form any part of the essence of Christian perfection. The word “especially” does not mean totally, nor should one confuse the metaphysical essence of a thing with its physical essence. The metaphysical essence of Christian perfection is constituted by the simple perfection of charity, to be sure; its physical essence, which is total or integral, demands all the other infused virtues in the same degree of perfection as charity.

We must not forget that the moral virtues, and with greater reason faith and hope, have their proper excellency even when considered in themselves, independently of charity. For although all the acts of the Christian life can and should be commanded by charity, many of them are nevertheless acts elicited by the other infused virtues. It is evident that there can be a diversity of degrees of perfection in the manner of producing the elicited act of any virtue, even precluding from the greater or lesser influence which imparting charity may have had on it. As a matter of fact, when the Church wishes to judge the sanctity of a servant of God in view of possible beatification, she does not consider charity only but also the exercise of the other virtues to a heroic degree. This means that the infused virtues are integral parts of Christian perfection.

Christian perfection consists integrally in the elicited act of charity and in the acts of the other infused virtues imprecated by charity which are of precept.

It is necessary to distinguish in the Christian virtues what is of grave precept, what is of light precept, and what is of counsel. So far as something is of grave precept it is per se essentially connected with charity, in such a way that without it charity itself would cease to exist because of a mortal sin which the transgression of a grave precept implies. As to the light precept, a thing is required, not for the very essence of charity, but for its perfection, since the perfection of charity is incompatible with a voluntary venial sin which follows the transgression of a light precept. But in a matter of pure counsel, a thing is only accidentally related to charity and perfection, since acts of pure counsel do not affect the substance of charity nor its perfection.

We must also note that the act of the infused virtues can be considered in two ways: in itself (the elicited act) and as imprecated by charity. An act of humility performed precisely as an act of humility is an elicited act of that virtue. The same act performed for the love of God is an elicited act of the virtue of humility and at the same time an act commanded by the virtue of charity. So too, the essence of a thing can be taken in two senses: in the abstract or as regards its formal principle (metaphysical essence), and in the concrete or integrally (physical essence).

Finally, perfection can be considered either habitually (in actu primo) or actually (in actu secundo). The first is substantial or radical perfection; the second is accidental perfection or perfection simpliciter. For the first type of perfection the simple state of grace suffices; for the second, there is required a notable degree of development of the active principles which emanate from grace.

In view of the foregoing distinctions, we say that actual perfection (perfection simpliciter and in actu secundo) consists essentially (in the sense of the physical or integral essence), not only in the elicited act of charity itself (the metaphysical essence), but also in the acts of the other infused virtues; not in themselves (in this sense they are only secondary or accidentally related to perfection), but precisely as they are imprecated by charity and are of precept.

1) Since Christian perfection cannot be considered as a simple form but must be considered as a moral whole integrated by the conjunction of those conditions which perfect the life of the Christian, we are evidently dealing with

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16 Cf. ibid., II-II, q. 17, a. 6.
17 Cf. ibid., I-II, q. 66, a. 6.
18 Cf. ibid., II-II, q. 23, a. 1.
19 Cf. ibid., q. 24, a. 12 and ad 5; I-II, q. 65, a. 4.
20 Cf. ibid., II-II, q. 23, a. 6.
21 Cf. I Cor. 13.
22 In scholastic philosophy, one understands by the metaphysical essence of a thing that which is conceived as the first and most knowable property of that thing, understood the conjunction of all the properties and perfections which belong to a thing in the real order.
a plenitude which presupposes the perfect submission or rectification of our entire moral life. But this total rectification is not achieved by charity alone, which refers only to the end; it also presupposes the complete rectification of the means which are ordained to that end, by subjecting and rectifying the disordered passions which place obstacles and difficulties to the act of charity. Hence it follows that the acts of all the other infused virtues—whose precise work is that of above-mentioned means—form a part of the very essence of Christian perfection considered in a physical or integral manner.

2) Christian perfection, as St. Thomas teaches,26 consists essentially in the precepts and not in the counsels. Nonetheless, since in addition to charity many other virtues fall under the precepts, we must conclude that they also must enter into the essential concept of Christian perfection. In the areas ruled by infused virtues there are a great many matters which fall under precept, some gravely and others lightly. Only by the fulfillment of the grave duties is the existence of charity possible; only when those duties which bind lightly are fulfilled is its perfection possible. Thus initial charity is incompatible with any mortal sin, perfect charity with venial sin—and this necessarily presupposes the practice of the infused virtues in those matters which are prescribed, gravely or lightly. The virtuous acts which are purely of counsel are simply excluded from this necessary minimum, although these also are most useful and to a certain extent they may even be necessary.

3) Only in this way can we justify the expressions of Sacred Scripture which attribute an essential role to the acts of the other virtues, such as faith, obedience, patience, humility, etc. This follows likewise from the practice of the Church in the beatification of the servants of God, which requires heroism in all the Christian virtues and not only in charity. Nevertheless, one must not lose sight of the fact that the acts of the other infused virtues pertain to the essence of Christian perfection, not in themselves (in this sense they pertain to it only secondarily and accidentally), but so far as they are imperated by charity, which is the form of all the other virtues.27 The proper function of charity as the form of all the virtues is to direct and ordain the acts of all the virtues to the ultimate supernatural end, even those of faith and hope, which without charity would be unformed although they would still retain their proper specific form.28

In what way does charity exercise this command over the other infused virtues in relation to the supernatural end? Is it a mere external impulse from without? Or does it communicate something to them of its own proper virtuality? Obviously it is necessary to reject the doctrine which makes charity the intrinsic and essential form of all the other virtues. It is impossible that it should be such, since all the virtues would be essentially the same thing as charity, unless we were to admit the absurdity that one virtue could have two distinct substantial forms.29 But neither should one think that the impulse of charity toward the supernatural end is purely exterior to the acts of the other virtues. By reason of this impulse, the acts of the other virtues receive from charity in a passive manner a real intrinsic mode through which both the acts themselves and the virtues from which they flow are perfected.30

26 Cf. St. Thomas, loc. cit.: “In morals the form of an act is taken chiefly from the end. The reason for this is that the principle of moral acts is the will, whose object and form, so to speak, are the end. Now the form of an act always follows from a form of the agent. Consequently, in moral matters that which gives an act its order to the end must needs give the act its form. But it is clear that charity directs the acts of all other virtues to the last end and, as a result, also gives the form to all other acts of virtue; and it is precisely in this sense that charity is called the form of the virtues, for these are called virtues in relation to ‘informed’ acts.”

27 St. Thomas expressly states that charity is the form of the other virtues, not because it is their exemplary or essential form, but by way of an efficient cause (loc. cit., ad 1). Cajetan makes the profound comment that charity not only informs effectively because it directs and ordains—this is common to every director—but because a certain passive participation in its direction and ordination is, as it were, the form which constitutes the other acts as virtuous simpliciter.

28 Charity informs not only the acts of the other virtues but the virtues themselves as habits. St. Thomas expressly teaches in De veritate, q. 14, a. 5, ad 9. Properly speaking, charity informs the act of the virtue, but by consequence it informs the habit of the virtue. The following explanation is given by the Carmelites of Salamanca: “Cum aliquis actus attingit aliquem finem, nequit non dicere verum ordinem, sive habitudinem realem ad talem finem; ergo quando actus virtutis inferioris ordinatur ad finem caritatis illumque attingit, nequit non importare verum ordinem et realem habitudinem ad talem finem: cumque hujusmodi ordine non ordinem et reale habitudinem ordinavit finem alius, a qua elicietur, opus est quod participetur ex influxu caritatis, cui per se conventit illum finem attingere. . . . Insuper actus virtutis inferioris ratione ordinis ad Deum ultimum finem consecutur valorum adaequatam ad merum virtutis actum. Sibi rem congetur de condigno. Sed hic valorem non est rationis, nec denominatio extrinseca, sed aliquo praedicatu reale; ergo ordo, quem actus virtutis inferioris habet ex motione caritatis ad ejus finem est aliquid reale: cumque talis ordo non pertinent ad speciem praeediti actus, sequitur esse aliquid sibi intrinsecus superadditum.” (De caritate, dist. 7, n. 49.)
It is evident that if there were no matter capable of being directed to the end, the directive form of charity would have nothing to inform and could not be exercised. Charity would have to be limited exclusively to its own proper act. Consequently, we must conclude that Christian perfection is not a simple form but a moral plenteous constituted principally by the act of charity and secondarily by the acts elicited by the other virtues under the impulse of charity, which directs them to the ultimate supernatural end.

Christian perfection increases in the measure that charity produces its own elicited act more intensively and imperates the acts of the other virtues in a manner that is more intense, actual and universal.

This conclusion has two parts which we shall examine separately. First, Christian perfection increases in the measure that charity produces its proper elicited act more intensively. We prescind here from the question of whether the infused habits increase only by a more intense act or even by remiss acts. According to St. Thomas, it is evident that they increase only by a more intense act; he affirms this expressly in regard to charity. But our conclusion would be true even if we followed the opposite opinion concerning the increase of charity, for if any act of charity is capable of increasing the habit of charity, a fortiori the more intense acts of charity would also increase it. Since we have already seen that Christian perfection consists especially in the perfection of charity, it is obvious that, in the measure that this virtue produces its elicited act with greater intensity, there is produced a greater increase of Christian perfection itself. In this sense it is certain that the degree of sanctity coincides with the degree of love. To a greater love of God and neighbor corresponds always a greater degree of holiness.

But apart from its elicited act, which constitutes the essence of Christian perfection, charity, as the form of all the virtues, should imperate and direct the acts of all the virtues to the ultimate supernatural end. For that reason we must add the second part of our conclusion, namely, that Christian perfection will be greater as charity imperates the acts of the other infused virtues in a manner that is more intense, actual and universal.

In a more intense manner. This is a simple application and corollary of the doctrine which we have just explained regarding the elicited act of charity.

More actual. Whether the merit of a supernatural act requires the virtual influence of charity or whether the habitual influence suffices is a question disputed among theologians, but it is evident and admitted by all that the most perfect influence of charity is the actual influence. Consequently, in the measure that the imperating power of virtue over the virtues is more actual, the acts elicited by those virtues will be more perfect, since the motive of charity is more perfect and more meritorious than that of all the other virtues. There is a great difference between an act which is performed simply for the proper and specific motive of a given virtue, such as humility, and that same act performed for the love of God, which is the perfect motive of charity.

More universal. It would never be possible that the actual influence of charity should imperate all the human acts of a man in this life. The Council of Trent has defined that no one can absolutely avoid all venial sins during his whole life unless by a special privilege, which does not seem to have been granted to anyone except the Blessed Virgin. Therefore, there is no doubt that certain acts will be produced, namely, venial sins, which are in no way informed by charity. But in the measure that the acts informed or imperated by charity are more numerous and extend to a greater number of virtues, the integral perfection of the Christian life will be increased more and more.

The perfection of the Christian life is identified with the perfection of the double act of charity—primarily in relation to God and secondarily in relation to one's neighbor.

It is elementary in theology that there is only one virtue and one infused habit of charity, by which we love God for himself, and our neighbor and ourselves for God. All the acts which proceed from charity, whatever be their terminus, are specified by the same formal quo object, namely, the infinite goodness of God considered in itself. Whether we love God directly in himself or whether we love our neighbor or ourselves directly, if it is a question of the true love of charity the formal motive of this love is always the same: the infinite goodness of God. There cannot be any true charity for our neighbor or ourselves if it does not proceed from the supernatural motive of the love of God, and it is necessary to distinguish carefully this formal act of charity from any inclination toward the service of our neighbor which is born of a purely human compassion or any other purely natural motive. This being so, it is evident that the increase of the infused habit of charity will provide a greater capacity in relation to the double act of charity. The capacity of loving God cannot be increased in the soul without a corresponding increase in the same degree of the capacity for loving one's neighbor. This truth being the central argument of the sublime first epistle of St. John, in

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21Charity does not actually increase by every act of charity, but each act of charity does not increase charity for an increase of charity so far as one act of charity does not increase but a man breaks forth in an act of more fervent love by which he strives to increase in charity, and then charity actually increases" (Summa, II-II, q. 24, a. 6).

22Canon 23 on justification: Denz. 833.

23Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 23, a. 5; q. 25, a. 12; q. 26, aa. 1-4.
Christian perfection consists in the perfection of affective and effective charity; primarily in affective charity and secondarily in effective charity.

It is necessary to distinguish carefully the two modes of exercising charity. This is the way in which St. Francis de Sales explains it:

"There are two principal exercises of our love of God: one affective and the other effective or active, as St. Bernard says. By the first we are attached to God and to everything that pleases him; by the second we serve God and we do whatever he commands. The former unites us to the goodness of God; the latter makes us do the will of God. The one fills us with complacency, benevolence, aspirations, desires, longings and spiritual ardor, so that our spirit is submerged in God and blended with him. The other places us in the firm resolution, the decided intention and the unswerving obedience, except, approve and embrace whatever comes from his divine will. The one makes us take pleasure in God; the other makes us please God."

Since Christian perfection will be greater in the measure that charity produces its elicited act more intensively and imparts the acts of the other virtues in a more intense, actual and universal manner, it is evident that perfection depends primarily on affective charity and only secondarily on effective charity. The reasons are as follows:

1) Unless the influence of charity informs the soul in some way, the internal or external acts of any acquired virtue, however perfect they may be in themselves, have no supernatural value, nor are they of any avail in relation to eternal life.

2) The supernatural acts which proceed from an infused virtue and are realized with a movement of charity which is weak and remiss have a meritorious value which is equally weak and remiss, however difficult and painful the acts may be in themselves. We should not forget that the greater or lesser difficulty of an act does not of itself add any essential merit to the act. Merit depends exclusively on the degree of charity with which the act is performed, although difficulty may accidentally cause some increase of merit by reason of the greater impulse of charity which ordinarily will accompany the act.

3) On the other hand, the acts of any infused virtue, however easy and simple in themselves, have a great meritorious value, if performed with a more intense movement of charity, and are of the highest perfection. Thus the slightest action performed by Christ, the simple acts of cooking and housecleaning done by Mary in the house at Nazareth, had a value incomparably greater than the martyrdom of any saint.

4) The same conclusion follows from the fact that Christian perfection consists especially in the proper or elicited act of charity (affective charity) and only integrally in the acts of the other virtues imparted by charity (effective charity).

Nevertheless, subjectively or quoad nos, the perfection of divine love is better manifested in the practice of effective charity; that is, in the practice of the Christian virtues for the love of God, especially if it is necessary for that exercise to overcome great difficulties, temptations or obstacles. Affective love, although more excellent in itself, is often subject to great illusions and falsification. It is very easy to tell God that we love him with all our powers, that we desire to be martyrs, etc., and then fail to observe silence, which costs a great deal less than martyrdom, or to maintain, with an obstinacy mixed with self-love, a point of view which is incompatible with that plenitude of love which has been declared. On the other hand, the genuineness of our love of God is much less suspect when it impels us to practice silently and perseveringly, in spite of all obstacles and difficulties, the painful and monotonous duties of everyday life. Christ himself teaches us that a tree is known by its fruits (Matt. 7:15-20) who will not enter the kingdom of heaven who

\[\text{Cf.,} \quad \text{Cf.,} \quad \text{Cf.,} \quad \text{Cf.,} \quad \text{Cf.,} \quad \text{Treatise on the Love of God, Chap. 6.} \]
merely say, "Lord, Lord," but only they who do the will of his heavenly Father (Matt. 7:21). This same truth is taught in the parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28-32).

SIXTH CONCLUSION

For its complete expansion and development, as is required by Christian perfection, charity must be perfected by the gift of wisdom.

This is a simple application of the general doctrine of the necessity of the gifts for the perfection of the infused virtues. Without the influence of the gifts, the infused virtues operate according to the rules of natural reason illumined by faith, according to a human mode. Since they are in themselves supernatural and divine habits, the infused virtues demand by their very nature an exercise in a divine or superhuman mode, a quality which properly corresponds to them as supernatural habits. As long as the gifts of the Holy Ghost do not impart to these virtues that divine mode which should be characteristic of them and which they lack of themselves (since they are subjected to the control and rule of natural reason illumined by faith), it is impossible that the infused virtues should attain their perfect expansion and development.

While this is true of all the infused virtues, it is especially true of charity. Being a most perfect virtue in itself, indeed the most divine and excellent of all the virtues, charity demands by a kind of inner necessity the divine atmosphere of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in order to give all that it is capable of giving. The rule of human reason, even when illumined by faith, is insufficient to give charity that divine modality. Natural reason is infinitely removed from the supernatural order and is absolutely incapable, not only of producing it, but even of having any claim on the supernatural order. And even when raised to the supernatural order by grace and illumined by the light of faith, the soul still exercises the infused virtues in a human mode under the control of human reason which, under the ordinary movement of grace, is the operator of the virtuous habit and must of necessity impress upon it its own human modality. In order that charity have a divine modality, it is necessary that human reason cease to be the rule and operator of the habit and that the habit itself be converted into a passive subject which receives without resistance the divine modality of the gifts which proceeds from the Holy Spirit himself. Only under the influence of the gift of understanding (which without destroying faith gives it an intense penetration of the supernatural mysteries) and especially under the influence of the gift of wisdom (which makes the soul taste divine things by a certain mysterious connaturality) will charity reach its full expansion and development in the measure required for Christian perfection.

It follows from this as an inevitable consequence that the mystical state is necessary for Christian perfection, since the essential characteristic of the mystical state consists precisely in the actuation and predominance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. There is no reason for charity cannot be any perfection or sanctity which is purely ascetical and based on the human mode of the infused virtues. It is necessary that the human modality which characterizes the infused virtues be replaced by the divine modality of the gifts; and this is the mystical state in the technical and strict sense of the word.

Charity can increase indefinitely in man as a wayfarer; consequently, Christian perfection has no definite terminus in this life.

In proving this thesis, St. Thomas states that there are three ways in which the increase of any form may have a limit or terminus. The first is on the part of the form itself, when it has a limited capacity beyond which it cannot advance without the destruction of the form itself. The second is by reason of the agent, when it does not have sufficient power to continue increasing the form in the subject. And a third is on the part of the subject, when it is not susceptible of a greater perfection.

But none of these three manners of limitation can be attributed to charity in this life. Not on the part of charity itself, since in its proper specific nature it is nothing other than a participation in infinite charity, which is the Holy Spirit himself. Not on the part of the agent, who is God, whose power is infinite and therefore inexhaustible. And not on the part of the subject in which charity resides—the human will—whose obdiliential potency in the hands of God is likewise without limit, so that in the measure that charity increases, the capacity of the soul for a further increase is likewise enlarged. Therefore, charity encounters no limitation in its development as long as man is on this earth, and it can for that reason increase indefinitely.

It will be quite different in heaven. There the soul will have reached its terminus and at the moment of its entrance into heaven its degree of charity will be permanently fixed according to the measure of the intensity it has attained up to the last moment on earth. It is true that even in heaven charity could increase indefinitely as regards the three points we have just enumerated.
since in heaven the nature of charity does not change, the power of God is not diminished, nor is the obdiential potencies of the creature limited. But we know with certainty that charity will not increase in heaven because it will have been fixed in its degree or grade by the inmutable will of God and because the time of merit will have passed.\textsuperscript{44}

\textbf{EIGHTH CONCLUSION}

Christian perfection consists essentially in the precepts and secondarily or instrumentally in the counsels.

St. Thomas invokes the authority of Sacred Scriptures to prove this doctrine.\textsuperscript{45} We are told in Deuteronomy (6:5): "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." Again in Leviticus (19:18) it is stated: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two precepts, says the Lord, depends all the Law and the prophets (Matt. 22:40). Therefore, the perfection of charity, in which Christian perfection consists, is demanded of us by precept.

Moreover, St. Thomas argues, we know that Christian perfection consists \textit{per se} and essentially in charity: principally in the love of God and secondarily in the love of neighbor. But both the love of God and the love of neighbor constitute the first and the greatest of all the commandments. Therefore, Christian perfection consists essentially in the precepts. This is confirmed by the authority of St. Paul: "The end of the gospel is charity" (1 Tim. 1:5), for it is evident that no limit of any kind is placed in the end but only in the means for attaining the end. Thus the doctor does not place any limit to the health that he wishes to give to the sick, but he does place a limit on the medicine which he administers to that end.

St. Thomas continues by proving that perfection consists secondarily and instrumentally in the counsels. All of them, as he says, are ordained to charity, as are the precepts, but in a different way. The precepts are ordained to remove those things which are contrary to charity, in union with which charity could impede the facile exercise of charity, although these things are not totally contrary to charity. It is evident from this that the counsels are not essential for Christian perfection but are only instruments for attaining Christian perfection.

From this magnificent doctrine important practical conclusions can be drawn, especially concerning the obligation of all Christians in regard to Christian perfection. For it is evident that if Christian perfection consists principally in the precepts—which means that no Christian whatever is exempt from them—it follows that every Christian, whatever his state or condition, is obliged to aspire to perfection. We are not treating here of a counsel, but a precept, and therefore obliges all.

The counsels do not obligate all Christians, but all Christians ought to sanctify themselves by the conscientious fulfillment of the precepts and by the affective practice of the counsels, which means the spirit of the counsels. It is necessary to distinguish between the \textit{effective} or material practice of the evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity and obedience), which is not universally obligatory, and the \textit{affective} practice or spirit of the counsels, which obliges everyone. The first is usually verified by public vows (as in the religious state); the second affects all Christians regardless of their state in life. No one is obliged to take a vow of poverty, obedience or chastity, but all are obliged to practice those three virtues in a manner that is compatible with each one's state in life.

It is also necessary to keep in mind that, in addition to the traditional evangelical counsels, there are many other particular or private counsels which proceed from interior inspirations of the Holy Spirit and pertain to works of supererogation (a greater practice of prayer, a greater spirit of sacrifice, greater detachment from worldly things, etc.). Although they do not properly constitute a true precept, these counsels represent a particular invitation or a concrete manifestation of the will of God for a particular soul, and they cannot be ignored without committing an act of infidelity to grace, which is difficult to reconcile with the complete and integral concept of Christian perfection.

\textbf{THE OBLIGATION OF PERFECTION}

This question has already been resolved in the previous conclusion, of which it is nothing more than the logical consequence. If Christian perfection does not consist in the counsels but in the precepts, it follows that it is of obligation for all, since the precepts bind all Christians. But it is well to examine more carefully the whole problem and to complete the picture with its complementary details and secondary questions.

\textit{All Christians are obliged to aspire to Christian perfection.} We say all Christians in order to signify that the obligation to aspire to perfection is not restricted to priests and religious. They are obliged \textit{a fortiori} by their priestly ordination or by religious profession, but the fundamental obligation regarding perfection stems from the very nature of grace, which is received as a seed at the reception of baptism and by its very nature demands an increase. We
are treating, therefore, of an obligation which is common to all Christians by reason of their baptism in Christ.

They are obliged, and not simply "invited," although this obligation admits of varying degrees, as we shall see when we distinguish the various classes of persons. The obligation is to aspire or strive. By this we mean that one is not obliged to be already perfect at the beginning of the Christian life or even at any determined moment in that life, but simply to aspire positively to Christian perfection as an end which one seriously proposes to reach.

The Christian perfection to which we refer is not simply the radical perfection or perfection in first act (which would signify simply the preservation of the state of grace) but perfection simpliciter or in second act. This presupposes the eminent development of the entire supernatural organism of sanctifying grace, the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

We prove this thesis from various sources: From Sacred Scripture. Let us listen to the words of Christ himself: "You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). These words were pronounced by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, which was addressed to all men. This has been the unanimous teaching of the Fathers of the Church.

The apostles insist on the commandment of the divine Master. St. Paul says that God has chosen us in Christ, "that we should be holy and without blemish in his sight" (Eph. 1:4). He says likewise that we must struggle "until we all attain to the unity of faith and of the deep knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). It is the will of God that we all sanctify ourselves: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3). St. Peter desires that we be holy, in imitation of God, who is holy: "As the One who called you is holy, be you also holy, in all your behavior; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15-16). And in the Apocalypse we read that no one can be considered so perfect that he cannot be more perfect: "He who is 22:11.

The Fathers of the Church. This doctrine is so well attested by tradition that it would be a simple matter to give variety of texts. The famous axiom, so often cited by the Fathers of the Church, "He who does not go forward on the road of God falls back," clearly expresses the necessity of constantly progressing in the way of Christian perfection at the risk of falling back and of compromising one's salvation.

Magisterium of the Church. The definitive teaching of Pope Pius XI in his encyclical on St. Francis de Sales will give ample proof from the Church's teaching. "Let no one judge," says the Holy Father, "that this obligation pertains only to a select few and that all others are permitted to remain in an inferior grade of virtue. They are all obliged to this law, absolutely and without exception." Theological argument. When St. Thomas teaches that perfection consists in the precepts, he implies that charity, with all its grades and modes, including that of heaven, is of precept for everyone. Charity is not commanded of us in any determined limit or degree beyond which it would be merely in a matter of counsel, but it is commanded in all its extension: "With all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5; cf. Matt. 22:37). Of all the spiritual elements in the Christian life, charity alone has the role of end or goal. Not only is charity the end of all the other precepts, which are given to us the better to fulfill this end, but it is also an end for us because by charity we are united to God, our ultimate end and our supreme perfection. Now when one treats of the end or goal, it is not possible to point out a determined measure; and here in the question of Christian perfection this is much less possible than in any other instance, because we are treating of the supreme end which shares in a certain way in God's own infinity.

A very important conclusion follows from this doctrine, and with it we are able to solve the objections which may be brought against it. The perfection of charity is commanded as an end or goal to which one must tend and not as the immediate material which must be practiced at once. The difference is enormous. If the perfection of charity were commanded as something to be possessed at once, all who are not perfect would be in a state of mortal sin because of the transgression of a grave precept. On the other hand, as St. Thomas explains, since perfection is commanded as a goal or end, he does not transgress the precept who has not yet reached full perfection, as long as he travels toward perfection and actually possesses charity at least in a minimum degree—which consists in not loving anything more than God, against God or as much as God. Only he who has not reached this lowest grade of perfection gravely violates the precept to strive for perfection.

It is clear that one must not go to the opposite extreme. The fact that one does not violate the precept as long as he possesses the substantial perfection of charity in its lowest degree does not mean that he is not obliged to travel continuously toward the full perfection of charity. For the precept aims at this full and complete perfection, not as the immediate material but certainly as an end to be sought. Consequently, he who consciously and deliberately resists not to progress further but to be content with the lowest perfection (simply the state of sanctifying grace) would undoubtedly violate the precept.
of striving for perfection. But what type of sin would he commit who acts in this way? It depends on his state and condition in the mystical body of Christ.

OBLIGATION OF PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

In order to resolve the question, it is necessary to keep in mind the following principles: 56

1) All Christians are obliged to love God above all things and, consequently, to tend to perfection at least in a general manner by using the means offered them in their state of life.

2) In addition to this general obligation, the religious contracts a special obligation by reason of his religious profession, which obliges him to strive for perfection properly speaking by the practice of the evangelical counsels in the manner determined by his rule and constitutions.

3) The diocesan priest, although he is not in the canonical state of perfection, is obliged, in virtue of his priestly ordination and his ministerial office, to tend to perfection properly speaking and to surpass in perfection the non-clerical or lay religious. 81

Keeping these principles in mind, we can answer the question concerning the type of sin a person would commit who consciously and deliberately decides not to strive for a higher perfection. If that person is consecrated to God by religious vows he would undoubtedly commit a mortal sin. St. Alphonsus Liguori expressly teaches this, 82 and it is a conclusion which logically follows from the very nature of things. For a religious would thereby be guilty of a grave fault regarding the essential duty of his state in life, which is precisely to strive for perfection. 83

The same thing is true, mutatis mutandis, regarding the diocesan priest. The priest also is especially obliged to strive for Christian perfection. He is not de jure in the state of perfection as is the religious, but by reason of his lofty dignity of the priestly functions there is required of him a sanctity which others, says St. Thomas, requires, not any kind of goodness, but excellent and degree of order, they may also be above them by the merit of holiness. 84

Let us now see what St. Thomas says regarding lay religious: "If, however, the religious is also without orders, as is the case of religious laybrothers, then it is evident that the pre-eminence of orders excels in the point of dignity, since by holy orders a man is appointed to the most august ministry of serving Christ himself in the sacrament of the altar. For this requires a greater inward holiness than that required for the religious state. . . . Hence, other things being equal, a cleric who is in holy orders sins more grievously if he does something contrary to holiness than a religious who is not in holy orders." 85

Presupposing this doctrine, it is easy to establish our conclusion. If the lay religious who seriously neglects his striving for perfection sins mortally, as St. Alphonsus teaches, and if in similar conditions the secular priest who neglects his obligations sins even more seriously than the lay religious, it follows that the transgression of the precept of perfection (if it is a conscious and deliberate transgression) constitutes a mortal sin for the diocesan priest. 86

It is quite another matter with the laity. They also are obliged to strive for Christian perfection—not by reason of any special obligation as are the religious and the priest, however, but because of the general obligation contained in the first commandment. By reason of this principle, in order that a lay person be free of any grave transgressions of the general precept concerning perfection, it suffices that he possess charity in its minimum degree. 87

This involves using the means that are necessary to not lose charity and not disdaining or excluding perfection positively; 88 and this, in turn, supposes in practice a certain tendency for perfection and the exercise of certain works of supererogation. 89 This would not suffice for the priest or religious, since

56 Summa, II-II, q. 184, a. 8.
57 It should be noted, however, that (according to the more probable opinion) the special obligation of striving for perfection, both as regards the priest and the religious, is identified with that of worthily fulfilling the various duties of the priestly or religious life, and those of themselves are efficacious for leading them to the heights of perfection. By reason of the precept of perfection they are obliged to fulfill those duties more and more perfectly, following upon the growth of charity. And charity should increase until death, as St. Thomas teaches (cf. Summa, II-II, q. 24, aa. 7-8).
58 "One does not transgress the precept if one does not attain to the intermediate degrees of perfection, provided one attain to the lowest" (St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 184, a. 3, ad 2).
59 If one were to exclude positively and by contempt the obligation to strive for perfection, it is certain that even a lay person would sin mortally against the precept of Christian perfection (cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 186, a. 2, ad 2).
60 It is common doctrine, as stated by Suarez in the following words: "It could scarcely be morally possible that a person, even a lay person, could have the firm resolution never to commit a mortal sin, without by that very fact performing some work of supererogation and having the intention, either formally or virtually, of doing so" (De religione, IV, I, cap. 4, n. 12).
they are obliged to strive for perfection not only by the general obligation which is common to all Christians but also by a special obligation proceeding from religious profession or priestly ordination. The general obligation could be fulfilled by those minimal dispositions which we have spoken of regarding the laity, but they would be lacking in their special obligation which binds them as religious or as priests.

Choosing the Better Good

This question is much more complex than it would appear at first glance. By gathering together certain principles from different parts of the writings of St. Thomas, we can reconstruct his thought on the matter.

1) In answering an objection, St. Thomas points out that one would transgress the precept of charity if, satisfied with possessing the superlative perfection of charity in its lowest state, he would disdain the higher grades and the total perfection of charity.60

2) But it is not enough simply to avoid the rejection of Christian perfection. To fulfill the precept it is necessary to desire to reach perfection. “The perfection of charity is twofold,” says St. Thomas. “There is an external perfection which consists in exterior acts as signs of the interior dispositions (for example, virginity and voluntary poverty), and to this perfection (which is the proper material of the counsels), no one is obliged. But there is an internal perfection of charity which consists in the interior love of God and of neighbor… and to this perfection all are obliged to tend, although they do not as yet possess it actually. In a word, if one does not wish to love God more than he loves God, he does not in any way fulfill the precept of charity.”61

3) Is it then necessary always to aspire to the more perfect and to practice it in reality? “It is necessary to make a distinction,” St. Thomas says. “The greater good can be considered as the matter of action or as the object of love. We are not obliged to the greater good on the level of action, but we are obliged to it on the level of love. The reason is simple. Every rule of action demands a determined and precise material. But if one were obliged to practice, as regards external actions, since we cannot be obliged to that which is undetermined, neither are we obliged to the greater good. But on the level of love we are obliged to the greater good in all its extension.”62

In the first quotation St. Thomas stated that one may not disdain perfection; in the second quotation he stated that one must desire perfection; and in the third quotation he teaches that one must love the greater good. Does this mean that the aspiration to the more perfect is limited to a simple affective and sentimental tendency, to a pure romanticism on the plane of love, without ever reaching the energetic and definitive “I will”? Let us turn again to the Angelic Doctor: “The will is not perfect unless it be such that, given the opportunity, it realizes the operation. But if this prove impossible, as long as the will is so perfected as to realize the operation if it could, the lack of perfection derived from the external action is simply involuntary.”63

This principle gives us the key to the true solution of the problem. The interior will is not a true will if, when the occasion offers itself, it is not translated into words or action. Consequently, one could not say that interiorly he loves the greater good or the more perfect if, given the opportunity to practice it, he fails to do so without a reasonable cause. The reason given by St. Thomas to prove that we are not obliged to the more perfect in the level of action is that no one is obliged to the uncertain and undetermined. There are so many things that we could do each day which are more perfect than the things that we actually do. But since they are so numerous, so uncertain and so indefinite, we cannot be obliged to practice them, nor is there any fault in omitting them and using that time in performing actions which in themselves are less perfect. But if it should happen that a better good presents itself to us as a particular and specified good, and after taking account of all the circumstances of place, time, obligations of one’s state, etc., it is presented to us as the better good here and now, we are no longer dealing with something which is merely objectively or materially the more perfect, and therefore undetermined and uncertain, but with that which is subjectively and formally more perfect, and therefore concrete and determined. Presented in this form, as a definite and concrete good, we are obliged to practice that good under pain of resisting grace. And to resist grace without a reasonable cause (and this would never happen if it is a true inspiration from the Holy Ghost) cannot fail to constitute a fault, at least an imperfection, if one does not wish to admit a true venial sin. In the majority of cases it will be a culpable negligence and therefore a venial sin. In these cases it is evident that this would suffice to justify the doctrine of the obligation to do the more perfect or to choose the better good when it is presented here and now in view of all the circumstances. To say otherwise would be to maintain that the Holy Spirit authorizes us to commit culpable negligence.

This leads us to examine briefly the concept of imperfection, with which we shall complete our discussion of the obligation to strive for Christian perfection.

There are two theological opinions on moral imperfections. The first opinion holds that there are no positive imperfections distinct from venial sin, that is, that all positive imperfections are true venial sins. The second opinion...
maintains that venial sin and imperfection (even positive imperfection) are two distinct things, or that there are imperfections which of themselves are not venial sins.\[66\]

Generally speaking, imperfections imply the omission of a good act which is not of precept but simply of counsel or the remiss performance of an act of precept, that is, the performance of an act with a lesser degree of fervor than that of which the agent is capable. What is to be thought of this question? It seems to us that the truth can be found in a synthesis which would gather together the valid arguments for either opinion.

In theory it seems to us that it cannot be denied that there is a difference between venial sin and positive imperfection. For example, if one possesses the habit of charity with an intensity of 30 degrees, but performs an act of only 20 degrees of intensity, he has performed a remiss act and has on that account committed an imperfection. But it is not lawful to say that by that very fact he has committed a venial sin. Venial sin is evil, but the imperfect act performed is good, even though it is less good than it could have been. Nor does it suffice to say that we are obliged to practice that which here and now seems to us to be the more perfect and that, as a consequence, to fail to do the better act and to do the less perfect without sufficient motive would cease to be a good act. In this case, together with the imperfection which proceeds from a less perfect act, there would have to be a venial sin of imprudence, sloth, lack of charity, etc.

But the good imperfect act does not cease to be good simply because it is imperfect. When one recites the rosary or some other voluntary prayer, he is performing a good action, although it may perhaps be accompanied by venial sins which proceed from voluntary distractions. On the other hand, many times it is evil, in which case it would be better not to pray than to pray imperfectly, and this is obviously absurd. One must not confuse what is less good in itself with that which is evil in itself, nor that which is less good for us here and now with that which is evil for us here and now. The lesser good is not an evil, nor is the lesser evil a good. We must not confuse good and evil nor precepts with counsels.\[69\]

In spite of all this, it is very difficult in practice to decide the distinction between less generosity and actual negligence or sloth. In the majority of cases there will be true negligence, imprudence, sloth or a lack of charity, and, therefore, a venial sin. It is true that the accompanying venial sin does not compromise the goodness of the imperfect act, but it is something which is connected with the act, and for that reason there is an obligation to avoid it. But apart from this obligation, if we perform the imperfect good act, the act itself does not cease to be good in itself, although it be less good than it could have been and is accompanied by certain venial sins which proceed, not from the act itself (which would be a contradiction), but from the evil dispositions of the subject. There is an obligation to avoid the imperfection by reason of these adjacent sins and not by reason of the less perfect act which is in itself a good and not an evil.\[66\]

In this way the two opinions concerning moral imperfection can be harmonized. No one is authorized to commit imperfections; he should avoid them at any cost. But the obligation to avoid them does not follow from the fact that an imperfection such as is evil, but because it is almost always accompanied by other evils, such as venial sin, which one is bound to avoid.

RELATED QUESTIONS ON PERFECTION

Since perfection consists formally in the perfection of charity, the grades of the one and the other will coincide. Therefore, to speak of the grades of Christian perfection is to speak of the degrees of charity.

In asking the question concerning the various degrees of charity, St. Thomas uses the classical division which is based on the three ways or stages of the

\[66\] Cardinal Mercier distinguishes mortal and venial sin as follows: "Mortal sin is the repudiation of the ultimate end. Venial sin is the fault of a will which does not depart completely from the end but deviates from it. Imperfections are not opposed to the end nor do they depart from it, but they merely are a lack of progress in the direction of the end. Venial sin is the failure to do a good which could and ought to be done; it is, therefore, the privation of a good and for that reason it is an evil, since evil by its definition is the privation of good. Imperfection is the non-acquisition of a good, the simple absence of a good, the negation of a good; and hence, in a strict sense, it is not an evil. That a man does not have wings is not an evil (physical), but it is simply the absence of a good. That a man does not have eyes is the privation of an organ which he ought to have, and this is an evil (physical). These same notions are applicable to the moral order." (Cf. Cardinal Mercier, "La vie intérieure, appel aux âmes sacerdotales.")
spiritual life: purgative, illuminative and unitive, but he modifies the terminology in order to use terms which are more closely related to the virtue of charity. For him, as for St. Augustine, charity admits of three degrees: incipient, proficient and perfect. He quotes the well-known text of St. Augustine: “As soon as charity is born, it takes food; after taking food, it waxeth strong; and when it has become strong, it is perfected.” These are the three grades which correspond to the beginners, the proficient and the perfect. In proving the thesis, St. Thomas returns to an analogy with the natural order which he frequently employs. In the physical and psychological growth and development of human life one can distinguish three basic stages: infancy, adolescence and maturity; these are characterized by the appearance and exercise of vital activities which are more and more perfect. Something similar occurs in the growth of charity. Although one could distinguish in this growth an indefinite number of degrees, all growth and increase can be summarized under the three fundamental grades we have given.

The various degrees of charity are distinguished according to the different pursuits to which man is brought by the increase of charity. For at first it is incumbent on man to occupy himself chiefly with avoiding sin and resisting his concupiscences, which move him in opposition to charity. This concerns beginners, in whom charity has to be fed or fostered lest it be destroyed. In the second place, man’s chief pursuit is to aim at progress in good, and this is the pursuit of the proficient, whose chief aim is to strengthen their charity or God, and this belongs to the perfect, who desire to be dissolled and to be with Christ.

In like manner we observe in local motion that at first there is withdrawal from one term, then approach to the other term, and, thirdly, rest in this term. One must not overlook the fact that these three stages of charity are nothing more than divisions which characterize in a general way the infinite variety of aspects in the Christian life. The path of the supernatural life is a winding path, and its stages offer a variety of transitions and levels which will differ with each individual. We must never think that these three basic stages are so many self-contained compartments and that those who are at a given time in one stage will never participate in the activities of another stage. Sometimes this happens in a transitory manner, as when a soul in the purgative stage experiences per medium actus the graces of the illuminative stage. It frequently happens that God gives to souls in one stage of the spiritual life the graces which are proper to another stage or even to the perfection of charity. Likewise, on the path of the advanced it may happen that there are obstacles and difficulties which proceed from the evil inclinations of human nature or there may be greater or less impulses toward the summit of Christian perfection. In a word, in the age of the perfect it may be necessary to return to the struggles against evil inclinations and to the practice of certain virtues which are not as deeply rooted as the individual had thought. Human psychology is too complex to enable us to place these things in a rigid framework.

This is a question which is intimately connected with the material we have already discussed. The doctrine which states that charity can increase indefinitely in this life is certainly sublime, and it appeals to the infinite aspirations of generous souls; but it seems to imply a very serious contradiction. If, however, it may increase, charity never reaches its terminus in this life, it would seem necessary to conclude that true Christian perfection is impossible, because one could not imagine a degree of charity which is so perfect that it could not be more perfect.

This difficulty did not escape the attention of St. Thomas. He himself asks the question in two distinct places in his Summa theologiae, first in relation to charity, and secondly in relation to man. By summarizing the doctrine of these two articles, we shall be able to solve the question regarding the limit of Christian perfection and the attainment of the perfection of charity in this life.

St. Thomas establishes the thesis of the possibility of perfection by using a proof from authority. The divine law cannot command the impossible; but Christ commands us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48); therefore, it is certain that perfection is attainable in this life:

The perfection of the Christian life consists in charity. But perfection implies and presupposes a certain universality, since, as the Philosopher says, that is perfect to which nothing is lacking. Hence we may consider a threefold perfection. One is absolute, and answers to a totality not only on the part of the lover but also on the part of the object loved, so that God be loved as much as he is lovable. Such perfection as this is not possible to any creature, but is competent to God alone, in whom good is wholly and essentially.

Another perfection answers to an absolute totality on the part of the lover, so that the affective faculty always actually tends to God as much as it possibly can; and such perfection as this is not possible so long as we are on the way, but we shall have it in heaven.

The third perfection answers to a totality neither on the part of the object loved nor on the part of the lover as regards his always actually tending to God, but on the part of the lover as regards the removal of obstacles to the movement of love towards God, in which sense Augustine says, “Carnal desire is the poison of charity; to have no carnal desires is the perfection of charity.” Such perfection as this can be had in this life, and in two ways. First, by the mortal removal from man’s affections of all that is contrary to charity, such as mortal
Christian perfection cannot consist in the absolute perfection of charity, either on the part of the object loved (since God is infinitely lovely) or on the part of the subject in the sense of an ultimate grade of charity possible in this life (since there is no such grade). There can be no terminus to the charity of the soul on earth, but it can increase indefinitely, as we have already seen. Neither can there be any degree of charity which fills perfectly the soul’s capacity for charity, since St. Thomas teaches that each new increase of charity enlarges the capacity of the soul, whose obediential potency is limited. Therefore, if the degree of charity which constitutes perfection is not limited by the nature of charity itself, by its relation to its proper object, or by its relation to the subject, what is it that determines the degree of charity for each soul?

No other answer is possible but the free will of God. We are dealing now with one of the most hidden aspects of divine predestination. God distributes his graces among creatures in various degrees and without any other determination but his own free will, as St. Paul teaches. These are the mysteries which escape the powers of human reason (cf. Rom. 11:33), but so far as we are able to understand these things, the most profound reason for the diversity of graces is that which St. Paul teaches in his marvelous doctrine on the Mystical Body: “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s bestowal. . . . And he himself gave some men as apostles,

11Summa, II-II, q. 184, a. 2.
12This is the teaching of Father Cristóbal O.C.D. (Compendio de Aseítica y Mística, 41), who, upon examining the negative element of perfection—the absence of faults, who, upon examining the negative element of perfection—the absence of faults, says that this element must be identical in all perfect difference in the degree of charity in two perfect souls, without either of them ceasing to be perfect, but there cannot be admitted any difference whatever in the absence of voluntary defects. All perfect souls must be equally exempt from deliberate be the absence of defects.

We cannot admit this doctrine. It is de fide that in this life we cannot avoid all venial sins except by a special privilege, as was enjoyed by the Blessed Virgin. Therefore, one must conclude either that perfection is not possible in this life or that certain voluntary imperfections (and even venial sins) are not incommensurable with the state of perfection. The truth of the matter is that even the greatest saints committed venial sins and moral imperfections.
and some as prophets, and others again as evangelists, and others as pastors and teachers, in order to perfect the saints for a work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the deep knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:7, 11-13).

There can be no doubt about this. According to St. Paul, the unequal distribution of graces has a finality which pertains to the totality of the Mystical Body of Christ. Here we touch one of the most profound mysteries of our faith: our predestination in Christ. It could be said that the God of predestination did not take into account, when effecting man’s predestination, anything else but that immense reality of Christ in his personal and in his mystical aspect. Everything else disappears before the gaze of God, if it is lawful to use such language. And precisely because everything is subordinated and orientated to Christ, it is necessary that there be in the members of Christ a “disordered order,” a harmonious dissonance, if one may speak in this paradoxologic language, for the purpose of achieving the supreme beauty, the great symphony of the whole. If we add to this the fact that the formation of the Mystical Body of Christ is not the ultimate purpose of creation, but that the whole Christ—both Head and members—is subordinated to the glory of God, the supreme finality, the alpha and omega of the works of God ad exterum, we shall have gathered together in its essential lines the marvelous plan of our predestination in Christ, the only one that can give us some notion of the purpose of the inequality which God distributes his graces among the sons of men. Only when we see God face to face in the beatific vision shall we see perfectly harmonized the will of God and man’s freedom, the inalienable rights of the Creator and the meritorious co-operation of the creature.

If we must grant the inequality of the distribution of graces, is there any way in which we can verify the degree of perfection and charity determined by God for a particular soul? In no way. Since there is neither on the part of the creature nor on the part of grace itself any title which would require a determined degree of perfection, it follows that it is utterly impossible to verify that degree, or even to conjecture what it might be. It depends entirely and exclusively on the free will of God, which cannot be known except by divine revelation.

Nevertheless, while leaving these undeniable principles intact, we can still propose four important conclusions:

First Conclusion: Christian perfection, to which all are called, presupposes an eminent development of grace.

This first statement can be amply demonstrated from divine revelation. The words of Christ, “You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect,” presuppose a lofty ideal which is of itself inaccessible to man since it pertains to an exemplar that is of infinite. This ideal, without limits of any kind, is presented by the Lord to all men.

Another argument from Scripture can be taken from the words of Christ in his Sermon on the Mount, when he enunciated the beatitudes, for these presuppose an eminent perfection. Therefore, the sanctity which Christ proposes to all as an ideal to be attained presupposes an eminent development of grace, even to the lofty perfection of the beatitudes.

In addition to the arguments from Sacred Scripture, this fact is evident from the analogy with natural life, which requires a complete development of all its virtualities and powers before it can be called perfect. In the supernatural order, as in the natural order, the weak and undeveloped is imperfect.

How can we correlate these data of revelation and of natural reason with the teachings of St. Paul on the different grades of perfection to which God predestines us “according to the measure of Christ’s bestowal”? To resolve the difficulty it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the call and predestination itself. They are not the same thing, as neither are the antecedent will of God and his consequent will. The antecedent will corresponds to the call to perfection; the consequent will pertains to that which produces predestination.

Here we have the key to the solution of the problem. It is a fact that God does not predestine all of us to one and the same degree of perfection, as he does not predestine all souls to glory. Predestination cannot be frustrated by the creature since it follows from the consequent will of God, which nothing can resist. It is also a fact of daily experience that many Christians die without having reached Christian perfection. Indeed, some die penitent and showing the signs of repentation. Does this mean that they were not called by God to perfection or to eternal life? Not at all. To hold this would be an obvious error in regard to perfection, and it would be close to heresy in regard to eternal life. St. Paul expressly tells us that God desires the salvation of all men: “Who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (Tim. 2:4). This same teaching has been repeated...
in various councils of the Church\textsuperscript{84} and is the unanimous doctrine of all Catholic theologians. As regards the universal call to perfection, although it is not expressly defined, it is evident from the sources of revelation and is unanimously accepted by all the schools of Christian spirituality.

Then how can one explain the undeniable fact that many Christians die without having attained Christian perfection? Indeed, some even die with all the appearances of eternal condemnation. The key to this solution lies in the distinction which we have just given, namely, the distinction between the call and predestination and between the antecedent and the consequent will of God. Prescinding from the problem of the predestination to glory (which is not the purpose of our study but can be resolved with the same principles that we are going to lay down) and confining our investigation to the universal call to Christian perfection, the solution seems to us to be as follows.

It is certain that we are all called to the highest degree of sanctity and perfection in a remote and sufficient manner by the antecedent will of God. But in a proximate and efficacious manner, as an effect of the consequent will of God (to which predestination in the concrete order and with all the individual circumstances pertains), each one of the predestined has a degree of perfection assigned by God, and to this degree of perfection the degree of glory to which he has been destined will correspond.\textsuperscript{85} In practice, only those who are predestined to the summit of perfection will infallibly reach that degree, since the consequent will of God cannot be frustrated by the creature.\textsuperscript{86} Those who are not predestined to the heights of perfection will, as a matter of fact, resist that remote and sufficient call to perfection. In other words, de jure, remotely, sufficiently and according to the antecedent will of God, all are called to Christian perfection and to all are given sufficient graces to obtain it if they do not place any obstacle to grace and if they freely co-operate with the divine action. But de facto, proximately, efficaciously and according to the con-

\textsuperscript{84}Here, for example, are the words of the Council of Carthage (353) against Gottschalk and the predestinarians: “Deus omnipotens omnes homines sine exceptione vult salvos fieri, liest non omnes salvanter. Quod autem quidam salvantur, 318). The Council of Valence also states that if a man is not saved it is not because he could not be saved but because he would not (Denz. 322). This question cannot be denied without heresy and probably without an error regarding the true faith. Cf. Denz. 794 ff., 1096, 1380, 1382.\textsuperscript{85}St. Thomas says that each rational creature is led to beatitude by God in such a way that he is also led by divine predestination to a definite degree of beatitude. Consequently, when that degree is reached, he cannot pass to a higher degree. Cf. Summa, I, q. 62, a. 9.\textsuperscript{86}Cf. ibid., q. 19, a. 6.

\textsuperscript{86}As St. Augustine says: “Quare hunc trahat, et illum non trahat, noli velle judicari, si non vis errare” (Super Joan. 6:44, tr. 26; P.L. 35: 1607).
them the efficacious graces to lead them to the height of perfection or the
door of salvation.86

This problem is not concerned with the greater or lesser number of those
souls who actually attain Christian perfection, but only the de iure exigencies
of grace itself. The fact that some human beings do not live beyond infancy
does not in any way compromise the general call of all to maturity, and this
is true both in the natural and in the supernatural order. Christian maturity
or Christian perfection supposes always an eminent development of sanctifying
grace with relation to the initial grace which all receive equally at baptism, as
St. Thomas teaches.87

Without that eminent degree, eternal salvation is possible, but Christian
perfection is in no way possible in the sense usually given to this word by
theologians.

Second Conclusion: Christian perfection always presupposes the
perfection of the infused virtues.

This is an obvious corollary from the nature of perfection itself, which
consists precisely in the full development of the infused virtues, and especially of
the virtue of charity. Therefore, either there will be no Christian perfection,
or it will have to be on the basis of the perfect development of the infused
virtues. This doctrine is so clear and evident that no one denies it; it would
be useless to insist further.

Third Conclusion: Christian perfection always requires the passive
purifications.

According to St. John of the Cross (and as is evident from facts of daily
experience in association with souls), "However much the beginner in mortifi-
cation exercises himself in controlling his actions and passions, he cannot ever
control them perfectly until God mortifies the soul passively through the puri-
fication of the night."88 We shall return to this question when we treat in
detail of active and passive purification.

Fourth Conclusion: Christian perfection necessarily implies the mysti-
cal life.

This proposition is nothing more than a conclusion which follows from
the previous two. The argument or proof could not be more simple. In addition
to the fact that the passive purifications, according to the unanimous teaching
of all the schools, pertain to the mystical order, the infused virtues cannot
attain their perfection until they come under the influence of the gifts of the
Holy Spirit and are actuated in a divine manner. It is in this way that the
action of the gifts of the Holy Spirit constitutes the very essence of the
mystical state and the mystical act. Therefore, the perfection of the virtues
and, by consequence, Christian perfection are impossible outside the mystical
state.

86There are many places in Scripture in which it is stated that God does not
wish the condemnation of anyone but that it depends entirely on the perverse will
87Cf. Summa, III, q. 69, a. 8. We are speaking of the baptism of infants, who
receive the sacrament with exactly the same dispositions, and not of the baptism of
adults, who will receive more or less initial grace according to the dispositions with
which they receive the sacrament.
88The Dark Night, Bk. I, Chap. 7, n. 5.
2: THE MYSTICAL STATE

We are now to discuss one of the most fundamental questions in the theology of Christian perfection, perhaps the most important of all from a theoretical point of view. We are firmly convinced that most controversies on the mystical question arise from not having come to any agreement on the terminology to be used. The central problem is to come to an understanding concerning the content of the question, for all the questions which have arisen are completely dependent on the definition of the mystical state. Hence the mystical question should be investigated in the light of theological principles. The argument from authority (usually quotations from the mystics themselves) has been greatly abused and has not led to any practical result, nor will it ever solve the problem, because this type of argument is completely incapable of offering a solution or a basis of agreement. The data of mystical experience are vague and lack precision because they are ineffable; they cannot give us the light that is indispensable for solving this problem.

TEXT OF THE MYSTICS

To prove our point, we cite the following texts from St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa, which have been quoted countless times by authors of various schools, even though the texts have at times seemed contradictory.

For not all those who walk by the way of the spirit are brought by God to contemplation, nor even half of them; why, he knows,

to this lofty state of the perfection of union with God. It must be known

to be the same thing as a high spiritual state, for it would rather please him that all souls should be lofty as a work.

And so it does not follow that, because all of us in this house practice prayer, we are all perforce to be contemplatives. That is impossible; and those that are not are to be greatly discouraged if we did not grasp the truth for salvation and God does not ask it of us before he gives us our reward, we

must not suppose that anyone else will require it of us. We shall not fail to attain perfection if we do what has been said here.

Remember, the Lord invites us all, and since he is truth itself, we cannot doubt him. If his invitation were not a general one, he would not have said:

"I will give you to drink." He might have said: "Come, all of you, for after all you will lose nothing by coming; and I will give drink to those whom I think fit for it." But as he said we were all to come without making this condition, I feel sure that none will fail to receive this living water unless they cannot keep to the path. May the Lord, who promises it, give us grace, for his Majesty's own sake, to seek it as it must be sought.

As is evident, it is impossible to establish any solid conclusion on the basis of texts taken from the mystics themselves. The first quotations seem to be clear in denying the universal call to the mystical state. However, the last quotation could not be more decisive in favor of that universal call. If we had no other criterion of investigation than these texts, what would we be able to conclude? If this is true of the two greatest names in mystical theology, the two who have most accurately described the mystical state, what conclusion could we reach if we were to quote abundant texts from other mystical authors? Side by side with a series of selected texts which seem to prove one thesis, one could usually place another series which would give abundant proof of the contrary opinion.

For that reason we prefer a rigorously theological method. Only in this way can we establish a firm basis which is capable of withstanding any attack. The data from the mystics themselves will always be read and studied with great interest and veneration, but only so far as they are compatible with the certain truths which are deduced from the principles of theology. And statements which are at variance with these theological truths will have to be rejected a priori, regardless of their author, since it is impossible that one truth should contradict another and still proceed from the one source of

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1St. John of the Cross, The Dark Night, Bk. 1, Chap. 9.

2St. John of the Cross, The Living Flame, Stanza 2.

3St. Teresa, The Way of Perfection, Chap 17.

4Ibid., Chap. 19.

5As a matter of fact, St. Teresa herself states: "In this last chapter I seem to have been contradicting what I had previously said, as, in consoling those who had not reached the contemplative state, I told them that the Lord had different roads by which they might come to him, just as he also had many mansions. I now repeat this: His Majesty, being who he is and understanding our weakness, has provided for us. But he did not say: 'Some must come by this way and others by that.' His mercy is so great that he has forbidden none to strive to come and drink of this fountain of life" (The Way of Perfection, Chap. 20).

6As regards St. John of the Cross, anyone who reads him objectively can see that the intention of the saint is to lead the soul to the heights of mystical union with God, and that is not possible without passing through the passive purifications, which are definitely mystical in nature. Consequently, for St. John of the Cross, Christian perfection is not possible without mysticism.
eternal truth in whom there can be no contradiction. If one must choose between a certain theological conclusion and a contrary statement from mystical experience, one will have to choose the first, because the theological principle from which the conclusion follows has its ultimate basis in divine revelation. To do otherwise would be to fall victim to all types of illusions. Following the criterion which has been established, let us attempt to define with exactitude and theological accuracy the constitutive element of the mystical state. This will give us the key to the solution of all the other problems which are nothing more than consequences and corollaries of this basic question.

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

Before formulating our thesis and giving the proof, we shall examine the actual state of the question. We shall select the opinions of those theologians who are most representative among modern authors of the various schools of spirituality, limiting ourselves to theologians and speculative authors of the mystical life to the complete exclusion of the mystics themselves. In recent times theologians have begun to study these questions by using modern methods of critical investigation, and in this respect their opinion is often superior to that of the ancient theologians. Many of the theologians whom we shall mention have made profound studies of the history of the theology of Christian mysticism, and they are for that reason in a better position to tell us what should be understood by the mystical state.

There is a great variety of definitions among modern authors, but through them all one can perceive a basis of common agreement concerning the constitutive element of Christian mysticism. They dispute at great length as to whether mysticism is necessary for Christian perfection and about many other questions related to this one, but as regards the nature of mysticism they are in complete agreement. Many identify mysticism with infused contemplation, which is not quite exact, but in any case, since infused contemplation is the mystical act par excellence, their words express clearly the concept which they have formulated concerning mysticism.

Although for convenience sake we group together the authors of the same religious order, this does not mean that all the authors of the same order are in complete agreement.

For the Trappist abbot of the monastery of Notre Dame de Grace, Dom Lehodey, mystical prayer is passive contemplation, which is manifestly super-

natural, infused and passive. In this passive contemplation God makes himself known in the soul in an ineffable manner through a union of love which communicates to the soul peace and repose which overflow to the senses. Dom Columba Marmion does not treat expressly of mysticism in any of his writings. But we know from the testimony of his biographer and intimate friend, Dom Thibaut, that the great Benedictine spiritual writer considered infused contemplation as the normal but gratuitous complement of the spiritual life.

According to Dom Huijben, the essence of mysticism consists in a confused perception of the very reality of God which is sometimes an awareness of God's proximity, sometimes of his presence, or again of his action, or his very being, depending on whether the mystical experience is more or less profound.

Dom Anselm Stolz maintains that the awareness of the presence of God and of his operation in the soul is essential to the mystical life. The mystical life is a transpsychological experience of the immersion of the soul in the current of the divine life, and this immersion is effected in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. For Dom Stolz mysticism is the plenitude of the Christian life, and as such it is not something extraordinary, nor is it a second path to sanctity which is trod only by the chosen few. It is the path which all ought to travel, and if souls do not reach this point in their Christian life, they will be forced to despoil themselves of all the obstacles by a purification in the life to come in order to prepare themselves for union with God in the beatific vision.

In his work on mysticism Dom Cuthbert Butler investigates the mystical doctrine of the primitive Church in the West and offers certain definitions of contemplation and the mystical life which were drawn from different treatises on mysticism by the Fathers. For them, contemplation implied an intellectual intuition, direct and objective, of transcendent reality; a conscious relationship with the absolute; the union of the soul with the absolute, so far as is possible in this life; the experimental perception of the presence and being of God in the soul.

For Dom Louismet mystical theology belongs to the experimental order. It is a phenomenon which takes place in every fervent soul, and it consists simply in the experience of a soul on earth which has succeeded in tasting God and seeing how sweet he is.

1 The Ways of Mental Prayer (trans. by a monk of Mt. Mellery; Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1920), Part 3, Chap. 4.
3 Cf. "La Terminologie Mystique," La Vie Spirituelle, XXIV (Aout-Septembre, 1930), Supplement, pp.[20]-[26].
4 Cf. The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection (St. Louis: Herder, 1938).
5 Cf. Western Mysticism (New York: Dutton, 1932).
6 Cf. Divine Contemplation for All (New York: Kennedy, 1922).
Christian Perfection

Father Gardeil places the question of the mystical experience by asking whether in this life we can touch God by an immediate contact and enjoy an experience of him that is truly direct and substantial. The saints maintain that we can, and their descriptions of the prayer of union, ecstasy and spiritual marriage are all filled with this type of a quasi-experimental perception of God within ourselves.  

Father Carrigou-Lagrange distinguishes between doctrinal mysticism, which studies the laws and conditions of the progress of the Christian virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in view of perfection, and experimental mysticism, which is a loving and savory knowledge, entirely supernatural and infused, which the Holy Ghost alone can give us by his unction and which is, as it were, a prelude to the beatific vision.

For Father F. D. Joret infused love is the essential element of the mystical state. This infused love is frequently preceded by an infused light passively received in the soul, but it is not absolutely necessary.

Father Arintero maintains that the constitutive element of the mystical life consists in the predominance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and that the mystical life is nothing else but the conscious life of grace, or a certain intimate experience of the mysterious touches and influences of the Holy Ghost.

Father Ignatius Menéndez-Reigada places the essence of the mystical state in the life of grace lived in a conscious manner and characterized especially by the actuation of the gifts of wisdom and understanding through which one begins to be conscious of the fact that he possesses God and is united with him.

Father Marcellino Llamas holds that the mystical life is the life of grace under the rule of the Holy Ghost through his gifts; the constitutive element of the mystical life is the actuation of the gifts; the mystical act is an act of the gifts; the mystical state is the permanent or habitual activity of the gifts in the soul. The mystical state is characterized by the passivity of the soul, which is acted upon by God. Every Christian soul in the state of grace is radically a mystical soul; the mystic in act is that soul which lives the life and should aspire to it. In the ascetical life there may be frequent interventions of contemplation in a loving and prolonged intuition of God infused in the soul by the Holy Ghost through the gifts of understanding and wisdom. The normal or ordinary mystical graces are those which actuate the gifts of the Holy Ghost; the extraordinary graces are those which surpass the activity of the gifts, and although they are not necessary for the mystical state, they are not always gratae gratis datae or for the good of one's neighbor, but may also sanctify the soul which receives them.

Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen believes that the mystical state is characterized by infused contemplation, which is the most essential act of the mystical state. He is convinced that mysticism enters into the normal and ordinary development of the life of grace.

Father Chrysogonus of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament does not give his exact thought concerning the constitutive element of mysticism, but we can gather his teaching from various elements. Mysticism is for him the development of grace through operations which surpass the exigencies of grace itself, in other words, by extraordinary means. The mystical state is essentially constituted by infused knowledge and love. Infused contemplation is an affective intuition of divine things which results from a special influence of God on the soul.

For Father Claudius of Jesus Crucified, mystical theology is the intuitive knowledge and love of God founded in the negation of all natural light of the intellect, through which the intellect perceives an indescribable goodness and being which is truly present in the soul.

The Teresian Congregation held in Madrid in 1923 formulated the following statements as the authentic Carmelite doctrine concerning contemplation: 1) Infused contemplation is the mystical operation par excellence. 2) This contemplation is the experimental knowledge of divine things produced supernaturally by God in the soul, and it represents the most intimate union between the soul and God which is possible in this life. 3) It is, therefore, the ultimate ideal and culminating step of the Christian life in this world for souls that are called to mystical union with God. 4) The state of contemplation is characterized by the increasing predominance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the superhuman mode with which all good actions are executed through the activity of the gifts. 5) Since the virtues find their ultimate perfection in the gifts and since the gifts reach their perfect operation in contemplation, contemplation is the ordinary path of sanctity and habitually heroic virtue.

14"Études Carmelitaines, April, 1933; "L'Union de Transformation dans la Doctrine de Saint Jean de la Croix," La Vie Spirituelle, Supplément, March, 1925.
15"Compendio de Ascética y Mística (Salamanca: 1933).
16Cf. Revista Españoia de Teologia, I (1940), 598.
17Cf. El Monte Carmelo, May, 1923, 211. As is evident, these statements reflect Thomistic teaching on the mystical state. However, not all Thomists would accept the third conclusion as stated, since it seems to restrict the call to the mystical state. Neither would all Thomists admit that infused contemplation is the culmination of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for each and every mystic, for infused contemplation is not the only mystical operation.
Christian Perfection

Father de Mauniguy defines infused contemplation as a simple and loving gaze on God by which the soul, suspended in admiration and love, knows and tastes God experimentally, amidst a profound peace which is the beginning of eternal beatitude.28

According to Father Poulain, the mystical state is especially characterized by recollection and union. The basic difference in the mystical recollection is that the soul does not merely recall God or think of him, but it has an experimental intellectual knowledge of God. It truly experiences that it is in communication with God.24

For Father de la Taille, contemplation comes from love; it is a loving gaze. And what distinguishes this love from the love implied in every act of faith? It is not its perfection or its intensity, for the love of the contemplative could in this respect be less than that of the ordinary Christian. But this love is a love which is consciously infused. The mystic has the consciousness of receiving from God a "ready-made" love. The origin of contemplation is in this love which is passively received and in the consciousness of this passivity which swoops on the intelligence and carries it above itself toward the sovereign good to which it attaches it in a dark light.27

Father J. V. Baivel maintains that the mystical state is constituted by the consciousness of the supernatural in us.26

Basing his opinion on the testimony of the mystics themselves, Father J. Marechal believes that infused contemplation involves a new element which is distinct from the normal psychological operations and from ordinary grace, namely, the immediate intuition of God by the soul.27

According to Father de Guibert, the soul experiences the presence of God in itself during the act of contemplation. Formerly it knew the indwelling and the action of God indirectly through faith; now it has an actual experience of these things. This direct and experimental perception of God is general found and simple intuition. The will is drawn to God by a simple and direct movement. The soul receives all this in a passive manner, and it can neither achieve it by its own efforts nor retain it as long as it pleases.9

Father Schrijvers, C.S.S.R., maintains that contemplation is essentially a knowledge and love produced directly by God in the intellect and will through the gifts of the Holy Ghost. All true contemplation is necessarily infused.29

For Father Cayré, A.A., mysticism involves the following elements: 1) a certain awareness of God produced by God himself; 2) God is perceived as dwelling in the soul; 3) the mystical experience is completely distinct from any kind of sensible consolation.30

Father Lamballe, Eudist, quotes the definition by St. Francis de Sales (Treatise on the Love of God, Bk. VI, Chap. 3): "Contemplation is nothing other than a loving, simple and permanent attention to divine things."31

Father Naval, C.F.M., teaches that mysticism consists in an intuitive knowledge and an intense love of God received by divine infusion, that is, through extraordinary means of divine providence.32

Monsignor M. J. Ribet defines the mystical act as a supernatural and passive attraction of the soul for God, proceeding from an illumination and inflammation which precede reflection and surpass human efforts.33

Monsignor Soudreau points out a twofold element in every mystical state: a superior knowledge of God and an intense love which the soul could never attain by its own powers.34

Father Tanqueray, S.S., considers that mysticism pertains to the contemplative life and embraces all the phases of the spiritual life from the first night of the senses to the spiritual marriage. He describes contemplation as a simple, affective and prolonged vision of God and divine things, a vision which is an effect of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and a special actual grace which makes us more passive than active.35

Monsignor F. X. Maquart summarizes his conclusions as follows:

If one admits, with the Thomistic school, the intrinsic efficacy of actual grace, the nature of the mystical life is easy to explain. Since theologians are unanimous in recognizing the mystical life in a certain vital passivity of the soul, the Thomists, in seeking the cause of this passivity, will find it in the intrinsic development of grace itself. Their doctrine on the efficacy of actual grace gives them the right to do so. If grace is by its very nature efficacious, it is required for every act of the life of grace. And since sanctifying grace and the habits which accompany it (the virtues and gifts) give only the power of working supernaturally, the will must be moved in actu secundo by an efficacious actual grace.

On the other hand, the defenders of efficacious grace ab extrinsceo, that is, by the action of the will, teach in conformity with their doctrine that habitual grace and the virtues suffice. How could it be otherwise? If efficacious grace is nothing other than the actual sufficient grace which gives the posse agere, to which is added the co-operation of the will, whoever possesses as an infused habit which gives him this posse agere needs absolutely nothing else for operation except the intervention of the will. But since, according to the Molinist theory, the efficacy of grace proceeds from the will, there cannot be in the normal economy of the life of grace a state in which the vitally operating soul would be passive; the mystical life is thus excluded.\(^{26}\)

Jacques Maritain considers the mystical state to be the flowering of sanctifying grace and to be characterized by the predominance of the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It is not possible to discern the exact moment at which the mystical state begins, but any Christian who grows in grace and progresses to perfection, if he lives long enough, will reach the mystical state and the life of habitual predominance of the activity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.\(^{27}\)

Summary

After investigating the various opinions of theologians concerning the essence of mysticism, one fact is very evident: as a psychological fact, mysticism is an experience or awareness of the divine. Practically all theologians agree on this point, in spite of the fact that definitions of mysticism have been formulated by authors of schools that are completely distinct and even contradictory on certain fundamental points. Mysticism is a passive and not an active experience because—and here also there is a general agreement among theologians—only the Holy Spirit can produce this experience in us by the influence and actuation of his gifts.

THE ESSENCE OF MYSTICISM

It is no easy task to attempt a complete psychological and theological synthesis concerning the essence of mysticism, and yet we believe that such a synthesis can be stated with all theological precision in the following thesis:

\(^{26}\) C.F. "Pour Fixer la Terminologie Spirituelle," La Vie Spirituelle, XXII (January, 1930), Suppleme, pp. [34]-[41]. We do not subscribe to the final conclusions of even those theologians who defend the Molinist position on the mystical state, for will require the concursus of God in the action of the creature and hence would not exclude the possibility of a mystical state or mystical acts.

\(^{27}\) C.F. "Une Question sur la Vie Mystique," La Vie Spirituelle, VII (March, 1923), pp. 636-50 f.; with Raisa Maritain, Prayer and Intelligence (trans. by A. Thorold; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1934); The Degrees of Knowledge (trans. under the supervision of Gerald B. Phelan; New York: Scribners, 1939). Maritain is one of the few authors to define clearly the distinction between mysticism and infused contemplation.

The essential constitutive of mysticism is the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the divine or superhuman manner which ordinarily produces a passive experience of God or of his divine activity in the soul.

Let us examine carefully the various terms of the thesis. In the first place, when we say "essential constitutive," we are not referring to any external characteristic or psychological manifestation to distinguish mysticism from non-mysticism, but we are speaking of the essential note which intrinsically constitutes mysticism.

When we say that it consists in "the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in a divine or superhuman mode," we mean that the mystical experience is itself the effect of the actuation of the gifts, which work in a divine manner. This is a most certain conclusion which has been admitted by all the schools of Christian spirituality.

This actuation of the gifts constitutes the very essence of mysticism. Whenever a gift of the Holy Ghost operates, there is produced a mystical act which is more or less intense according to the intensity of the activity of the gift. And when the actuation of the gifts is so frequent and repeated that it predominates over the exercise of the infused virtues, which operate in a human manner—characteristic of the ascetical state—the soul has entered fully into the mystical state. This is always relative, of course, since the gifts never operate, even in the great mystics, in a manner which is absolutely continuous and uninterrupted.

The actuation of the gifts in a divine manner is the primary and essential element of mysticism, and for that reason it is never lacking in any of the mystical states or mystical acts. The experience of the divine is one of the most frequent and ordinary manifestations in the activity of the gifts, but it is not absolutely essential. It can be lacking; and, as a matter of fact, it is lacking during those nights of the soul and other passive purifications which are nevertheless truly mystical.\(^{28}\) What can never be lacking is the superhuman manner in which the soul practices the virtues as a natural effect of being acted upon by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. There are many degrees of this.

\(^{28}\) To say with Father de Guibert, S.J. (The Theology of the Spiritual Life, n. 405) that the nights pertain to mysticism "inasmuch as these states are a preparation for infused contemplation or inasmuch as the soul is passive both in these states and in infused contemplation" is merely to offer a facile argument in order to prove the opinion that the experience of the divine is the essential element of mysticism. But this is manifestly contrary to the teaching of St. John of the Cross and all previous tradition, which has always considered the nights of the soul to be essentially mystical. Neither can we admit the opinion of those who consider the experience to be a secondary but essential element of the mystical state. What is essential, even secondarily, can never be lacking; but the experience of the divine is lacking in the nights of the soul.
supernatural mode of action, and they will depend on the greater perfection of the soul and the greater or less intensity with which the gift is actuated, but this mode of action is always verified when the soul operates under the influence of the gifts. The prudent and experienced spiritual director who observes the reactions of the soul can readily discover the operation of the gifts even in those situations, such as the nights of the soul, in which the soul seems far from God. The lack of the experience of the divine during the dark nights makes it impossible to designate the experience of the divine as the essential note of mysticism.

On the other hand, in the midst of the sufferings which cause a feeling of the total absence of God, the soul continues to practice the virtues to a heroic degree and in a manner that is more divine than ever. Its faith is most vivid, its hope is superior to all hope, and its charity is above all measure. Hence it is evident that the only mystical element which is never lacking, even in the terrible nights, is the supernatural activity of the gifts, which is very intense in the periods of passive purification. If, however, we exclude those nights and any other phenomenon of purification, then we may affirm that the experience of the divine is the most ordinary and frequent effect of the activity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The actuation of the gifts, in other words, "ordinarily" produces a passive experience of God or of his divine activity in the soul.

The awareness of the divine is also one of the most radical differences between the mystical state and the ascetical state. The ascetical soul lives in the Christian life in a purely human manner and has no awareness of this life other than by reflection and discursus. The mystic, on the other hand, experiences in himself, except in those cases mentioned, the ineffable reality of the life of grace. The mystics are, as de Grandmont says, the witnesses of the loving presence of God in us. How beautifully St. Teresa speaks of this when she treats of the lofty communication of the Trinity to the soul that is transformed by grace:

"What we hold by faith, the soul may be said here to grasp by sight, although nothing is seen by the eyes, either of the body or of the soul, for it is no imaginary vision. Here all three Persons communicate themselves to the soul and speak to the soul and explain to it those words which the gospel attributes to the Lord, namely, that he and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul which loves him and keeps his commandments. O, God help me! What a difference there is between hearing and believing these words and being led in this way to perceive how true they are. Each day this soul wonders more, for she feels that they have never left her and perceives quite clearly, in the way I have described, that they are in the interior of her heart, in the most interior place of all and in its greatest depths."

It is true that mystical communications are not always as lofty as this, but they always produce (except in the passive purifications) an experimental awareness of the life of grace. To hear and to believe this is characteristic of the ascetical. To understand in an experimental and ineffable manner—this is the privilege of the mystic. The reader will recall the remarkable case of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, who actually experienced the indwelling of God in her soul before ever hearing anyone speak of this mystery.

Passivity is another typical note. The mystic has a clear awareness of the fact that what he is experiencing is not produced by himself. He is restricted to receive an impression produced by an agent completely distinct from himself. He is under the passive influence of an experience which he did not cause and which he cannot retain for a second longer than is desired by the one who produces it.

If we read attentively the descriptions written by those who have been favored by heaven, we shall soon discover amid many varied factors this constant basis of their mysticism. It appears always and above all as an experience which is perceived by a kind of psychological passivity of love which dominates their whole life. The mystics have an impression, more or less sensible, concerning an intervention which is foreign to them and which arises nevertheless from the depths of their being to unite them in a movement to God and a certain fruition of God.

It is a psychological fact admitted by all the schools as a typical note of the mystical experience that the soul is passive during this experience. Even in the most ancient treatise on mysticism, De Divinis Nominibus by the pseudo-Athanasius, one can find a famous expression, patiens divina, which was repeated by all theologians and masters of the spiritual life as the characteristic note of the mystical state. It is evident that we are referring to a relative passivity, that is, only in relation to the principal agent who is the Holy Ghost, for the soul reacts in a vital manner to the movement of the Holy Ghost."

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*THE MYSTICAL STATE*

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166

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Teresa says, "the will consents" by co-operating with the divine action in a free and voluntary manner. And thus liberty and merit are preserved under the activity of the gifts.

Sometimes the soul experiences God himself dwelling within the soul in a most clear manner; at other times it is God's divine action perfecting the soul which is experienced. The soul would say that it feels within the very depths of its spirit a kind of contact with the brush of the divine artist as he draws the portrait of Christ in the soul. The soul thinks of that stanza of the Veni Creator in which reference is made to the digitus paternae dexteræetroe (in the Dominican liturgy, dextro Dei tu digitus) which is the Holy Ghost.

But how do the gifts of the Holy Spirit produce this passive experience of the divine, and why do they cease to give this experience during the passive purgation? The answer is simple. The mystical experience is produced through the gifts because of their divine or supernatural mode of operation. But the infused virtues, even the theological virtues, operate under the rule of reason or in a human manner; hence it is impossible that they could produce the experience of the divine.

It is the constant teaching of St. Thomas and theologians of all schools that the union of the soul with God, begun essentially through sanctifying grace, is actualized and perfected by the acts of supernatural knowledge and love, that is, by the exercise of the infused virtues, principally of faith and of charity.43 But the infused virtues, although supernatural as regards their essence, are not supernatural in their manner of operation. This is not because they do not demand a divine modality (which is the only one proportioned to their supernatural nature), but because of the imperfect manner in which they are possessed by a soul in the state of grace, as St. Thomas explains.44 When separated from the influence of the gifts, the infused virtues must act in a human mode or manner, following the rule of reason, although always under the influence of an actual grace which God denies to no one.45 Hence we say that it is within our power, with the help of actual grace, to put these virtues into practice whenever we wish to do so. Although supernatural, these acts are produced in our conatural human manner, and for that reason they do not give us nor can they give us any passive experience.

The soul has no more awareness of those actions than the simple psychological awareness which one has while actually performing the acts. The mystical experience is absolutely outside the realm of this type of activity.

43Cf. Summa, III, q. 6, a. 6, ad 1; De Caritate, q. 2, ad 7.
44Summa, I, q. 68, a. 2.
45Actual efficacious grace is a gift of God which no one can merit strictly, but God offers this grace to us in fulfilling the duty of each moment. Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, The Three Ages of the Interior Life, I, p. 90.

The nature and function of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is far different. As we have already seen, the gifts are supernatural, not only in their essence, but even in their manner or mode of operation. They are not subject to the movement and control of human reason as the infused virtues are, for the Holy Spirit himself directly and immediately moves the gifts to operation. Therefore, although the gifts are essentially inferior to the theological virtues, even though they are essentially superior to the moral virtues,46 as regards their mode of operation they are superior to all the infused virtues because the characteristic mode of the gifts is the divine or superhuman mode.

This divine mode of operation is completely alien to our human psychology. It is not something connotutal to our manner of being and operation, it is entirely transcendent. For that reason, on producing an act of the gifts, the soul perceives that transcendent element as something completely foreign to itself, that is, as something which the soul itself has not produced by its own power and which the soul cannot retain any longer than is desired by the mysterious agent who produces it.47 This is fundamentally the passive experience of the divine which we have been investigating.

The intensity of this experience will depend on the intensity with which the gift has been actuated. Because of this, the imperfect mystical acts given in the ascetical stage do not usually produce anything that can qualify as a truly mystical experience. The reason is that the gift has been actuated, but only imperfectly, with little intensity, because the imperfect disposition of the subject would not permit more. Of itself the gift has produced an experience of the divine, but it is so weak and imperfect that the soul scarcely notices it. If it is a question of one of the intellectual gifts, there will be a transitory act of infused contemplation, but in a very incipient grace which is almost imperceptible. St. John of the Cross explains this as follows:

It is true, however, that when this condition first begins, the soul is hardly aware of this loving knowledge. The reason for this is twofold. First, this loving knowledge is apt at the beginning to be very subtle and delicate, so as to be almost imperceptible to the senses. Secondly, when the soul is used to the exercise of meditations, which is wholly perceptible, it is unaware and hardly conscious of this other new and imperceptible condition, which is purely spiritual; especially when, not understanding it, the soul does not allow itself to rest in it, but strives after the former, which is more readily perceptible. The result is that, however abundant the loving interior peace may be, the soul has no opportunity of experiencing and enjoying it. But the more ac-

46Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 68, a. 8; a. 4, ad 3.
47It is necessary that the gifts operate if they are to be perceived; it is not sufficient to possess them simply as habits. Evident realities are not perceived, but only dynamic realities. For that reason our soul is not aware of its own essence except through the acts of the intellect, nor is it aware of the habits which modify its faculties except through the acts of the habit. Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 87, a. 1-2.
customed the soul grows to this by allowing itself to rest, the more it will
grow therein, and the more conscious it will become of that loving general
knowledge of God in which it has greater enjoyment than in anything else,
since this knowledge causes peace, rest, pleasure and effortless delight. 49

THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Such is the nature of the mystical experience. At the beginning it is subtle
and delicate and almost imperceptible because of the imperfect actuation of
the gifts of the Holy Ghost; but the actuation is gradually intensified and
becomes more frequent, until the activity of the gifts predominates in the
life of the soul. Then the soul has entered into the full mystical state, whose
essential characteristic is the predominance of the activity of the gifts in a
divine mode over the simple exercise of the infused virtues in a human mode,
that which was proper to the ascetical state.

In themselves, the gifts of the Holy Spirit tend to produce an experience
of the divine by reason of their divine modality, which is alien to our human
psychology. But there are exceptions, both on the part of the divine motion
and on the part of the soul's disposition. During the passive purgations the
divine motion of the gifts has as its purpose the purification of the soul from
all its sensible attachments and even from spiritual delights which contempla-
tion produces. It imposes a kind of motion which not only deprives the soul
of an awareness of God filled with sweetness and delight, but gives the soul
a contrary experience of absence and abandonment by God, which is of
great purgative value. In these cases the gift is limited to its essential and
primary effect, which is to dispose the soul for the superhuman exercise of the
virtues, but it lacks its secondary and accidental effect, the experience of the
divine. This is a logical and natural consequence of the purification which
God intends to effect in the soul. The Holy Ghost is master of his gifts and
he can do with them as he wills. Sometimes he actuates them in all their
fulness, producing their double effect: the essential effect of the divine modality
and the accidental effect of the awareness of God. At other times he exercises
them only in their essential aspect and holds in suspense the accidental effects.

If to this difference on the part of the divine movement we add the dis-
evident why the soul does not perceive the divine movement of the gifts during
that period. As St. John of the Cross explains so well in the text that we
have cited, when the first light of contemplation begins to dawn (in the night
of the senses), the soul is not yet accustomed to that subtle, delicate and al-
hand, the soul is incapacitated for the exercise of the discursive meditation to
which it was accustomed, it is left apparently without the one or the other

and in complete obscurity. It is limited to a simple loving gaze by which it
perceives by gradual degrees the divine motion of the gifts, and at the com-
pletion of the night of the senses it enters upon a clear awareness of the divine.

Something similar occurs during the night of the spirit. God proposes to
carry the purification of the soul to its ultimate consequences before admitting
it to the transforming union or the spiritual marriage. To that end, he in-
creases the power of the infused light to an intense degree. The soul, blinded
by such light, can see nothing but the numerous miseries and imperfections
with which it is filled, which it was incapable of perceiving before it had re-
ceived that extraordinary light. It is, as St. Teresa says, like the water in a
glass which seems very clear, but when the sun shines through it it is seen
to be full of particles. The contrast between the sanctity and grandeur of God
and the misery and weakness of the soul is so great that it seems to the soul
that it will never be possible to unite light with darkness, sanctity with sin,
the all with the nothing, and the Creator with the poor creature. This causes
a frightful torture to the soul, and it is this which is the very substance of the
night of the spirit. 50 The soul does not realize that it is the intensity of
contemplative life which produces that state. It sees nothing more than ineffable
majesty and grandeur on the one side, and misery and corruption on the other.
It believes itself to be irreparably lost and separated from God. Nevertheless,
it continues to practice the infused virtues, and especially the theological
virtues, in a heroic degree and in a manner more divine than ever. The gifts are
operating in the soul most intensely and producing their essential effect,
that divine or superhuman modality with which the soul exercises the virtues
but because of the purification which is being suffered and because of the
dispositions of the soul they do not produce their accidental and secondary effect.

COMPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

From all that we have said, certain important conclusions can be drawn. We
shall explain briefly the principal ones which are necessary for understanding
the true nature of mysticism.

First Conclusion: The mystical act and the mystical state are not
identical.

The mystical experience is produced by the actuation of the gifts of the
Holy Spirit through their divine modality, which is completely alien to our

49The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. 2, Chap. 17, 7.

human psychology. Consequently, there is a mystical act, more or less intense, as often as any gift of the Holy Ghost operates in the soul. The actuation of a gift in the divine manner, which is the only possible mode of operation for a gift, will give to the soul, if nothing prevents it, a passive experience of the divine which is more or less intense and constitutes, from a psychological point of view, the most frequent and ordinary phenomenon in mysticism. But it is evident that an isolated actuation of a gift of the Holy Spirit does not suffice to constitute the mystical state. A state is of itself something fixed, stable, permanent and habitual. It is incompatible with weak and transitory acts. There is no mystical state until the actuation of the gifts is so intense and frequent that this operation predominates over the simple exercise of the infused virtues in a human mode.

The Mystical State

It is evident that the expression "mystical state" must be understood correctly. Since the mystical state consists in the predominance of the rule of the gifts, that expression cannot be understood in an absolute manner, but only in a relative manner. It is not a question of a psychological state which is habitual in the proper sense of the word, but only of a predominant mode of operation. The mystical state, understood as a permanent and habitual mode of action without any kind of interruption, is never verified. The gifts of the Holy Spirit do not act continuously and uninterruptedly in any mystic; to be sure, they operate in the soul of the mystic in a manner that is increasingly intense and more frequent, but never in a permanent and uninterrupted manner.

The reason is evident: for the operation of the gifts a special motion of the Holy Ghost is required in each case, because he alone can actuate them directly and immediately; this motion corresponds to the movement of the actual graces which are of themselves transitory. Therefore, when theologians and mystics speak of the mystical state, they use the word "state" in a wide sense, meaning the habitual state of the simple predominance of the gifts. This means that ordinarily and habitually the acts of the gifts predominate over personal exercise in a human manner. Understood in this sense, the expression is true and exact and has the advantage of conveying the idea of a soul that lives most of the time under the rule and movement of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Reducing this distinction to precise formulas, we would offer the following definitions: The mystical act is the simple actuation, more or less intense, of manifest predominance of the activity of the gifts, operating in a divine manner. The mystical state is the manner, over the simple exercise of the infused virtues, operating in a human manner.

Second Conclusion: There is a distinction between mysticism and infused contemplation.

Many authors speak of these two things as if treating of one and the same reality, but if we are to speak precisely, they are not only distinct but separable. There can be no infused contemplation without mysticism, since contemplation is the mystical act par excellence; but there can be mysticism without infused contemplation.

The reason for this apparent paradox is very simple. All theologians agree in stating that infused contemplation is produced by the intellectual gifts, especially the gifts of wisdom and understanding, and not by the affective gifts. This is common doctrine. Now one or another of the affective gifts, such as the gift of piety, could be actuated and thereby produce a mystical act in the soul without causing infused contemplation, which proceeds only from the intellectual gifts. And there is no contradiction in saying that these acts of the affective gifts could be multiplied and intensified to such a point that the soul would be introduced into the mystical state, without having experienced, at least not in a clear and evident manner, the habitual activity of contemplative prayer. Such was the case, in our opinion, with St. Thérèse of Lisieux, who was a mystic because she was possessed completely by the Holy Ghost. The gift of piety was manifested in her to an extraordinary degree, but this gift is an affective gift and is incapable in itself of producing contemplation.

It is necessary to remark, however, that this is not usual in the lives of the saints. Ordinarily they did not enter the mystical state in a full and perfect degree without also receiving infused contemplation. The reason is that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are intimately connected with charity and they grow together with it proportionately like the fingers on the hand. Consequently, although it is possible to have perfectly mystical acts which are not contemplative because of the actuation of an affective and not an intellectual gift, it is difficult to see how the soul could enter into the full mystical state without ever enjoying the activity of the intellectual gifts which produce infused contemplation. Even in those saints in whom the affective gifts predominated, infused contemplation was experienced from time to time. St. Thérèse herself confessed to her sister, Mother Agnes of Jesus, that she had frequently enjoyed the prayer of quiet (which is the second degree of infused contemplation according to St. Teresa) and that she experienced the flight of the spirit (which is a contemplative phenomenon, as explained by St. Teresa of Avila).
Third Conclusion: A\textit{sceticism and mysticism are so intermingled that there is never a purely ascetical state or a purely mystical state. Sometimes the ascetical proceeds mystically, and the mystic, ascetically. The ascetical state is that in which ascetical acts predominate; the mystical state is that in which mystical acts predominate.}

This is a conclusion which follows from the doctrine as we have already explained it. The gifts of the Holy Spirit can and do act during the ascetical state and produce transitory mystical acts, although they may be weak and almost insensible because of the imperfect disposition of the soul.\textsuperscript{64} On the other hand, mystical souls, even those who have arrived at the transforming union, sometimes need to proceed in the manner of ascetics because at a given moment they do not experience the supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost. St. Teresa speaks of this when she says that there is no state of prayer so lofty that it is not necessary to return to the beginning,\textsuperscript{55} and when she says to her nuns that sometimes our Lord leaves to the natural order even those souls who have arrived at the sublime heights of the seventh mansions of the interior castle.\textsuperscript{56}

This same doctrine is clearly stated by Father Arintero:

\begin{quote}
What truly constitutes the mystical state is the predominance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost (and their consequences: the mature and ripe fruits of the beatitudes) over simple ordinary verified faith with its corresponding works of hope and charity. The predominance of the latter over the former characterizes the ascetical state. But sometimes the good ascetic, moved by the Holy Spirit, can proceed mystically although he may not advert to it; and so also, on the other hand, the mystic, however elevated they may be, when the Holy Ghost withdraws from them for some time—although he leaves them rich in great affections and fruits which give their actions greater intensity and value—must proceed and do proceed after the manner of ascetics.

Thus the soul that still proceeds by the most ordinary paths may sometimes produce truly mystical acts, just as a mystic on many occasions produces ascetical acts, and those acts increase until little by little, purified and illumined, acts of virtue and, denying itself, ordinarily permits itself to be moved without resistance by the teachings and breathings of the sanctifying Spirit who draws from it divine melodies, then we can say that the soul is now in the full mystical state, although from time to time it will still have to return to the ascetical state.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{64}Father Garriga\-Logrange explains this concept very clearly in his Christian Perfection and Contemplation, 384 ff.
\textsuperscript{55}Cf. The Life, Chap. 13, n. 15.
\textsuperscript{56}Cf. Interior Castle, Seventh Mansions, Chap. 4, n. 1.

Fourth Conclusion: Mysticism is not an extraordinary grace similar to the graces gratis datae. Christians may participate in it to some degree even in the early stages of the spiritual life.

This consequence is nothing more than a corollary and confirmation of the former conclusion. If in the simple ascetic there are sometimes produced truly mystical acts and if the mystic sometimes descends to ascetical activity, it follows that there is no definitive barrier between asceticism and mysticism. The passage from the one to the other is a normal and insensible one, since the mystic is distinguished from the ascetic only by the predominance of certain actions which already begin to occur, although rarely and with small intensity, in the very beginnings of the Christian life.

Father Arintero sets forth the proposition in this way:

\begin{quote}
Since the gifts are infused in greater or less degree together with sanctifying grace, and since they grow with charity, all who live in charity can operate heroically and mystically through the gifts. And thus, even in a remiss state, in the very beginning of the spiritual life the mystical life begins and it embraces the whole development of the Christian life and the whole path of evangelical perfection, although its principal manifestations are reserved almost exclusively for the unitive way in which the soul possesses, as it were, the habit of heroism and of the divine and in which, exercising with perfection even the most difficult practice of virtue, the soul clearly operates in a superhuman manner.\textsuperscript{58}

This doctrine gives the Christian life all of the grandeur and sublimity which we admire in the primitive Church, where the Christian spirit attained a maximum degree of splendor. In the first centuries of Christianity the supernatural, understood as synonymous with heroic or superhuman, was the normal atmosphere for the church of Christ. It was only later, when complications and divisions were introduced, that the ways of the Lord, simple in themselves, became confused. The epoch of the greatest confusion began in the seventh century and extended to the beginning of our own century, in which there was a reaction and a return to the traditional mystical doctrine. Today the truth has been so strongly established that there are few spiritual writers of any authority who would dare to present the mystical life as an abnormal and extraordinary phenomenon which is reserved for only a small group of the elite. The majority maintain that there is no impassable barrier between asceticism and mysticism. There are not two distinct paths which lead to Christian perfection; on the contrary, they are but two stages of the same path to perfection which all should travel until they reach sanctity.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{58}Of. cit., p. 663.
3: MYSTICISM AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

One of the most controversial questions among the various schools of spirituality is the relationship between mysticism and Christian perfection. Theologians are divided into two principal opinions concerning this important question. The first opinion holds for the unity of way in the spiritual life, considering asceticism and mysticism as two phases of the same path which all souls ought to travel on the way to perfection. The ascetical phase serves as a basis and preparation for the mystical phase in which alone is found the full perfection of the Christian life.

The second opinion maintains a duality of ways—the one ascetical and the other mystical—and by either one the soul can arrive at Christian perfection, but in such wise that the ascetical way is the normal and common way according to the ordinary providence of God and is therefore the way which all souls should strive to follow. The mystical way is completely abnormal and extraordinary.

The exceptional importance of this question should be evident to all, not only as a theoretical question but in the practical order, since the solution to this problem in the speculative order will determine to a great extent the direction which should be given to souls in their progress toward sanctity.

THE PROBLEM

The first thing that we must do is clarify the state of the question, because not all authors understand the terms in the same way.

In the first place, some authors believe that the problem consists in determining whether or not there are various kinds of sanctity determined by the development of various kinds of sanctifying grace. But this is not the question in dispute. Sanctifying grace is one, both for those who affirm and for those who deny the unity of the spiritual life, because there is not nor can there be any other kind of participation in the divine nature which would be more perfect without ceasing to be so in an accidental manner. It is not a question, therefore, of determining whether there exists in the mystical way a sanctifying grace which is specifically distinct from the grace of the ascetical way. In this sense all theologians admit the unity of the spiritual life, since the grace is one, the faith is one, and the charity is one—and these constitute the spiritual life from beginning to end.

Neither is it a question of determining whether there exists in the mystical way, and in it alone, a call to perfection which is unknown in the ascetical way. Or to put the matter more clearly, it is not a question of trying to discover whether all souls, mystics or not, are called to Christian perfection. All the schools of spirituality would answer this question in the affirmative. What is disputed is whether this perfection falls exclusively under the dominion of the mystical way or whether it can be attained without leaving the boundaries of the ascetical way.

Finally, we are not attempting to verify the question de facto—whether they are many or few who actually reach the mystical stage—but only the question de jure, that is, whether the mystical state enters into the normal development of sanctifying grace or whether it is the effect of an extraordinary providence absolutely outside the common ways which are open to all Christians who possess grace.

Having isolated the false interpretations of the problem, let us now put the question in its true focus. All are called to Christian perfection. Perfection, or the development of grace and the virtues in the soul, is the terminus of the spiritual life. To reach this perfection, is it necessary that the soul experience mystical operations, or can the soul attain perfection without having experienced these things? In other words, are the ascetical and the mystical phases two parts of one and the same path which leads to the terminus of the spiritual life—the perfection of charity—or are there two different paths which lead to the same terminus?

As is evident, the question does not pertain to the beginning or to the end of the spiritual life. Neither in the one nor the other can there be any specific difference, since grace and charity cannot be otherwise than essentially one. The question refers to the means by which one can reach the terminus of this path: the perfection of charity. It is a question concerning the unity of the spiritual way rather than the unity of the spiritual life.

Keeping in mind the principles which we have established, it seems to us that the principal relations between Christian perfection and mysticism can be synthesized in the following conclusions:

Mysticism and Perfection

The true question
First Conclusion: Mysticism enters into the normal development of sanctifying grace.

This conclusion should be evident in view of the doctrine already explained. There are three elements intermingled in this conclusion: grace, its normal development and mysticism. We have said that sanctifying grace is given to us in the form of a seed which by its very nature demands an increase and growth. This is so clear that it is admitted by all the different schools of Christian spirituality. If grace were infused in the soul already perfectly developed, the obligation to strive for perfection would be meaningless and absurd. We know also what mysticism is: the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a divine mode and usually producing a passive experience of the divine. This point is also admitted by all theologians—with certain differences, to be sure, but these do not affect the substance of the matter. Those who deny the universal call to mysticism will suggest the possibility of a human mode in the operation of the gifts or some other subterfuge, but all admit substantially that mysticism is produced by the divine modality of the gifts. There is also perfect agreement among all schools concerning the meaning of the normal development of sanctifying grace. Whatever falls within the exigencies of grace evidently falls within its normal and ordinary development. And whatever is outside the exigencies of grace will be abnormal and extraordinary in its development. On this also all theologians are in agreement.

Who can deny that the simple actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost falls within the normal exigencies of grace? Who would say that the simple actuation of a gift of the Holy Ghost is an abnormal and extraordinary phenomenon in the life of grace?

As a matter of fact, no one has ever dared to say such a thing. All the schools of Christian spirituality recognize that the simple actuation of a gift of the Holy Ghost cannot be classified among the extraordinary phenomena (as one would classify, for example, the graces gratia datae), but that it is something perfectly normal and ordinary in the life of grace. And precisely because they are aware of the inevitable consequences which follow this evident fact, those who deny the universal call to mysticism are forced to say that the gifts of the Holy Spirit can operate in two different ways: the human mode, which does not transcend the ascetical phase, and the divine mode, which is characteristic of and proper to the mystical phase. Consequently, they conclude that the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost enters into the normal and ordinary development of grace, but that mysticism does not necessarily enter into this normal development, because the actuation of the gifts (according to their theory) can be explained by a human mode of operation which could occur in the ascetical phase.

This explanation would be incontestable if it were true. But in our opinion it is completely false. We have already demonstrated that the gifts of the Holy Ghost do not and cannot act in a human mode; this human manner of operation is absolutely incompatible with the very nature of the gifts. We have already seen that such a manner of operation, besides being useless and superfluous, is philosophically impossible, for it would destroy the very nature of the habits; and it is philosophically absurd, because it would destroy the very nature of the gifts. Consequently, either the gifts do not operate, or they necessarily operate in a divine manner—and then we are in the domain of the mystical, because that actuation in a divine mode necessarily produces a mystical act (although we admit a variety in its intensity and its duration).

In the ascetical state the gifts rarely operate, and when they do, it is only imperfectly and with little intensity, due to the imperfect disposition of the soul. But the superhuman mode of the gifts is surely present even in this case, although in a weak and latent manner, as Father Garrigou-Lagrange puts it.

The whole matter is reduced to the fact that the soul, with the aid of grace, disposes itself more and more for the more intense and more frequent actuation of the gifts. The gifts do not have to change specifically, and they do not need anything else to be added to their nature. It suffices merely that the latent and imperfect exercise of the gifts in the ascetical state be intensified and multiplied in order that the soul gradually enter into the full mystical state, whose essential characteristic consists in the predominance of the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in a divine manner over the simple exercise or predominance of the infused virtues in a human manner.

This explanation, which is demanded by the very nature of things, seems to us to be the only logical explanation. Until our adversaries can show us that the simple actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is an extraordinary phenomenon in the life of grace (and we are certain that they will never be able to do that), we shall rest secure that our position is invulnerable.

Second Conclusion: Complete Christian perfection is found only in the mystical life.

This is another conclusion which follows from the theological principles which we have already established. Christian perfection consists in the full development of that sanctifying grace received at baptism as a seed. This
development is verified by the increase of the infused virtues, both theological and moral, and especially that of charity, the virtue par excellence whose perfection coincides with the perfection of the Christian life.

But the infused virtues cannot attain their full perfection except under the influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, for without the gifts they cannot go beyond the human modality under the rule of reason to which they are restricted in the ascetical state. Only the divine modality of the gifts gives the infused virtues the atmosphere which they need for their perfection. It is this predominance of the activity of the gifts of the Spirit operating in a divine mode, however, which characterizes the mystical state.

We have already demonstrated the truth of these statements, and from them our conclusion follows with the logical force of a syllogism. The infused virtues cannot reach their full perfection without the influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit operating on them in a divine manner. But this actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in a divine manner constitutes the very essence of mysticism. Therefore, the infused virtues cannot attain their full perfection outside the mystical life. But if Christian perfection coincides with the perfection of the infused virtues, and especially that of charity, and if these virtues cannot attain their perfection except in the mystical life, it follows that Christian perfection is impossible outside the mystical life.

This conclusion, almost forgotten during the last three centuries of decadence in mystical theology, has once again received its proper place among the authors of modern spirituality. There are few theologians of any authority who insist on preserving the doctrines formerly held, and there are none who can offer a solid argument against this doctrine. Let us review the teaching of the three greatest lights in experimental mysticism: St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila and St. Francis de Sales, whose doctrines are in complete accord with the teachings of the Angelic Doctor.

The teaching of St. John of the Cross, if studied in its totality, is orientated to mysticism as the normal and indispensable terminus for the attainment of Christian perfection. Of course, if one concentrates on an isolated text and abstracts from his whole system, it would be easy to defend any preconceived thesis; but it would not represent the authentic thought of St. John of the Cross. If a person reads his works without any preconceived notions, it will be evident that he teaches that one cannot attain Christian perfection except on the foundations of the passive purifications. The following two texts clearly indicate his thought:

"...and he had a thousand more of the same sort. But he was not the less a saint. He was not the less a saint because he failed to attain perfection. He was the more a saint because he knew and confessed his imperfection."

But neither from these imperfections nor from those others can the soul be perfectly purified until God brings it into the passive purgation of that dark night of which we shall presently speak. It is fitting for the soul, however, to contrive to labor, so far as it can, on its own account, in order that it may purify and perfect itself and thus may merit being taken by God into that divine care in which it becomes healed of all things that it was unable to cure itself. For however greatly the soul itself labors, it cannot actively purify itself so as to be prepared in the least degree for the divine union of perfection of love if God does not take its hand and purify it in that dark fire, in the way and manner that we have yet to describe.

The thought of St. John of the Cross could not be expressed with more force concerning the necessity of the mystical purifications to attain perfection. He starts with a soul that labors seriously to purify itself of its imperfections; a soul that has reached the height of the ascetical way; a generous soul that does all it can and yet cannot, he says, be disposed for the perfect union of love until God himself prepares the soul by means of the mystical purifications. To attempt to avoid the difficulty by saying that St. John of the Cross is referring only to those who are to be purified by the mystical way is to distort the teaching of the mystical doctor. For him, Christian perfection is absolutely impossible outside the mystical state.

The teaching of St. Teresa of Avila is in conformity with that of St. John of the Cross. St. Teresa considered that anything that we ourselves might accomplish in the ascetical life would be nothing more than a "few little straws." She not only teaches in many places that mysticism is the normal terminus of the Christian life and is not reserved for some few aristocrats of the spirit; but she expressly states that the reason she wrote her books is none other than to cause souls to covet so sublime a blessing.

"...and he had a thousand more of the same sort. But he was not the less a saint. He was not the less a saint because he failed to attain perfection. He was the more a saint because he knew and confessed his imperfection."
As regards certain apparent contradictions in the writings of St. Teresa, she herself explains with all precision the true meaning of her words. The following passage is an example of her clarification:

I seem to have been contradicting what I had previously said, since, in consoling those who had not reached the contemplative state, I told them that the Lord had different roads by which they might come to him, just as he also had many mansions. I now repeat this: his Majesty, being who he is and understanding our weakness, has provided for us. But he did not say: "Some must come by this way and others by that." His mercy is so great that he has forbidden none to strive to come and drink of this fountain of life.¹

Note the importance of this passage for an understanding of the authentic teaching of St. Teresa. It is the saint herself who realizes perfectly that what she had just stated seemed to involve a contradiction of her previous teaching. Consequently, she attempts to clarify her thought by giving an authentic interpretation of her own words. Speaking with great care, she tells us that the Lord invites all of us to drink the clear and crystal waters of mystical contemplation. No defender of the universal call to mysticism could have expressed the doctrine with greater clarity. At the risk of an arbitrary denial of St. Teresa’s obvious teaching, one cannot deny that she is decidedly of the opinion that all are called to mysticism.

As regards the teaching of St. Francis de Sales, one can study the beautiful commentary by Father Lambarre on the Treatise on the Love of God, where St. Francis states that "prayer is called meditation until it produces the honey of devotion; and after this it is changed into contemplation.... Meditation is the mother of love, but contemplation is her daughter.... Holy contemplation is the end and terminus to which all those exercises tend, and all of them are reducible to it."²

This sublime doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila and St. Francis de Sales is also the teaching of St. Bonaventure, St. Catherine of Siena, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, Ruybroeck, Blonsius, John of Avila and of all the mystical theologians previous to the seventeenth century, which begins the age of decadence. In modern times there has been a return to this traditional doctrine on the mystical life, and we can mention the following as examples: Marmion, Lehodey, Louismet, Stolz, Gardeil, Garrigou-Lagrange, Arintero, Joret, Philibert, Beretta, Bruno of Jesus and Mary, Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, de la Taille, Jaegher, Schrijvers, Cayré, Mercier, Soudreau and Martinin. In a word, most of the great names in modern Christian spirituality have returned, after a period of three centuries, to the sublime concept of the mystical life as the normal culmination of the life of grace.

Third Conclusion: All are called, at least by a remote and sufficient call, to the mystical state.

To deny the universal call to the mystical life it would be necessary to deny also the universal call to perfection. If God does not wish all of us to be perfect, then it is evident that he does not wish all of us to be mystics. But if the call to perfection is absolutely universal—and this is so clear that all the schools admit it—it is necessary to say that the call to the mystical life is likewise universal.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the question de jure is beyond all doubt, we do not think it inconvenient to make some practical restrictions. Here as elsewhere if one wants to remain in the area of truth and avoid all extremes, there is no other remedy but to make a distinction between the juridical order and the order of facts. The questions de jure hardly ever coincide completely with the questions de facto, especially in these matters in which our human limitations and weaknesses play such a great part.

We think that the most balanced and most realistic doctrine that has been offered today concerning the universal call to the mystical state is that of Father Garrigou-Lagrange. His magnificent chapter on the call to contemplation and the mystical life in Christian Perfection and Contemplation could be accepted as a point of convergence for all the schools of spirituality, and we strongly urge the reader to study this chapter with great care. In practice, it seems, the true solution of the problem can be stated in the following propositions:

1) By a remote and sufficient call, by the very fact of being in the state of grace, all are called to the mystical life as the normal expression of sanctifying grace. As the child is called to maturity by the mere fact of being born, so as regards the mystical life, since grace is the seed of mysticism.

2) If the soul is faithful and places no obstacles to the plans of God, a moment will arrive in which that remote call is converted into a proximate sufficient call through the presence of the three signs stipulated by Tauler and St. John of the Cross. The reason is that as habits of the Holy Ghost demand an operation which is more and more vital.

3) The proximate sufficient call becomes a proximate efficacious call if the soul, on receiving the first call, corresponds faithfully with it and

²St. Francis de Sales, Treatise on the Love of God, Bk. 6, Chaps. 3 and 6.
⁴Divine Institutions, Chap. 35; The Dark Night, Bk. 1, Chap. 9.
places no obstacle to the divine activity. The reason for this is that efficacious grace is always given to him who does not resist sufficient grace.

4) The greater or less degree of holiness which the soul will attain is the mystical life will depend on the degree of fidelity on the part of the soul and the free determination of God in view of the degree of sanctity to which that soul has been predestined. The degree of grace and glory is determined by God for each one by divine predestination. It should be noted that this doctrine is true, whether predestination is effected as the Thomists maintain, ante praevista merita, or as the Molinist school teaches, post praevista merita.

SOLUTION OF OBJECTIONS

FIRST

It is a universal law that every vital principle can reach its perfect development without going beyond its proper mode of being and operation. Therefore, if grace resides and works in the soul after the manner of the soul, that is, in a human and natural mode, it is evident that grace can attain its perfect development without going beyond that human mode. Whatever exceeds this mode of operation will be more or less fitting so far as it facilitates the development of grace, but it will never be absolutely necessary. As a proof of this argument, theologians sometimes quote the following words of St. Thomas: "Grace is in the soul as a form having complete existence in the soul; but a complete form is in its subject according to the condition of the subject."[11]

The text

Let us first examine the text from St. Thomas, and then we shall proceed to the objection as stated. In the question of the Summa from which the quotation is taken, St. Thomas is asking whether a sacramental character can be blotted out from the soul. The objection which St. Thomas raises and answers can be summarized as follows: It seems that a character can be blotted out from the soul because the more perfect an accident is, the more firmly does it adhere to its subject. But grace is more perfect than a character, because a character is ordained to grace as to a further end. But grace is lost through sin and therefore much more can a character be lost.

The complete reply given by St. Thomas is as follows: Both grace and the character are in the soul, but in different ways. Grace is in the soul as a form having complete existence therein, whereas a character is in the soul as an instrumental power. Now a complete form is in its subject according to the condition of the subject, and since the soul, as long as it is a wayfarer, is changeable in respect of free will, it results that grace is in the soul in a changeable manner. But an instrumental power follows rather the condition of the principal agent; consequently, the character exists in the soul in an indelible manner, not from any perfection of its own, but from the perfection of Christ's priesthood, from which the character flows like an instrumental power.

The objection

The first question that should come to the mind of the reader is: what has all this to do with grace and the human mode of operation? It is surely strange that anyone should quote this text in order to prove something that is completely alien to the text itself. Whether or not grace is in the soul in a human mode is a question which we shall examine later, but it is as clear as the light of day that this text from St. Thomas does not have the slightest relation to the question.

St. Thomas is saying in this text that grace, as distinct from the character, is in the soul in an amissible manner, as is demanded by the intrinsic mutability of the soul itself wherein grace resides as in its proper subject. Grace is in the soul as a complete form in its own being; but this type of a form necessarily is subject to the characteristics of the subject in which it inheres, and for that reason grace is subject to the mutable condition of the human soul, which proceeds from the mutability of human free will. Consequently, grace can be lost and as a matter of fact is frequently lost. This is the only thing that St. Thomas says in the passage quoted. There is no reference whatever to the human mode or the superhuman mode.

We are not interested here in insisting on the thought of St. Thomas in the above text. As a matter of fact, we would prefer that the text quoted would have the meaning attributed to it, because that condition of grace wherein it must operate in a human mode, far from weakening our thesis, would fortify it.

But let us examine the objection itself. The fundamental statement of the objection refers to the universal law that any vital principle can reach its full perfection without going beyond its proper mode of being and of operation. We are in full agreement with this statement, and, if anything, we would complain that the statement itself has not been emphasized enough: it seems to us that any vital principle not only can but must reach its perfect development without going beyond its proper mode of being and of operation. How could it be otherwise, especially if the mode referred to is something specifically distinct? Could a plant grow and develop in the mode of an animal? Consequently, we not only admit the principle, but we would state it even more forcefully.

But what follows from this principle? According to the objection, the conclusion drawn is that grace is and works in the soul according to the mode of the soul, namely, in a natural and human mode, and that therefore it can reach its perfection without going beyond this human mode. We suspect that the objector must have suffered an involuntary distortion when he wrote those words. He certainly must know that grace does not work in the soul either
in the human or in the divine mode, because grace does not operate at all; it is an inherent habit and is not ordained immediately to action. It is the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost which operate, and they reside, not in the essence of the soul as does sanctifying grace, but in the soul's faculties. And those infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit are really distinct from grace, although they are rooted in grace. The virtues and the gifts operate after the mode of the agent who governs them, that is to say, the virtues in a human mode under the rule of reason enlightened by faith, and the gifts in a divine mode under the direct and immediate movement of the Holy Ghost himself.

Accepting the basic principle concerning the perfection of a vital principle within its own mode of being and operation, the objector immediately concludes that grace should be developed through its operative powers in a human mode because it resides in the soul according to our human and conatural mode. Perhaps the reader has already seen the sophism which is hidden in this argument. The logician would perceive that the syllogism has four terms and that the true conclusion should be one which is diametrically opposed to the conclusion stated. The basic principle of the argument not only does not prove the thesis of the development of grace according to a human mode, but it becomes the foundation for proving the exact opposite: grace demands by its very nature a mode of development which is completely divine.

What is the proper mode of sanctifying grace? Would any theologian dare to answer that it is a human mode? Have we not already seen in philosophy that operation follows being (operari sequitur esse)? And who would say that sanctifying grace is a human form? Has it not already been demonstrated as a truth of revelation that grace is a divine form which gives us nothing less than a physical and formal participation in the very nature of God himself? Does not St. Peter say that through grace we become participants in the very nature of God: divinae consors naturae? Now, if the being of grace is divine (and no one can deny this without a manifest error) and if operation follows being (and no one can deny this without denying a basic principle of philosophy), who would say that a divine form should develop in a human mode?

The objector confuses the operation which corresponds to grace itself with the operation which corresponds to the subject in whom grace resides. The operation which corresponds to the soul, or the subject wherein grace resides, is certainly an operation in a human mode because the soul itself is human and its operations must correspond to its mode of being (operari sequitur esse). But the operation demanded by sanctifying grace is an operation in a divine and superhuman mode, because the very essence of grace is divine and the operations which flow from it must correspond to the being from which they proceed.

Consequently, the basic principle used in the objection is a valid one. But the principle does not assert that every vital principle can reach its full perfection without going beyond the mode which is proper to the subject in which it resides; it states, on the contrary, that it does so without going beyond its proper mode of being and operation. Now the proper mode of being of sanctifying grace is in no sense human, it is divine, as is expressly stated in divine revelation. And since it is a divine form, it demands for its perfect development, not the human mode of the soul, but the divine mode which corresponds to its own proper mode of being and operation. And precisely because in the ascetical phase grace can be developed—through the infused virtues which are its operative principles—only in that human modality which proceeds from the rule of reason, it needs the divine modality of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are perfectly adapted to the divine nature of grace, in order to reach its full perfection. Once more it is evident that the mystical state, far from being extraordinary or abnormal, is the normal atmosphere which grace demands by the very fact of its supernatural and divine nature. In a sense, it is the ascetical state which is abnormal and alien to the nature of sanctifying grace, and for that reason the ascetical state is only a provisional and imperfect state through which grace must pass in its development to the divine atmosphere of the gifts of the Holy Spirit where the soul is introduced into the full mystical state. There cannot be any doubt that mysticism is the normal atmosphere desired by the very nature of grace and that Christian perfection is impossible outside of mysticism because the full development of grace would then be impossible.

The second objection admits that mysticism consists in the actuation and predominance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost working in a divine manner, but it maintains that the gifts can also operate in a human mode and that this falls perfectly within the normal development of grace without going beyond the human modality which is proper to the ascetical state. Consequently, mysticism is not absolutely indispensable for Christian perfection.

This objection proceeds from the false supposition that the gifts of the Holy Ghost admit of a human mode of operation, which we have already seen is impossible.

The third objection is based on a definition from the Council of Trent which states that the justified man can merit de condigno the increase of grace, eternal life, the attainment of eternal life and an increase of glory. Consequently, if mysticism were part of the ordinary and normal development of sanctifying...
teaches, implies only an essential ordination to a reward, but it does not always and necessarily imply the actual attainment of the reward, because obstacles can prevent this attainment. "Impetration implies the attainment of that which is asked; but merit does not imply the attainment, but an ordination to the attainment based on justice. Therefore, any obstacle which intervenes because of instability destroys the basis of the impetration because it destroys the attainment; but it does not destroy the ordination to the attainment and hence it does not destroy merit. Consequently, a man merits even if he does not persevere; but he does not impregnate unless he perseveres." 18

This teaching throws great light on the solution of the question. There is no contradiction in the fact that we are able to merit de jure that which we do not attain de facto because of the obstacles which our misery and instability have placed between the merit and the attainment of the corresponding reward. Just as an individual sometimes receives from God a mercy without meriting it, so also at other times he could very well have merited it but for one reason or another never have attained it. 19 As a matter of fact, the Christian who sins and is condemned after having lived in grace certainly merited eternal life by the works he performed in the state of grace, and nevertheless de facto he never attained eternal life because between the merit and the reward he placed the insuperable obstacle of final impenitence. 20

It can happen that he who has merited and attained an increase of grace by a merit de condigno, and has also by that fact merited an increase in the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit as habits, may later on not be sufficiently faithful and generous to be disposed to receive from God the actual graces which would place those habits in operation and produce infused contemplation or any other mystical act. We must not forget that in the order of efficacious actual graces we do not have true merit de condigno, according to the common teaching of the theologians, but only the improper merit de congruo or the merit which is based on a certain fitness (based, as they say, in jure amicabilis, secundum leges amicitiae). Man can and should dispose himself to receive these graces by not placing any obstacle to the divine action and by impetrating them with fervent, humble and persevering prayer. If he does this, he will infallibly obtain these graces, not because his efforts are equivalent to a true merit de condigno, but because of the divine promise which expressly states that a prayer which has all the necessary conditions

14St. Thomas expressly states: “Whatever the motion of grace reaches to falls under condign merit. Now the motion of a mover extends not merely to the last term of the movement, but to the whole progress of the movement. But the term of the movement of grace is eternal life; and progress in this movement is by the light shining, that grows in brilliance till perfect day,” which is the day of the state of grace falls under condign merit” (Summa, I-II, q. 114, a. 8).
16Cf. Questions Misticas, II, art. 6.
17The same conclusion was reached by the eminent Thomist, Father Ramirez, O.P., in two articles which appeared in La Vida Sobrenatural (August and October, his thesis as follows: From the theological principles of St. Thomas it can be clearly deduced that the gift of mystical contemplation falls under merit de condigno or what is the same, it is an object of that merit.
18St. Thomas, In IV Sent., dist. 15, q. 4, a. 7, ad 4.
19As St. Thomas points out, “the impetration of prayer rests on mercy, whereas condign merit rests on justice. Therefore, a man may impetrate many things from the divine mercy in prayer which he does not merit in justice” (Summa, I-II, q. 114, a. 6, ad 2).
20Cf. Denz. 842.
will obtain whatever is fitting for our eternal salvation.\textsuperscript{21} And that infused contemplation is most fitting in relation to eternal salvation cannot be doubted by anyone.

On the other hand, once the gifts of the Holy Ghost have attained a notable development as habits—and this is effected by merit de condigno—they demand operation, so to speak, unless we wish to admit that God increases them so that they will remain idle. Consequently, in practice, if the soul is faithful to grace and perseveres in prayer, God will infallibly actuate those habits and thereby produce the mystical activity which is perfectly normal within the ordinary development of sanctifying grace. In this way the mystical life is merited de condigno under one aspect (that of the development of the habit of the gifts) and it is attained by congruous merit but infallibly under another aspect (the act itself of contemplation or the actuation of any one of the gifts through an actual grace).

It is true that in practice our prayer will often lack the necessary condition for the infallible impetration of those actual graces, and then God will have to act out of pure mercy, so to speak, if he wishes to grant us the gift of infused contemplation in spite of our resistance and our infidelity to grace. God is not obliged to do this and as a matter of fact he may not do it, in order to punish our own faults or neglect; and yet sometimes, moved by his ineffable mercy, he sends us an efficacious actual grace which puts the gifts of the Holy Ghost in motion, thus causing in us—if it is a question of the intellectual gifts—the act of infused contemplation, not only in an entirely gratuitous manner, but even at times when the soul is most careless, as St. Teresa says. We should not forget the statement of St. Thomas to the effect that God in rewarding always goes beyond that which we merit.\textsuperscript{22}

This should explain the apparent contradiction, not only between the terminology of the mystics and that of the theologians, but even between the passages of one and the same mystical work. The Thomistic school has always quoted against the Carmelite school those passages of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross in which they invoke all the souls to the heights of contemplation and to the mystical life. The Carmelite school opposes the Thomists by quoting other texts from St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross which seem to teach the contrary. Rather than attribute a true contradiction in the doctrine of either of these great mystics, it is necessary to say that the one passage states


\textsuperscript{22}In Matt. 5: "The gifts of God always surpass our merits." Summa, I-II, q. 114, a. 6, ad 2: "A man may impetrate many things from the divine mercy in prayer which the question \textit{de jure}—what ought to occur because of the proper and normal exigencies of grace—and the other refers to the question \textit{de facto}—that which actually occurs in practice. St. John of the Cross has distinguished these two aspects in the following passage:

And here it is fitting to note the reason why there are so few who arrive at such a lofty state of perfection of union with God. It should be known in this regard that it is not because God wishes that there be few of these elevated spirits, but rather he desires that all should be perfect, but the reason is that he finds few vessels to suffer such a lofty and elevated work.\textsuperscript{23}

Father Garrigou-Lagrange has explained this whole question so well that we shall transcribe his exact words:

It is true that we can merit condignly the increase of charity, of the virtues and of the gifts as \textit{habitus}, and that in this life no limit can be placed on this augmentation. The Holy Ghost moves souls as a rule according to the degree of their infused \textit{habitus}, of their habitual docility (provided there is no obstacle, venial sin or imperfection; in case there is, the meritorious act is weak, remiss, inferior to the degree of charity). Consequently, Thomists usually say that the just man who perseveres in fervor can merit \textit{saltem de congruo} (at least in the broad sense of the word "merit") the grace of infused contemplation.

Why do they say \textit{saltem} (at least) \textit{de congruo}? Because in the grace of infused contemplation there is something merited strictly or condignly, that is, a high degree of the gifts of understanding and wisdom considered as \textit{habitus}. But in itself infused contemplation is not a habit, it is an act, and the mystical state is this act which lasts a certain time. But this act supposes an efficacious actual grace, and according to Thomists, we cannot strictly or condignly merit the efficacious help which keeps us in the state of grace. Why is this? Because the principle of merit does not fall under merit: that is why neither the first grace, nor the efficacious help which maintains us in the state of grace, nor the gift of final perseverance, though so necessary to salvation, can be merited condignly.

Moreover, if a just man could strictly merit efficacious grace \textit{A}, by it he would likewise merit efficacious grace \textit{B}, and so on to the grace of final perseverance, which would thus be merited condignly. Whence it follows that many graces necessary to salvation cannot be the object of strict merit. It should not surprise us, then, that the actual efficacious grace of infused contemplation cannot be merited condignly, even though it is in the normal way of sanctity. It can be merited more than the grace of final perseverance, for it would be exaggeration to say that this last can be merited at least condignly. But in one sense the actual grace of infused contemplation is more gratuitous than that necessary to the obligatory exercise of the infused virtues, for we use infused virtues when we wish to do so. The same is not true of the gifts, although by our fidelity we can prepare ourselves to receive the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, we ought to prepare ourselves for it; and if we do this generously, a day will come when the grace of contemplation will be given to us quite frequently. God ordinarily gives it to the perfect, provided there are no accidental obstacles; but he gives it either in adultery and night, or in light and consolation.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23}The Living Flame, Stanza II, n. 27.

\textsuperscript{24}Christian Perfection and Contemplation, pp. 412-14.
In another place in the same work Father Garrigou-Lagrange completes his doctrine in the following manner:

The grace of a happy death or of final perseverance cannot be merited condignly in the strict sense of the word, nor even strictly congruously. It is, however, necessary for salvation, and we ought certainly to desire it, to dispose ourselves for it, and to ask for it incessantly, because persevering prayer will obtain it for us. The same may be said for the grace of conversion or justification for a sinner. It cannot be merited, since it is the principle of merit yet anyone in the state of mortal sin ought, with the actual grace offered him, to desire it and ask for it. These are profound mysteries of the efficacy of grace and of predestination. (Cf. H.II, q. 114, a. 5, q. 9.)

The grace of justification and that of final perseverance are necessary for salvation, but they cannot be merited condignly. The same is true of efficacious graces which keep us in the state of grace.

The grace of infused contemplation is not gratuitous, since one can progressively merit condignly a very high degree of the gift of wisdom considered as a habitus, and since the Holy Ghost generally inspires souls according to the degree of their habitual docility.

Moreover, we must add to merit the imperative power of prayer. Since we ought to ask for the grace of a happy death, which we are unable to merit, a fervent soul may indeed, with as much confidence as humility, also ask for the grace of contemplation in order to live the mysteries of salvation more and to be less indifferent to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Reduced to common terms, this is what the soul requests when it recites the Verum Creator with sincerity. The grace of contemplation is thereby less gratuitous than graces gratis datae, such as the grace of a miracle or prophecy, which are in no way necessary to our personal sanctification. After all, the wills for we do not exercise at will the acts which proceed from the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Summary.

We can summarize our doctrine on the question of the relationship between merit and the mystical life by stating the following conclusions:

1) The increase of grace and of the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit as habits can be merited de condigno.

2) By good works and fidelity to grace one can merit de congruo and by humble and persevering prayer one can impetrate infallibly (by reason of the divine promise) actual efficacious graces which will put the habit in operation and thus normally produce the mystical phenomenon.

3) Due to human weakness and misery, it often happens in practice that a man does not do all that he should in order to merit actual graces by congruous merit, nor is his prayer accompanied by the conditions necessary to impetrate these graces infallibly, so that he lacks them by reason of his negligence or his lack of generosity.

4) Where merit de condigno and merit de congruo are lacking, and also even the conditions necessary for the infallible impetration of actual graces through prayer, it may sometimes happen that God supplies the defect of his creature by granting him, out of pure mercy and in spite of the lack of the proper dispositions, those actual efficacious graces which produce the mystical phenomenon through the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. But God has no obligation to do this, and frequently he denies these things to souls that are voluntarily imperfect. This explains why de facto there are so few mystics in spite of the fact that de jure all souls are called to the mystical state. And this is the sense in which one must interpret the texts of the mystics when they say that God gives the grace of contemplation as he wills and when he wills, and sometimes even to souls that are negligent.

5) Consequently, de jure or by reason of the exigencies of grace, the mystical life is merited de condigno under one aspect (the development of the gifts as habits), and can be merited de congruo and obtained infallibly through prayer under another aspect (the actuation of the gifts which produces the mystical phenomenon under the impetus of an efficacious actual grace). In this sense, it can be said that the mystical life is infallibly available to all generous souls who place no obstacles to grace and properly dispose themselves for it. The fact that in practice there are so few mystics does not in any way compromise the normal order of the exigencies of grace de jure.

We believe that these conclusions can serve as a point of contact between the various mystical schools which appear to be antagonistic, such as the Thomists and the Carmelites, for the discrepancies are more apparent than real. The Thomistic school, accustomed to lofty theological speculation, forcefully states the exigencies of the juridical order and sees the mystical life contained virtually in the seed of grace. The Carmelite school, accustomed to follow the experimental mystics, emphasizes above all the remarkable scarcity of mystics and denies in the concrete order that which the Thomists affirm in the juridical order. We believe that both schools could come to agreement if they would state the meaning of the question with greater precision.

The fourth objection is given by Father Poulain in his work, The Graces of Interior Prayer:

But if mystical contemplation is produced by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the converse, namely, that every act produced by certain gifts is mystical is false. For that would be tantamount to saying that these gifts never operate in ordinary prayer. Now such a thesis has never been laid down. It is not in conformity with St. Thomas' teaching, which holds that the gifts are not reserved for difficult acts alone. And further, if this proposition were true, mystics would swarm upon our globe. For at confirmation and even at baptism every
Christian receives these gifts, and no one can hold that they continue in the state of pure habit without any actuation.\textsuperscript{26}

It does not follow that if all Christians began to share imperfectly in mystical graces at the very beginning of the spiritual life, mystics would swarm all over the world. It would not occur to anyone to call a person a pianist who is just beginning to learn how to play the piano, although he plays it very often, but only when he is able to play with facility and by habit. In like manner, it is not correct to call the imperfect Christian a mystic, although the Holy Spirit may occasionally produce in him imperfect mystical act, since the disposition of the soul is as yet too imperfect for anything else. The true mystic is not one who only occasionally performs a mystical act under the influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but one who is habitually docile to the movement of the Holy Ghost and lets himself be led into the full mystical state.

This objection is absolutely without force because it contains an equivocation. It can be answered with a simple distinction: that imperfect mystical acts are to be found all over the world, we concede; that mystical souls are to be found all over the world, we deny. Mystical souls are few and are always rare because the mystical state requires heroic abnegation and a complete abandonment of self to the operation of the Holy Ghost without reservation. We should not forget that mystical souls are souls of heroic virtue; they are the souls of saints.

FIFTH
The last objection states that for the beatification and canonization of the servants of God, the Church never takes into account whether or not the individuals had infused contemplation or any other mystical phenomena, but only whether they habitually practiced the infused virtues in a heroic degree. This is stated by Pope Benedict XIV in his work, De Beatificatione Servorum Dei et de Beatorum Canonizazione.\textsuperscript{27}

This objection proves absolutely nothing. Even more, one could use it as a defense for the argument in favor of our thesis. For if the Church canonizes only those who have habitually practiced the infused virtues in a heroic degree, to which the virtues cannot reach without the influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost operating in a divine manner, it follows that the Church canonizes only those who are mystics. It is not surprising that the process of canonization does not consider whether an individual had infused contemplation. Infused contemplation and the other mystical gifts which are related to the normal development of sanctifying grace (and not, we note, the graces gratus...
4: MODELS OF PERFECTION

Configuration with Christ is the goal of our Christian life, since we thereby attain our own sanctification and at the same time give the greatest possible glory to God. In the present plan of divine providence we cannot perfectly sanctify ourselves nor give the greatest possible glory to God except through Christ and in Christ. For that reason it is of the greatest importance to have clear notions concerning the applications of Christology to the Christian life.

Until recently, relatively little emphasis was placed on the role of Christ in our sanctification, except for some of the outstanding classical works of spiritual doctrine, such as the writings of St. Bernard, St. Catherine of Siena and St. Teresa of Avila. This deficiency can be explained by recalling the exaggerated doctrines which were prevalent in France in the seventeenth century, with the result that the Church had to impose certain restrictions on the spiritual doctrines relative to the humanity of Christ. As a result, "devotion to Christ" was gradually relegated to a secondary place as one of the various means to sanctity, while in fact Christ is the cornerstone of our sanctification. We shall be saints only in the measure that we live the life of Christ, or rather, in the measure that Christ lives his life in us. The process of sanctification is a process of "Christification." The Christian must be converted into another Christ, and only when he can say in truth, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me," can he be sure that he has reached the heights of perfection.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Christ's role in the life of his members is one of the predominant thoughts in the teaching of St. Paul. His entire apostolate consisted in revealing to the world the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:3), "to enlighten all men as to what is the dispensation of the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in God" (Eph. 3:9), in whom "dwell all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9), so that they "may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19). We can summarize the application of Christology to the Christian life by taking the words which Christ spoke of himself when he stated: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Jesus Christ is the only way. No one can go to the Father except through him, for there has been given to us no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. According to the divine plan of our predestination, the sanctity to which God calls us through grace and adoption consists in a participation in the divine life which was brought to the world by Christ. This is expressly stated in divine revelation: "As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in his sight in love. He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons, according to the purpose of his will, unto the praise of the glory of his grace, with which he has favored us in his beloved Son" (Eph. 1:4-6).

Christ has re-established the divine plan of our salvation, which had been destroyed by the sin of Adam. "In this has the love of God been shown in our case, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world that we may live through him" (I John 4:9). Hence Christ is the only way by which we can go to the Father, and without him we can do absolutely nothing. Therefore, the preoccupation of every Christian must be to live the life of Christ, to be incorporated in him, and to let the sap of the true Vine circulate through his veins. Christ is the Vine and we are the branches, and the life of the branch depends on its union with the vine which imparts to it the vitifying sap.

St. Paul was unable to find any words in human language which could adequately express the incorporation of the Christian in the Vine. Everything about the Christian—his life, death and resurrection—must be intimately connected with Christ, and in order to express these profound truths, St. Paul had to invent expressions which had never before been used: "For if we have died with him (commoruit) (II Tim. 2:11), we were buried with him (conservata) (Rom. 6:4), but God . . . raised us up together (V. 26), brought us to life together with Christ" (convivificavit nos) (Ibid. 2:5), so that "we shall also live with him" (et convivemur) (II Tim. 2:11) and sit together in heaven in Christ Jesus (et consedere) (Eph. 2:6).

In view of the foregoing Pauline doctrine, we can heartily agree with the following observations of the saintly Dom Marmion:

We must understand that we can only be saints according to the measure in which the life of Jesus Christ is in us: that is the only holiness God asks of

2Cf. John 15:5.
Christ is the Truth, the absolute and integral Truth. As the uncreated Wisdom of the Word, he communicated to his sacred humanity, and through it to us, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This leads us to speak of the exemplary causality of Christ, which is exercised on us through his person, his works and his teaching.

As regards his person, Dom Marmion has written the following sublime doctrine:

The divine sonship of Christ is the type of our supernatural sonship; his condition, his "being" the Son of God is the exemplar of the state in which we must be established by sanctifying grace. Christ is the Son of God by nature and by right, in virtue of the union of the Eternal Word with human nature; we are so by adoption and grace, but we are so really and truly. Christ has, moreover, sanctifying grace; he possesses the fulness of it; from this fulness it flows into us more or less abundantly, but, in its substance, it is the same grace that both fills the created soul of Jesus and defies us. St. Thomas says that our divine filiation is a resemblance of the eternal filiation: *quaedam similitudo filiationis aeterna*.

Such is the primordial and supereminent manner in which Christ is first of all our example: in the Incarnation he is constituted, by right, the Son of God; we should become so by being partakers of the grace derived from him which, defying the substance of our souls, constitutes us in the state of children of God. That is the first and essential characteristic of the likeness we must have to Christ Jesus; it is the condition of all our supernatural activity.  

Consequently, the entire Christian life and all sanctity, as Dom Marmion teaches, can be reduced to being by grace what Christ is by nature: a son of God.

This should be the basic preoccupation of every Christian: to contemplate Jesus and especially to form the attitude of a son before the heavenly Father who is also our Father, as Jesus himself has told us: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17). These realities," says Dom Marmion, "are precisely what constitute the essence of Christianity. We shall understand nothing of perfection and sanctity, and we shall not even know in what simple Christianity consists, as long as we are not convinced that fundamentally it consists in being sons of God and that this quality or state is given to us by sanctifying grace, through which we share in the eternal filiation of the Incarnate Word. All the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles are synthesized in this truth, and all the mysteries of Jesus tend to make it a reality in our souls. There can be no doubt that this is the most important exemplary causality which Christ exercises upon us, although it is not the only one, for Christ is also our model in his works and in his virtues.

Jesus practiced what he taught and preached what he practiced; his life and doctrine form a harmonious unity from which there constantly issued glory.

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4Dom Columba Marmion, O.S.B., *Christ, the Life of the Soul* (St. Louis: Herder), pp. 39 f.
7Cf. Christ in *His Mysteries* (St. Louis: Herder, 1924), III, 6.
8Ibid.
to the Father. According to St. Thomas, the primary motive of the Incarnation was the redemption of the human race. But in addition to this principal end, the Incarnation also had other motives, and among them, doubtless, that of providing for us in Christ a most perfect model and exemplar of perfect virtue. And this was not without a special design of divine providence.

Speaking absolutely, the prototype and eminent exemplar of all perfection and sanctity is the Eternal Word. He is, if one may use the expression, the very ideal of God himself. The Father contemplates himself in the Word with infinite complacence and love, for the Word is the living, infinite, personal ideal with which the Father is well pleased through all eternity. Through the Word, the Father created the angels, men and the entire universe, as St. John teaches: “All things were made through him, and without him was made nothing that has been made” (John 1:3). The Word is also the ideal of angels and men and he would have been the ideal of all the possible beings which the Father could have created through all the centuries.

Is it possible that we have the same ideal of life as God? Yes; and it is not given to us to choose a less elevated work. See, Christian soul, what is your dignity; see whether or not noble are oblige. But this lofty ideal surpassed the powers of human reason and was too lofty even for faith itself. For that reason he came down: he became man, a child, a slave. He wished to know the weaknesses of our early years, our labors, our fatigue, as well as poverty, obscurity, silence, hunger, thirst, suffering and death. Of all our miseries there is only one which he did not experience and could not experience: sin, and certain moral disorders which derive from sin. Not being able to assume this weakness, he took upon himself its likeness and carried its punishment. Hence I need not rise to heaven to seek the thought of God in my regard; I need only, O my Jesus, contemplate thee. Thou art the perfect ideal in which I find my own."

In his doctrine

Lastly, as the Eternal Word Jesus communicates his infinite wisdom to us by means of his sacred doctrine. The intellect of Christ is an abyss in which poor human reason, even when illuminated by faith, is completely submerged. There are four classes of knowledge in Christ, completely distinct and yet in perfect harmony: divine knowledge, which he possesses as the Word of God; beatific knowledge, which is proper to the comprehenders and which Jesus possessed even here on earth; infused knowledge, which he received from God and in a degree which infinitely surpasses that of the angels and acquired knowledge, which increased or was more and more manifested throughout his life. Righly did St. Paul speak of Christ as possessing all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

Christ did not wish to reserve all his treasures of knowledge for himself, but it pleased the Father that they should be communicated to his adopted sons in the measure and degree that is necessary. Christ himself said to the Father at the Last Supper: “The words that thou hast given me I have given to them. And they have received them, and have known of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me” (John 17:8).

And what sublime doctrine it is that Jesus has given us! Rightly did the ministers report to the Pharisees concerning the teaching of Christ: “Never has man spoken as this man” (John 7:46). The most beautiful compositions by human genius fade into nothingness when compared with a single statement from the Sermon on the Mount. All of Christ's doctrine, from the Sermon on the Mount to the poignant Seven Last Words, is a sublime summary of instruction for attaining sanctity. The soul that wishes to find the true way for going to God need only open the gospel of Jesus Christ and there drink divine knowledge at its source. As St. Thérèse of Lisieux declared: “I seldom find anything in books, except in the gospel. That book suffices for me.”

In speaking of Christ as our life, we arrive at the most profound and the most beautiful aspect of the mystery of Christ. Christ is our life in three different manners: so far as he merited grace for us, which is the life of the soul (meritorious cause); so far as that supernatural life springs from him (efficient cause); and so far as he communicates that life to us (capital influence).

The merit of Christ in relation to us is intimately connected with his redemptive sacrifice. Let us review briefly the fundamental points concerning his infinite satisfaction, which merited for us and restored to us the supernatural life which had been lost through the sin of Adam.

It was impossible for the human race to make condign satisfaction for the sin of Adam. If he had so desired, God could have freely forgiven the debt, but if he were to demand rigorous satisfaction, the impotence of the human race was absolute, due to the infinite distance between God and man. Only a God-man could bridge that infinite chasm and offer divine justice a complete satisfaction. Presupposing all this, the incarnation of the Word was absolutely necessary for the redemption of the human race.

“And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Since Christ united in himself the two natures—divine and human—in one divine person, all his actions had an infinite divine value. He could have redeemed millions of worlds by a mere smile or by his slightest action, but the redemption of the world actually was effected only through the sacrifice of the Cross. This is what the Father willed. Theologians have attempted to penetrate this

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1[Cf. Summa, III, q. 1, a. 3.

*Christ Perfection*

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*Models of Perfection*
mystery of the crucifixion and death of Christ to redeem the world, but it will always remain a secret of the incalculable designs of divine providence. 14

Christ merited not for himself but for us, with the merit of strict justice—de condigno ex toto rigore justitiae, as the theologians say. This justice has its foundation in the capital grace of Christ, in virtue of which he is constituted Head of the entire human race, and in the sovereign liberty of all his actions and the ineffable love with which he accepted his passion in order to save us.

The efficacy of his merits and satisfactions is strictly infinite and for that reason inexhaustible. That should arouse in us a boundless confidence in his love and mercy. In spite of our weaknesses, the merits of Christ have a superabundant efficacy to lead us to the heights of perfection. His merits are ours and they are at our disposition. In heaven he continues to intercede for us constantly (Heb. 7:25). Our weakness and poverty constitute a title to the divine mercy, and when we avail ourselves of this title we give great glory to the Father, because we thereby proclaim that Jesus is the only mediator whom it has pleased the Father to send to earth. For that reason, no man should become discouraged when he considers his own weakness and misery. The inexhaustible riches of Christ are at our disposition (Eph. 3:8).

All the supernatural graces which man has received from the fall of Adam to the coming of Christ have been granted only in reference to Christ—instant meritorum Christi. And all the riches which man will receive until the end of time will spring forth from the heart of Christ. We do not have the gratia Dei, as did our first parents and the angels, but we have the gratia Christi, that is, the grace of God through Christ. This grace is given to us in many ways, but the source from which it flows is Christ, the sacred humanity united to the person of the Word. This is what is meant by the phrase: “Christ, the efficient cause of grace.”

Jesus is the fountain of life. His sacred humanity is the instrument united to his divinity for the efficient production of the supernatural life. 15 Even more, the very humanity of Christ can also be a source of bodily life, for the gospel tells us that there went forth from Christ a power which cured the sick and raised the dead to life (Luke 6:19). But we are here interested primarily in Christ as the fountain and source of supernatural life.

In order to give us our natural life, God utilized our parents as instruments to give us supernatural life, he utilizes the sacred humanity of Christ. Christ has been constituted by the heavenly Father as Head, Pontiff, Mediator, Source and Dispenser of all graces, and particularly as Redeemer and in reference to his passion and death. St. Paul states that he “emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto men. And appearing in the form of man, and in habit found as man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross. Therefore, God also has exalted him and has bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:7-11).

The gospel illustrates the manner in which Christ used his sacred humanity to confer supernatural life on souls. “Son,” he said to the paralytic, “thy sins are forgiven thee.” Immediately there was a reaction of surprise and scandal among the bystanders. “Who is this man who pretends to forgive sins? Only God can do this.” But Jesus turns to them and gives a convincing argument that he, as man, has the power to forgive sins. “Which is easier,” he asks them, “to say thy sins are forgiven thee or to say arise, take up thy bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has the power to forgive sins,” and then he addresses the paralytic, “Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.” 16

Christ used the expression “Son of man” deliberately. It is true that only God (or one who through the power of God is authorized to do so) can forgive sins. Therefore, he who would dare to forgive sins, not in the name of God but in his own name, and has in addition worked a stupendous miracle to testify to his power, must indeed have the personal power to forgive sins. Christ is the Son of God and the author of grace, and he alone has power to forgive sins by his own authority; but in so doing, he used his sacred humanity as an instrument in the production of supernatural life in souls. Hence he used the expression “Son of man” in order to signify that if he as man worked miracles, conferred grace and pardoned sins, it is because his sacred humanity is of itself vivifying. In other words, his humanity is an apt instrument for producing and causing grace by reason of its personal or hypostatic union with the divine Word. 17

There is no difficulty in explaining the instrumental causality of the sacred humanity of Christ while he was yet on earth, but what is to be said of the...

14Cf. ibid., III, q. 46, a. 3.
15The united or conjointed instrument is that which by its very nature is united to the principal cause which uses the instrument (the arm or hand is an instrument conjointed or united to the human body); the separated instrument is that which by its nature is separate from the principal cause which uses the instrument (as the brush in the hand of the painter).
17St. Thomas points out: “To give grace or the Holy Ghost authoritatively belongs to Christ as God, but to give it instrumentally belongs to him as man, since his humanity is the instrument of his divinity. And hence in virtue of his divinity his actions were salutary so far as they caused grace in us meritoriously and efficiently” (Summa, III, q. 8, a. 1, ad 1).
influence of his humanity after his ascension into heaven? Is the influence of his sacred humanity now only a moral causality or is it still physical?

Jesus is Head of the Mystical Body which is his Church. "And all things he made subject under his feet, and him he gave as head over all the Church, which indeed is his body, the completion of him who fills all with all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

St. Thomas asks whether Christ as man is Head of the Church and answers the question by establishing an analogy with the natural order.18 In the human head, he states, we can consider three things: order, perfection and power. Order, because the head is the first part of man, beginning from the higher part; perfection, because in the head dwell all the senses, both interior and exterior, while in the other members there is only the sense of touch; power, because the power and movement of the other members, as well as the direction of their acts, is from the head, by reason of the sensitive and motive power which rules there.

Now all these characteristics are found in Christ spiritually, and therefore Christ is Head of the Church. He has the primacy of order because he is the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29) and has been constituted "above every Principality and Power and Office and Dominion—in short above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21), so that "in all things he may have the first place" (Col. 1:18). He has perfection above all others because in him is found the plenitude of all graces, according to St. John: "full of grace and of truth" (1:14). Lastly, he has the vital power over all the members of the Church because of his plenitude we have all received (John 1:16).

St. Paul summarizes these three characteristics in one statement when he writes to the Colossians: "He is the head of his body, the Church; he who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the first place. For it has pleased God the Father that in him all his fulness should dwell, and that through him he should reconcile to himself all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross" (1:18-20). And St. Thomas, in another place,19 proves that Christ is Head of the Church by reason of his dignity, his government and his causality. But the formal reason for Christ's headship is the plenitude of his habitual grace, connoting the grace of union. Hence, according to St. Thomas, the personal grace by which the soul of Christ is sanctified is essentially the same as that by which he justifies others as Head of the Church; there is only a rational distinction between them.20

How far does this capital grace of Christ extend? Who are affected by it and in what degree? According to St. Thomas, it extends to all the angels and to all men, except the damned, but in various manners and degrees. That Christ is Head of the angels is explicitly stated in the epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians (2:10). Christ is Head of this entire multitude because his sacred humanity, personally united to the Word, consequently shares in the graces and gifts of the Word much more perfectly than do the angels, and he also infuses in them many graces such as accidental glory, charisms, revelations of the mysteries of God, etc. Therefore, Christ is Head of the angels.21

Christ is also Head of men, but in different degrees.22 He is Head of the blessed in a most perfect manner, because they are united with him definitely by confirmation in grace and glory; the same is true regarding the souls in purgatory as pertains to confirmation in grace. He is Head of all men in the state of grace, because they possess supernatural life and are united to Christ as living members through grace and charity. He is Head of Christians in the state of mortal sin, although less perfectly, since they are actually united to Christ through formed faith and hope. Formal heretics and pagans are not actual but potential members of Christ, and those of this group who are predestined will one day pass from potential to actual members of Christ. The devils and the damned, on the other hand, are in no sense members of Christ, nor are the souls in limbo, for they are definitely separated from Christ and can never be united with him through sanctifying grace.

But how does Christ exercise his influence on those living members who are united to him in this life through grace and charity? He exercises it in many ways, but they can all be summarized under two headings: through the sacraments and through a contact by faith which is vitified by charity.

Sacramental influence. It is de fide that Christ is the author of the sacraments.23 It must be so, because the sacraments are defined as sensible signs which signify and produce sanctifying grace, and only Christ, who is the unique source of grace, could institute them. And he instituted them precisely to communicate his own divine life to us through them. These sensible signs have the power of communicating grace by their own intrinsic power (ex opere operato), but only as instruments of Christ, that is, in virtue of the impulse which they receive from the humanity of Christ united to the Word. For that reason the unworthiness of the human minister who confers the sacrament (whether he be sinner or heretic) is no obstacle to its validity as long as he had the intention of doing what the Church does in the administration of the sacrament. Christ wished to place the communication of his divine grace

18.-Cf. Summa, III, q. 8, a. 1.
19.-Cf. De veritate, q. 29, a. 4.
20.-Cf. Summa, III, q. 8, a. 5.
21.-Cf. ibid., a. 4.
22.-Cf. ibid., a. 3.
23.-Cf. Council of Trent, Sess. VII, can. 1; Denz. 844.
through the sacraments completely outside human weakness, with the result that we can have complete confidence in the efficacy of the sacraments as long as we ourselves do not place any obstacle to their sanctifying effects.

This last point needs special emphasis among modern Christians, for it is possible for us to place an insuperable obstacle to the sanctifying effects of a sacrament. No sacrament is valid if one does not interiorly consent to receive it. The lack of repentance impedes the reception of grace in the sacrament of penance or in the baptism of an adult in the state of mortal sin; conscious mortal sin prevents the reception of grace in the five sacraments of the living and makes the action sacrilegious.

But even if one possesses the necessary dispositions for the valid and fruitful reception of the sacraments, the measure of grace received in each case will depend not only on the excellence of the sacrament itself but on the perfection and fervor of one’s dispositions. If the individual approaches the sacrament with a hunger and thirst to be united to God through grace, he will receive an abundance of grace. As the classical example of the fountain and the vessel illustrates, the amount of water received will depend, not only on the fountain, but also on the size of the vessel in which the water is received. From this follows the great importance of a proper preparation for the reception of the sacraments, and especially of the Eucharist, which brings us not only grace but the very fountain and source of grace. It is through the sacraments especially that Christ exercises his vital influence on us, and we should approach them with the desire of increasing our supernatural life and our union with God. They are the authentic channels of grace, and there is nothing else that can replace them. Some souls, not realizing these truths, prefer other pious practices and devotions which are infinitely less efficacious than the sacraments. It is an injury to Christ not to appreciate, or to regulate to a second place, these channels of grace which he instituted as a means of increasing our supernatural life.

Contact through faith. As regards our contact with Christ through a vivified faith, St. Paul uses a mysterious expression in one of his epistles. He says that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17). What does this word mean? Is he referring to some kind of indwelling of Christ in our souls? It would be a great error to think this, for the humanity of Christ is physically present in us through Holy Communion, and the presence is so closely bound to the sacramental species that when they are substantially altered Christ’s physical presence ceases entirely and there remains in the soul only his divinity (together with the Father and the Holy Ghost) and the influence of his grace.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that Christ does in some way dwell in our hearts through faith. St. Thomas does not hesitate to interpret the words of St. Paul literally: “Christ dwells in us by faith (Eph. 3:17). Consequently, by faith Christ’s power is united to us.” In other words, it is the power of Christ which dwells in us through faith, and as often as we turn to him through the contact of a faith vivified by charity, a sanctifying power emanates from Christ to our souls. The Christ of today is the same Christ of the gospel, and all who approach him through faith and love will share in the power that emanates from him to cure the sicknesses of body and soul (Luke 6:19). “How, then,” asks Dom Marmion, “can we doubt that when we approach him, even outside the sacraments, with humility and confidence, divine power comes forth from him to enlighten, strengthen and help us? No one has ever approached Jesus Christ with faith without being touched by the benificent rays that ever escape from this furnace of light and heat: Virtus de illo exaltat.”

Therefore, the soul that would sanctify itself should increase and intensify more and more this contact with Christ through an ardent faith vivified by charity. This exercise can be performed at any moment, many times a day, while the sacramental contact through Holy Communion can be had only once daily.

Physical influence. We can now return to our previous question concerning the nature of the vital influence which the humanity of Christ has on us. Is it a physical or only a moral influence? Theologians are divided on the answer. Some hold for a merely moral influence, but the Thomists energetically defend the physical influence of the humanity of Christ. This is simply an extension of their teaching on the physical causality of the sacraments in the production of grace. If the sacraments, which are separated instruments of Christ, produce grace physically, why would not the humanity of Christ, which is a conjoined instrument, do likewise?

The greatest difficulty which opposes this teaching is the fact that a physical action presupposes a physical contact between the agent and the patient. Such a contact was realized during the earthly life of Christ, as when he healed by a touch of his hand, but how can this physical contact be verified now that the humanity is triumphant in heaven?

The answer to the objection calls for various distinctions. In the first place, the objection supposes a type of physical causality on the part of the humanity of Christ which cannot be accepted, for it refers to a contact which is quantitative. But the humanity of Christ comprises both his body and his

24The Church supplies this consent for infants who receive baptism (and confirmation).

25We say “conscious” mortal sin, for it is the common teaching of theologians that a person in good faith (not conscious of mortal sin on his part) receives the sacrament validly and fruitfully, even though he is actually in mortal sin.

26Summa, III, q. 62, a. 5, ad 2.

27Marmion, Christ, the Life of the Soul, p. 89.
As is evident from the formula, the glory of the Trinity is the absolute end of the creation of the world and of the redemption and sanctification of the human race. But in the actual economy of divine providence, the glory of the Trinity is realized through Christ, with Christ and in Christ. Hence anything that man would use for giving glory to God apart from Christ would be completely inept for the purpose. Everything in the Christian life must be reduced to doing all things through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, under the impulse of the Holy Ghost, for the glory of the Father.

Christ is the only Way, and no one can go to the Father except through him. Therefore, the principal preoccupation of the Christian who wishes to sanctify himself should be to incorporate himself in Christ until he does all things through Christ. Then he can offer all his works to the Father in and through Christ, and this will give great glory to the Father. For the Father has but one eternal obsession, so to speak, and it is his Word. Nothing else is of direct concern to the Father, and if he loves us it is because we love Christ and believe that he came from the Father. As Jesus himself has stated: “If the Father himself loves you because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God” (John 16:27). This sublime mystery should convert our love of Christ into a kind of obsession. What else does the Church teach in the liturgy but this truth? Although the Church is the spouse of Christ, she does not dare to ask anything of the Father in her own name but always petitions per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum Filium tuum.

It is not even enough to do all things through Christ, but the Christian should endeavor also to do all things with Christ. The divinity of Christ, the Word of God, is present in every soul in the state of grace. And the Word can always use the instrumental power of his sacred humanity, to which he is united hypothetically, to fill us with supernatural life. Christ, the man-God, is the source and fountain of grace, and the grace that sanctifies us is his capital grace, that is, the habitual grace which he possesses in its plenitude and which he as Head diffuses on his members. Hence this notion of doing all things with Christ is not an illusion or a pious exaggeration; it is a theological fact. As long as we are in the state of grace, Christ is within us, physically in his divinity and virtually in his sacred humanity, and for that reason there is no repugnance in saying that we can do all things with him. And what great value our works have when they are presented to the Father as having been performed with Christ! But without this union, our works are worthless, as Christ has taught (John 15:5).

This notion, which is complementary to the preceding and preparatory for the following, appears constantly in the teaching of St. Paul. He who had been given an unequalled insight into the mystery of Christ was unable to

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29Cf. Summa, III, q. 56, a. 1, ad 3.

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28Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, III, q. 8, a. 5.
The Church uses the indicative and not the subjunctive form of the verb, for it is not a question of desire or petition but of an accomplished fact. In these moments, when the Church is gathered around the altar to offer the body of the Lord who rests on it, God actually receives all honor and glory. The same thing is true of every action of a Christian which ascends to heaven through Christ, with Christ and in Christ. The slightest action thus acquires an infinite value and gives great glory to God. And this is another motivation for being intimately united with Christ.

Tibi Deo Patri omnipotenti. Everything is directed to the Father. This was the constant and unique goal of every act performed by Christ. He sought always to do the Father’s will (Matt. 26:39) and to give glory to his Father (John 17:1). The first words of Christ which are recorded in the gospel are: “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). The last words which he spoke from the cross were: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Jesus lived and died, thinking of his Father. The Christian should strive to imitate Jesus in all things, and especially in this constant aspiration to the Father. St. Paul summarizes it beautifully when he says: “For all things are yours ... and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3:22-23).

In unitate Spiritus Sancti. The glory of God does not pertain exclusively to the Father; it is the glory of the divinity and hence of the entire Trinity. Consequently, the glory which the Father receives from Christ also pertains to the Holy Ghost, the ineffable bond of love and union in the adorable Trinity.

Omnis honor et gloria. All glory must ascend to the Trinity through, with and in Christ, for he is the way. And thus is the divine circular motion completed: Jesus as Head and as mediator brings grace and supernatural life to his members; they, in turn, give glory to God by returning the selfsame supernatural gifts to God through Christ.

MARY AND OUR SANCTIFICATION

One of the outstanding authorities on the role of Mary in the Christian life has stated: “The more you look at Mary in your prayers, contemplations, actions and sufferings, if not in a clear and distinct manner, then at least with a general and imperceptible glance, the more perfectly will you find Jesus, who is always with Mary, great, powerful, active and incomprehensible, more than in heaven or in any other creature.”

"Enarrationes in Psalmas, In Ps. XXVI, enarr. 2, n. 2; PL 36:200.


"Cf. St. Louis Mary Grignon de Montfort, True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Part II, Chap. 2, Fifth Motive, n. 4.
MARY'S ROLE

All the titles and glories of Mary stem from her divine maternity. She is immaculate, full of grace, co-redemptrix and mediatrix because she is the Mother of God. Her divine maternity places her on such an exalted level that St. Thomas did not hesitate to say that it bestowed upon her a certain infinite dignity. And Cajetan says that Mary touches the boundaries of divinity. There is no other creature that has as great an affinity with God.

Because of her divine maternity, Mary is an intimate part of the hypostatic union, and hence she enters into the incarnation of the Word and the redemption of the human race as an essential element. But the hypostatic union, although it surpasses the order of grace and glory, the divine maturity surpasses the adoptive filiation through grace, because adoption establishes only a spiritual and mystical relationship, while the divine maternity establishes a relationship of nature and of blood with Jesus Christ, as well as one of affinity with the Blessed Trinity. The divine maternity, which terminates in the uncreated person of the Word made flesh, surpasses, by reason of its end, the grace and glory of all the elect and the plenitude of grace and glory received by Mary herself. It surpasses all the graces gratis datae and the charisms, because these graces are less than sanctifying grace.

Because of this, Mary is intimately associated with the entire redemptive mission of Christ, and all that he merited for us in strict justice (de condigno ex tota rigore justitiae), the likewise merited for us, but in a different way.

DEVOTION TO MARY

Mary's role in the sanctification of the Christian can be seen in the writings of St. Louis Grignon de Montfort, and we shall give a synthesis of his doctrine as found in The Secret of Mary. It is the will of God that we sanctify ourselves; to sanctify ourselves it is necessary to practice the virtues; to practice the virtues we need the grace of God; to find the grace of God it is necessary to find Mary. Why is this so? The following reasons can be given: 1) because only Mary found grace before God, both for herself and for others; 2) because Mary gave life to the Author of grace and is therefore called mother of grace; 3) because in giving Mary his divine Son the Father gave Mary all graces; 4) because God has selected her as the dispenser of all graces and with this power she gives grace to whom she wills, when she wills and as she wills; 5) because as in the natural order the child must have a father and a mother, so also in the supernatural order one must have God as his Father and Mary as his mother; 6) since Mary formed the Head of the predestined, that is, she should form the members; 7) because Mary was and still remains the Spouse of the Holy Ghost; 8) because as in the natural order the child receives its nourishment and strength from its mother, so also in the supernatural order we receive our spiritual nourishment and strength from Mary; 9) because he who finds Mary also finds Jesus, who is with her always.

Having seen the reasons for Mary's sublime role in our sanctification, we are now to see how to approach Mary to obtain her assistance. First, our devotion to Mary should be interior; that is, it should come from the mind and heart. Second, it is tender; that is, it is full of confidence of a child in a loving mother. Third, it is holy; that is, it should lead souls to avoid sin and to imitate her virtues. Fourthly, it should be constant; that is, it should confirm the soul in good so that it will not abandon its spiritual practices. Fifthly, it should be disinterested; that is, it should inspire the soul to seek not itself but God alone.

A final word should be said about the holy slavery to Mary as proposed by St. Louis de Montfort as the basis of total abandonment to Mary. It consists in giving oneself entirely to Mary as her slave and to Jesus through Mary, and of doing all things with Mary, through Mary and in Mary. This act of perfect devotion to Mary implies a complete and total consecration to Mary, which results in a new state for the soul, and the effort to live in perfect conformity with this total giving of self to Mary. St. Louis explains this heroic act of consecration to Mary as follows:

This devotion consists, then, in giving ourselves entirely to Our Lady, in order to belong entirely to Jesus through her. We must give her: 1) our body, with all its senses and its members; 2) our soul, with all its powers; 3) our exterior goods of fortune, whether present or to come; 4) our interior and spiritual goods, which are our merits and our virtues and our good works, past, present and future. In a word, we must give her all we have in the order of nature and grace, and all that may become ours in the future, in the orders of nature, grace and glory; and this we must do without the...
reserve of so much as one farthing, one hair or one least good action; and we
must do it also for all eternity; and we must do it, further, without pretending
to, or hoping for, any other recompense for our offering and service except the
honour of belonging to Jesus Christ through Mary and in Mary—even though
that sweet mistress were not, as she always is, the most generous and the
most grateful of creatures.

Here we must note that there are two things in the good works we perform,
namely, satisfaction and merit; in other words, their satisfactory or impetatory
value and their meritorious value. The satisfactory or impetatory value of a
good action is that action inasmuch as it satisfies for the pain due to sin, or
obtains some new grace; the meritorious value, or the merit, is the good action
inasmuch as it merits grace now and eternal glory hereafter. Now in this conse-
cration of ourselves to Our Lady, we give her all the satisfactory, impetatory and
meritorious value of our actions; in other words, the satisfactions and the merits
of all our good works. We give her all our merits, graces and virtues—not to
communicate them to others, for our merits, graces and virtues are, properly
speaking, incommunicable, and it is only Jesus Christ who, in making himself
our surety with his Father, is able to communicate his merits—but we give
her them to keep them, augment them and embellish them for us. . . . Our
satisfactions, however, we give her to communicate to whom she likes, and
for the greatest glory of God.41

As is evident, this act of consecration and holy slavery to Mary is an ex-
cellent and even heroic act. For that reason it is not to be made lightly or too
quickly, but only after mature deliberation and with the permission of a spiritual
director. Although it is not a true vow, it would be irreverent to make the act
and then live as if it had never been made. But those who, under the inspira-
tion of the Holy Spirit and with the express authorization of their director,
make this act of consecration to Mary can be sure that she will love them
with a special love, will provide for their needs generously, will guide them
along the path to holiness, will defend them against their enemies, and will
intercede continuously for them so that they may receive the gift of final
perseverance and attain eternal bliss.

--41Ibid., Part II, Chap. 1.
1: STAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Having examined the end and the basic principles of the Christian life, we shall now consider its growth or practice. The manner of treating this part of the theology of Christian perfection varies with different authors. Some divide the material on the basis of the traditional three ways: purgative, illuminative, and unitive, and then proceed to describe the principal characteristics manifested by souls as they pass through the various ways.¹ Those who defend the doctrine of two distinct paths to perfection consider those same three ways, first in the ascetical, and then in the mystical phase of the spiritual life.² Others describe the whole process of the spiritual life under the aspect of the practice of prayer.³ Others, finally, abstract more or less from any chronological order in the treatment of the phenomena of the spiritual life and classify the material under the general principles of the means of sanctification.⁴

All these methods, except the second, have their advantages and disadvantages. The principal advantage of using the three ways is that it is closer to the facts, but it has the serious disadvantage of isolating these three aspects of the spiritual life. In practice they do not fall into separate categories but intermingle to such an extent that at any moment or at any phase of the spiritual life one may find elements of purification, illumination and union. For that


reason, the authors who use this method are forced to repeat themselves time and again and to return constantly to material which they have already treated.

Those who develop the doctrine of the spiritual life on the basis of the grades of prayer will depend greatly on confirmation from experience. They will also perhaps recall the words of St. Pius X, in which he expressly declares that there is an intimate relation between the grades of prayer treated by St. Teresa and the growth of the spiritual life. But it has this inconvenience, that it does not solve many problems which arise in regard to the Christian life in general.

Those who prefer to classify the material into homogeneous sections proceed with great clarity and avoid monotonous repetitions. However, they are then forced to study separately many things which in actual life are intimately related.

We do not think that there is any method which will have all the advantages and will avoid all the disadvantages. The spiritual life is very mysterious and complex. There is such a variety of manifestations when the divine combines with the individual psychology of a particular soul that it is practically impossible to reduce the whole matter to human categories. The Holy Spirit breathes where he will, and he leads souls in different ways to the heights of perfection. One could say that each soul follows a path that is proper to itself and never repeated in the case of any other soul.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to follow some method in order to proceed with order and the greatest possible clarity in these intricate questions. Therefore, recognizing its disadvantages, we intend to follow the method of dividing the material into homogeneous parts. Keeping in mind that the purpose of this work is pedagogical, we shall first give a brief summary of the growth of the spiritual life, and then we shall treat at length of the negative aspect and the positive aspect of this growth.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Each soul follows its own path to sanctity under the direction and impulse of the Holy Ghost; there are no two persons absolutely identical, either in body or in soul. The masters of the spiritual life have attempted to give various classifications by concentrating on the predominant dispositions of souls, a useful device to establish a point of reference for determining the state in which a particular soul finds itself at a given time in the spiritual life. This knowledge is very important in practice, since the spiritual direction of a soul in the first stages of the spiritual life will be very different from that which is given to those who are advanced or already perfect.

The three principal classifications which have been proposed in the history of Christian spirituality are the classic division into the three ways (purgative, illuminative, and unitive), that of the three degrees (beginners, proficient and perfect), and that of St. Teresa of Avila as outlined in her Interior Castle. We shall blend these three classifications in order to construct the following schema of the entire Christian life.

The "outer court of the castle" is the stage of the sinners who live habitually in the state of sin and are not interested in abandoning it. Perhaps the majority sin through ignorance or frailty, but there are also some who give themselves to sin because of a cold indifference or even because of an obstinate and diabolical malice. In some cases there is a complete absence of remorse and a deliberate rejection of all prayer or recourse to God. They consider mortal sin to be of little importance or something that is readily pardoned. For that reason, they imprudently place themselves in all kinds of occasions of sin, and they succumb to temptation with the greatest facility. They miss Mass on Sundays and for the slightest reason; their annual confession, which is sometimes omitted, is made in a mechanical fashion, without any interior devotion and without a true desire to give up their sins definitively. They sometimes make use of vocal prayers, but without attention or true piety and usually to ask God for temporal things.

When the soul begins to desire sincerely to live in a Christian manner, it enters the purgative way or the first degree of charity. Its basic dispositions are described by St. Thomas in the following words: "At first it is man's principal concern to avoid sin and resist the passions, which move him in opposition to charity. And this pertains to beginners, in whom charity must be nourished and augmented lest it be destroyed."

The purgative way can be subdivided into the first three mansions described by St. Teresa of Avila. The first mansions are those of the faithful souls who struggle somewhat weakly against mortal sin but sincerely repent through


THE OUTER COURT

THE PURGATIVE WAY

THE INNER COURT

THE UNITIVE WAY
good confessions. Frequently, however, they voluntarily place themselves in the occasion of sin. They make no effort to avoid venial sin because they consider it to be of no importance. Their practices of piety are generally restricted to those which are commanded by the Church, and even here they sometimes fail. On rare occasions they may perform some pious work of supererogation. Their prayer is purely vocal and is accompanied by many distractions. Their petitions in prayer are usually in regard to temporal things and rarely pertain to the spiritual.

In the second mansions we find those good souls who valiantly struggle against mortal sin, although they find themselves in occasions which lead to their fall. When this happens, they repent sincerely and promptly go to confession. They still commit deliberate venial sins because their battle to overcome them is rather weak, their repentence is superficial, and they constantly fall back into the same venial sins. They frequent the sacraments, especially on the great feasts, the first Fridays, etc., and sometimes attend daily Mass, but with little preparation. They readily omit such devotions as the daily Rosary. Their prayer in general is still vocal, although at times they may attempt to make a meditation, which is often accompanied by voluntary distractions.

The third mansions of the purgative way comprise those pious souls who rarely commit mortal sin, and when they do their repentance is profound, they immediately confess their sin, and take precautions to avoid a relapse. They sincerely combat venial sin and make use of the particular examen, although as yet it is not performed with fidelity and it produces little fruit. They usually attend Mass and receive Communion daily, but often it is with a certain spirit of routine. They confess their sins each week but with only a slight amendment of their defects. Such souls often say the rosary daily, make frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and make the stations of the Cross regularly. They practice meditation daily but often do not make a good meditation because of their many distractions. They readily omit meditation, especially in times of dryness or numerous occupations which could have been avoided without failing in the duties of their state in life. Frequently they make affective prayer, which tends to become more and more simplified. The night of the senses usually begins here as a transition to the illuminative way.

When the soul has decided to enter upon a life of solid piety and to advance along the way of virtue, it has entered upon the illuminative way. This is what many spiritual authors call the second conversion. The principal concern of the soul at this point is to grow in the Christian life by increasing and strengthening its charity. We can divide the illuminative way into the following degrees or mansions.

The beginning of the illuminative way is found in those fervent souls who are in the fourth mansions. They never commit mortal sin. If they are suddenly surprised by unexpected temptation, their mortal sin is a doubtful one and is followed immediately by profound repentance, immediate confession and acts of penance. They exercise great care to avoid venial sin, and it is rarely fully deliberate when they commit a sin. They make use of the particular examen as a means of combating all venial sin. Such souls, however, often avoid examining themselves concerning imperfections lest they be obliged to combat them. They love abnegation and self-denial, but only to a certain point. Their daily Mass and Communion are accompanied by fervent preparation and thanksgiving. They are diligent in the weekly confession, they seek spiritual direction in order to make progress in virtue, and they have a tender devotion to Mary. They are faithful in prayer in spite of dryness or aridity in the night of the senses. They practice the prayer of simplicity, which is a transition to contemplative prayer, and in moments of particular intensity they enjoy the prayer of infused recollection and of quiet.

In the fifth mansions we find those souls that are relatively perfect. They never commit a deliberate venial sin, although sometimes they may fall by surprise or lack of adverence. Then they repent of their sin and make reparation. Any imperfections are immediately rejected and combatted with all their strength. There may be some deliberate imperfections, but they are quickly repented. There are frequent acts of abnegation and renunciation, and the particular examen is now aimed at seeking perfection in a definite virtue. Their practices of piety become more simple and less numerous but are practiced with greater love. Charity is beginning to have a more intense and a more actual influence on everything they do. They love solitude; they are more and more disinterested; they experience a great longing for God, a desire for heaven, a love of the cross, a disinterested zeal, and a great hunger for Communion. Their life of prayer is so habitual that it is as natural as breathing. They have reached the contemplative prayer of union, and frequently they undergo passive purifications and manifest certain phenomena that are concomitant with the mystical state.

When the life of prayer becomes, as it were, the very breathing of the soul, and even amidst its occupations and duties of state, and when intimate union with God and the attainment of complete Christian perfection constitute the supreme ideal of its life, the soul has entered the unitive way. Its fundamental preoccupation is to be united with God and to enjoy him. The unitive way can be subdivided into two grades or mansions.

The first degree of the unitive way is that of the heroic souls who are in the sixth mansions. They never commit deliberate imperfections; at most they are only partially deliberate and are quickly rejected. They perform all their practices of piety with an exquisite fidelity, but they are concerned only with their interior life. The second degree of the unitive way is that of the heroic souls who are in the seventh mansions. They never commit deliberate imperfections; at most they are only partially deliberate and are quickly rejected. They perform all their practices of piety with an exquisite fidelity, but they are concerned only with their interior life.
the point of forgetfulness of self. They have a great thirst for suffering and their penitential practices are severe. They would wish to offer themselves completely as a holocaust for the conversion of sinners. Frequently they offer themselves as victim souls. In their life of prayer, contemplation is practically habitual. They enjoy the prayer of union in a very high degree and it is frequently the prayer of ecstatic union. They undergo the passive purifications of the night of the spirit. The spiritual espousal occurs at this stage, as well as the concomitant mystical phenomena and sometimes graces gratis datae.

In the seventh mansions we find the great saints, in whom imperfections are scarcely apparent. Their practices of piety have been reduced to the simple exercise of love. As St. John of the Cross says: "Now loving is my only exercise." Their love has reached a point of incredible intensity, but it is still tranquil. They enjoy an unchanging peace and serenity; they manifest profound humility, unity of judgment and simplicity of intention. All that remains is the honor and glory of God. In their prayer life they enjoy what St. Teresa describes as a certain intellectual vision of the Blessed Trinity in the soul. They have reached the transforming union and mystical marriage, and sometimes confirmation in grace.

Such, in its general lines, is the path which souls usually travel in their journey to sanctity. It admits of an infinite variety of modification because no two souls are exactly alike, but the expert director who pays close attention to the general characteristics which we have described will be able to determine rather accurately the degree of the spiritual life which has been attained by a soul at any given time.

We shall now examine in detail the two basic aspects of the Christian life: the negative and the positive. Although in practice these two elements are usually intermingled and sometimes inseparable, for pedagogical reasons we shall treat first of the negative aspect in its entirety and then of the positive aspect.

2: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SIN

Sin is the worst enemy of our sanctification and is in reality the only enemy, since everything else that impedes growth in holiness either comes from sin or is conductive to sin. Sin is a voluntary transgression against the law of God. It always presupposes three essential elements: forbidden matter, deliberation on the part of the intellect, and consent on the part of the will. If the matter is grave and the deliberation and consent are complete, one has committed a mortal sin; if the matter is light or if deliberation and consent are imperfect, the sin is venial. Within these two types of sin there is an infinity of degrees. The detailed study of sin pertains to moral theology; we shall discuss only those things which pertain to the struggle for sanctity and shall be concerned principally with the manner of combating sin and voluntary imperfections.

MORTAL SIN

Unfortunately, there are countless men who live habitually in mortal sin. Absorbed almost entirely by preoccupations of this life, enmeshed in professional affairs, devoured by an insatiable thirst for pleasure and diversion, and overwhelmed with a religious ignorance which sometimes reaches incredible extremes, they never ask any questions concerning the life to come. Some, especially if they received some degree of Christian education during childhood and if they still preserve some remnant of faith, react in the face of approaching death and receive the last sacraments before appearing before God. But many others go down to the grave without any regrets save the fact that they must leave this world. These unfortunate people are what St. Teresa calls "paralyzed souls who, unless the Lord himself comes and commands them to rise, are like the man who had lain beside the pool for thirty years; they are unfortunate creatures and live in great peril."

1Interior Castle, First Mansions, n. 8.
They are actually in danger of eternal damnation. If death were to surprise them in this state they would be lost for all eternity. Habitual mortal sin has stained their souls to such an extent that there is, as St. Teresa says, "no darkness more black nor anything so obscure that this soul is not much more so." St. Teresa also says that if sinners could understand what happens to a soul when it sins mortally, "it would not be possible for anyone to sin, even if he had to undertake the greatest efforts that can be imagined in order to avoid the occasions of sin." Nevertheless, not all those who live habitually in the state of sin have contracted the same responsibility before God.

We can distinguish four classes of sins which serve as a basis for classifying sinners into as many categories.

Ignorance
We are not referring to a total and invincible ignorance, which would excuse entirely from sin, but to that ignorance which results from an anti-religious or completely indifferent education, or from an environment which is hostile or completely devoid of any religious influence. Those who live in such surroundings usually have some awareness of the malice of sin. They are perfectly conscious of the fact that certain actions which they commit with facility are not morally right. Perhaps from time to time they even feel a certain remorse. In any case, they are capable of committing deliberate mortal sin.

At the same time it is necessary to recognize that the responsibility of such persons before God is greatly lessened. If they have preserved a horror for that which seems unjust or sinful to them; if, in spite of external weaknesses, they have remained basically upright; if they have practiced even in a rudimentary fashion some devotion to the Blessed Virgin which they learned in childhood; if they have refrained from attacking religion and its ministers; and if especially at the hour of death they raise their heart to God, full of remorse and confident in his mercy, there is no doubt that they will be judged with special benignity at the divine tribunal. If Christ advises us that much more will be asked of him to whom much has been given (Luke 12:48), it is reasonable to think that little will be asked of him who has received little.

Souls such as these usually turn to God with comparative readiness if the opportunity presents itself. Since their careless life did not proceed from true malice, but from a profound ignorance, any situation that makes a strong impression on the soul and causes it to enter in upon itself will suffice to cause them to turn to God. The death of a member of the family, a sermon heard at a mission, the introduction to a religious environment, etc., ordinarily suffices to lead such souls to the right path. As a rule, such souls pass through whole life lukewarm and ignorant, and the priest charged with their care should return time and again to the task of completing their formation lest they return to their former state.

There are many persons who are sufficiently instructed in religion so that their sins cannot be attributed to the lack of a knowledge of their duties. And yet they do not sin through calculated malice. They are weak, lacking in will power, strongly inclined to sensual pleasure, intellectually dull, listless and cowardly. They lament their faults, they admire good people and would like to be one of them, but they lack the courage and energy to be so in reality. These dispositions do not excuse them from sin; on the contrary, they are more culpable than those who sin through ignorance, because they sin with a greater knowledge. But basically they are weak rather than evil. The person in charge of their spiritual welfare must be especially concerned with strengthening them in their good resolutions, leading them to the frequent reception of the sacraments, to reflection, avoidance of the occasions of sin, etc., in order to withdraw them from their sad situation and to orientate them toward the good.

These people sin, knowing that they sin, not because they will the evil as such or as an offense against God, but because they do not wish to give up their pleasures, and it does not cause them any concern that their conduct is sinful in the sight of God. They sin coldly and with indifference, without remorse of conscience, silencing the faint voice of conscience in order to continue their life of sin without reproach.

The conversion of these persons is very difficult. Their constant indifference to the inspirations of grace, their cold indifference to the postulates of reason and the most elementary morality, their systematic disdain for the advice which is given them by those who wish to help them—all this hardens their heart to such an extent that it would require a veritable miracle of grace for them to return to the right path. If death should overtake them in such a state, their eternal fate would be deplorable.

Perhaps the most efficacious means of leading them back to God would be to encourage them to practice certain spiritual exercises with a group of persons of the same profession or social condition as themselves. Although it may seem strange, it is not rare to find that this type of person will begin to practice some spiritual exercise in order to see what it is like, especially if it is proposed to them with a certain tenderness and affection. And it frequently happens that a great grace from God awaits them there. At times astounding conversions are effected, radical changes of life, and the beginning of a life of piety and fervor in persons who formerly lived completely forgetful of God. The priest who has the good fortune to be the instrument of such divine mercy should watch over the convert and by means of a wise and prudent direction try to assure the definitive and permanent return to God.
This class of sinners is the most culpable and the most horrible. These people do not sin through ignorance, weakness or indifference, but through refined malice and diabolical obstinacy. Their most common sin is blasphemy, which is pronounced strictly out of hatred for God. They may have begun as good Christians, but little by little they degenerated. Having yielded more and more to their evil passions, these passions gradually assumed gigantic proportions, until the moment came when their souls were definitively conquered. Then, in the arms of despair, came the inevitable consequence of defection and apostasy. The last barriers which kept them from falling over the precipice have been broken, and they are hurled, by a kind of vengeance against God and their own conscience, into every kind of crime and moral disorder. Fiercely they attack religion; they hate the good; they may enter into a non-Catholic sect and propagate its doctrines with zeal and ardor, until, finally driven to despair by the accusations of their own conscience, which speaks to them in spite of everything, they fall more and more deeply into sin. One of these unfortunate persons said on a certain occasion: "I do not believe in the existence of hell, but if there is a hell and if I go there, at least I shall have the satisfaction of never bowing down before God." Another such person, foreseeing that perhaps at the hour of death the grace of repentance would be offered to him, deliberately closed the door to any possibility of a return to God by saying to his friends and relatives: "If at the hour of death I ask for a priest to hear my confession, do not bring him, because I shall be delirious."

The conversion of one of these persons would require a miracle of grace greater than the resurrection of the dead in the natural order. It is useless to try to win these people by persuasion or advice. It will make no impression on them and may even produce contrary effects. The only method to be used with them is the strictly supernatural: prayer, fasting, tears, constant recourse to the Blessed Virgin. This requires a true miracle and only God can do it. And God will not always perform the miracle in spite of many prayers and supplications. It could almost be said that these unfortunate ones have exhausted the patience of God and are destined to be for all eternity the living testimony of inflexible and rigorous divine justice, because they have abused divine mercy.

Let us turn from these unfortunate souls whose conversion would require a miracle of grace and consider the great multitude of those who sin through weakness or indifference. These are persons who have faith, practice some devotions at least superficially, and think now and then about their soul and eternity. But absorbed as they are in the affairs and preoccupations of the world, they live a life that is almost purely natural, rising and falling continuously and remaining at times in the state of mortal sin for a long period. Such are the majority of those Christians who observe the minimum obligations such as Sunday Mass, yearly confession, etc. The Christian life is only slightly developed in them, and they live a life that has no supernatural horizons. The senses predominate rather than faith and reason, and they are very much in danger of being lost.

What can be done to lead these poor souls to a Christian life which is more in harmony with the demands of baptism and their own eternal interests? Above all, it is necessary to inspire in them a great horror for mortal sin. To do this, there is nothing better, after prayer, than the consideration of the gravity of sin and its terrible consequences. St. Teresa of Avila says in this respect:

While in a state like this, the soul will find profit in nothing; and hence, being as it is in mortal sin, none of the good works it may do will be of any avail to win it glory. . . . I know of a person to whom our Lord wished to show what a soul was like when it committed mortal sin. That person says that if people could understand this, she thinks they would find it impossible to sin at all and, rather than meet occasions of sin, would put themselves to the greatest trouble imaginable. . . . O souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ! Learn to understand yourselves and take pity on yourselves. Surely, if you understand your own natures, it is impossible that you will not strive to remove the pitch which blackens the crystal. Remember, if your life were to end now, you would never enjoy that life again. O Jesus! How sad it is to see a soul deprived of it! What a state the poor rooms of the castle are in! How distracted are the senses which inhabit them! And the faculties, which are their governors and butlers and stewards—how blind they are and how ill-controlled! And yet, after all, what kind of fruit can one expect to be borne by a tree rooted in the devil?

I once heard a spiritual man say that he was not so much astonished at the things done by a soul in mortal sin as at the things not done by it. May God, in his mercy, deliver us from such great evil, for there is nothing in the whole of our lives that so thoroughly deserves to be called evil as this, since it brings endless and eternal evils in its train.4

The following is a brief schema of ideas which the director should strive to inculcate in the soul that he wishes to draw out of habitual mortal sin:

1) Mortal sin must be a most serious evil if God punishes it so terribly. Realizing that God is infinitely just and that he cannot punish anyone more than he deserves, and that he is at the same time infinitely merciful and therefore always punishes the guilty less than they deserve, we know certainly that as the result of mortal sin: a) the rebellious angels were changed into horrible demons for all eternity; b) our first parents were driven out of paradise and all humanity was subjected to every manner of sickness, desolation and death; c) God will maintain for all eternity the fire of hell as a punishment for those guilty ones who die in mortal sin (de fide); d) Christ, the dearly beloved Son of God, when he wished to satisfy for culpable man, had to suffer the terrible torments of the Passion and experience in himself, as the representative of sinful humanity,

4Interior Castle, First Mansions, Chap. 2.
the indignation of divine justice, even to the point of exclaiming: "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46.)

2) Because of the injury against God's infinite majesty, sin possesses a malice which is in a certain sense infinite.6

3) Mortal sin instantly produces the following disastrous effects in the soul: a) the loss of sanctifying grace, the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; b) the loss of the indwelling of the Trinity in the soul; c) the loss of all merits acquired in one's past life; d) an ugly stain on the soul (macula animae), which leaves the soul dark and horrible; e) slavery to Satan, an increase of evil inclinations and remorse of conscience; f) the guilt of eternal punishment.

Mortal sin is, therefore, the death of the soul to the life of grace. If these ideas are well considered and if the soul humbly implores the help of God in prayer, it will gradually acquire a profound horror of mortal sin and eventually resolve to break with sin and even die rather than commit a mortal sin. But this decision of the will is not enough. The soul is still very weak and must be fortified by using the necessary means for acquiring the energy which it lacks. It must be advised to avoid all occasions of sin with the greatest care, to frequent the sacraments, to make a daily examination of conscience in order to prevent unexpected temptations, to have a tender devotion to Mary, to be always profitably occupied and thus combat sloth, the mother of all vices, and daily to ask of God the efficacious grace to avoid offending him.

VENIAL SIN

After mortal sin there is nothing that we should avoid more carefully than venial sin. Although it is much less serious than mortal sin, it is nevertheless a moral evil, and moral evil is the greatest of all evils. Before this type of evil all others of the physical order fade away as if they were nothing. Neither sickness nor death itself can be compared to the evil of sin. It is necessary therefore to have clear ideas about the nature, classes, malice and consequences of venial sin so that one can cultivate a horror of it and put into practice the means necessary to avoid it.

NATURE AND KINDS

This is one of the most difficult questions in all theology. For our purpose, however, it is sufficient to say that, as distinct from mortal sin, venial sin consists in a simple deviation and not a total aversion from the ultimate end. It is a sickness and not the death of the soul. The sinner who commits a mortal sin is like the traveler who, intending to reach a certain point, turns his back on it and begins to travel in the opposite direction. But he who commits a venial sin merely departs from the straight path without abandoning his orientation toward the goal to which he is traveling.

It is possible to distinguish three classes of venial sins:

1) Those sins which by their very nature involve a disorder or deviation, although only a slight one, such as a small lie which does no damage to anyone.

2) Those sins which, although of themselves gravely forbidden, because of the smallness of the matter involved, constitute only a light disorder, as to steal a small amount of money.

3) Those sins which lack complete deliberation or full consent of the will in matters which would otherwise be serious sins, such as inadvertent or semi-deliberate impure thoughts.

The mere multiplication of venial sins does not of itself change the species of the sin. A thousand venial sins do not equal a single mortal sin. Nevertheless, a venial sin could become a mortal sin for any one of the following reasons:

a) Because of an erroneous conscience or a seriously doubtful conscience concerning the grave malice of a deliberate act. Thus he who erroneously believes that an action which is objectively only venially sinful is a mortal sin would commit a mortal sin if he performed that action. One would also commit a mortal sin in performing an action if he has serious doubts as to whether or not it is a mortal sin or only a venial sin, for one is obliged to solve such a doubt before performing the action.

b) By reason of an end which is gravely evil, as would occur if one performs an act which is a light sin for the purpose of causing another to commit a serious sin.

c) By reason of the proximate danger of falling into mortal sin if one commits a particular venial sin, as would be the case if one were to let himself become angry when he knows that he will very likely end by inflicting grave damage or injury on his neighbor.

d) By reason of the grave scandal which would be occasioned by the commission of a light sin, e.g., if a venial sin committed by a priest were to become the occasion of a serious sin on the part of a layman.

e) By formal contempt of a law which binds under light obligation. Contempt is called formal if it is directed against authority as such; it is called material if it is directed to some other element, such as a disdain for the thing forbidden because one thinks it is of little importance.

f) By the accumulation of material which may increase until it is grave matter.

It is certain that there is a great difference between the malice of a mortal sin and that of a venial sin. The Church has condemned the following propositio

6Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, III, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2.
tion of Balaam: “There is no sin which is venial by its very nature, but every sin merits eternal punishment.” Nevertheless, venial sin does constitute a true offense against God, an effective disobedience of his law, and an act of ingratitude for his great benefits. On the one hand there is the will of God and his glory; on the other, our own desires and selfishness. In the case of venial sin, we in effect choose the latter. It is true that we should not prefer them if we knew that they would separate us radically from God (and in this we have the distinction between venial and mortal sin, because the latter consists in our turning away from God completely), but it is certain that the lack of respect toward God is of itself very great even in the case of venial sin. St. Teresa says in this regard:

From any sin, however small, committed with full knowledge, may God deliver us, especially since we are sinning against so great a Sovereign and realize that he is watching us. That seems to me to be a sin of malice aforethought; it is as though one were to say: “Lord, although this displeases thee, I shall do it. I know that thou seest it and I know that thou wouldst not have me do it; but although I understand this, I would rather follow my own whim and desire than thy will.” If we commit a sin in this way, however slight, it seems to me that our offense is not small but very, very great. Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish between venial sins committed out of weakness, surprise or lack of advertence and deliberation, and those which are committed coldly and with the complete awareness that one thereby displeases God. We can never completely avoid the former, and God, who knows very well the clay of which we are made, readily forgives us these sins of weakness. The only thing that one can do about these faults is to try to diminish their number as far as possible and to avoid discouragement, which would be fatal for one who is striving for perfection and always presupposes a self-love which is more or less dissimulated. St. Francis de Sales says in this respect:

Although it is reasonable to feel discouragement and to be sorry for having committed any faults, this discouragement should not be sour, angry, astringent or choleric, and this is the great defect of those who, seeing themselves angry, become impatient with their own impatience and become angry at their own anger.

Believe me, Philothea, that just as the sweet and cordial reproaches of a father make more of an impression on a son than his rage and anger, so also, if we reproach our heart when it commits some fault with sweet and peaceful reproaches, using more compassion than anger and arousing the heart to amend, we shall succeed in arousing a repentance which is much more profound and penetrating than that which could be aroused with resentment, anger and anxiety. Therefore, when your heart falls, raise it swiftly, humbling

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3Cf. Deoz. 1020.
7The Way of Perfection, Chap. 41.
8This would require a special privilege from God, as was received by the Blessed Virgin, and was so defined by the Council of Trent. Cf. Sess. VI, Decree on Justification, can. 23; Denz. 833.

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yourself greatly in the presence of God by the recognition of your misery, without being surprised at your fall; for what is so strange that sickness should be sick, that weakness should be weak, and that misery should be wretched. Nevertheless, detest with all your heart the offense which you have committed against God and, filled with courage and confidence in his mercy, begin again the practice of that virtue which you have abandoned. If one acts in this way, reacting promptly against those faults of weakness with a profound repentance full of meekness, humility and confidence in the mercy of God, they will leave scarcely any trace in the soul, and they will not constitute a serious obstacle in the path of our sanctification.

But when venial sins are committed coldly, with perfect deliberation and advertence, they constitute an insuperable obstacle to perfection. They make it impossible to proceed along the road to sanctity. Those sins sadden the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says ( Eph. 4:30), and they completely paralyze his sanctifying work in the soul. Father Lallemant says in this regard:

One is astonished to see so many religious who, after having lived forty or fifty years in the state of grace, saying Mass every day and practicing all the holy exercises of the religious life, and, consequently, possessing all the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a very high degree— one is astonished. I say, to see that these religious give no recognition to the gifts of the Holy Ghost in their acts and in their conduct; to see that their life is completely natural; that, when they are corrected or when they are discouraged, they show their resentment; that they show so much concern for the praise, the esteem and the applause of the world, that they delight in it, and they love and seek its comfort and everything that will appeal to their self-love.

There is no reason to be astonished. The venial sins which they commit continuously bind the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and it is no wonder that the effects of the gifts are not evident in them. It is true that these gifts grow together with charity habitually and in their physical being, but they do not grow actually and in the perfection which corresponds to the fervor of charity and increases merit in us, because venial sins, being opposed to the fervor of charity, impede the operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

If these religious would strive for purity of heart, the fervor of charity would increase in them more and more and the gifts of the Holy Ghost shine forth in their conduct; but this will never be very apparent in them, living as they do without recollection, without attention to their interior life, letting themselves be led and guided by their inclinations, and avoiding only the more grave sins while being careless about little things.10

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Venial sin has four effects in this life and certain effects in the life to come.11

1) It deprives us of many actual graces which God would otherwise have given us. This privation sometimes results in our falling into a temptation which we could have avoided by means of that actual grace of which we were deprived.

8Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chap. 9.
9The Spiritual Doctrine of Father Lallemant (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1955), Prin. 4, c. 3, a. 3.
At other times it may result in the loss of a new advance in the spiritual life. It likewise results in a lessening of the degree of glory which we would have attained through resistance to that temptation through the increase in grace. Only in the light of eternity—and then there is no remedy—shall we realize what we have lost as a result of deliberate venial sins.

2) It lessens the fervor of charity and one's generosity in the service of God. This fervor and generosity presuppose a sincere desire for perfection and a constant striving for it, which are totally incompatible with voluntary venial sin, because the latter implies a rejection of that lofty ideal and a deliberate halt in the struggle for greater holiness.

3) It increases the difficulties in the exercise of virtue. This is a result of the two previous effects. Deprived of many actual graces which are necessary to keep us on the path of the good and having lost a good part of its fervor and generosity in the service of God, the soul is gradually weakened and loses more and more of its spiritual energy. Virtue appears to be more difficult, the effort required for growing in holiness becomes more and more demanding, the experience of past failures for which we ourselves are responsible disheartens the soul, and while the world attracts the soul with its seductions and the devil intensifies his attacks, the soul ultimately abandons the path of perfection and perhaps gives itself without resistance to sin.

4) It predisposes for mortal sin. This is clearly testified in Scripture when it is stated that he who wastes the little he has is gradually stripped bare (Sirach 19:1). Experience confirms this proof. The soul seldom falls directly and immediately, however violent the attack of its enemies. Usually, the ultimate fall of a soul has been prepared little by little. The soul has gradually lost ground to the enemy, it has been losing its strength through voluntary imprudence in matters which it considered of little importance, it has been losing the divine inspirations, and little by little it has lowered its defenses until the moment arrives in which the enemy, in one furious assault, conquers the city.

5) The reason for the sufferings of purgatory is the punishment and purification of the soul. Every sin, in addition to the fault, carries with it the guilt of punishment which must be satisfied in this life or in the next. The punishment due to mortal sins already pardoned and that of venial sins, whether pardoned or not, not satisfied in this life is satisfied in purgatory. God cannot renounce his justice, and the soul must pay its debt completely before it can be admitted to beatific joy. And the pains which the soul will have to suffer in purgatory for those faults which on earth it considered light and of small importance surpass the greatest pains which one could suffer in this world. St. Thomas says this expressly when he teaches that there are two types of pain in purgatory: the one which consists in the delay in the reception of the beatific vision and the other which consists in the torment caused by a material fire.

And the smallest amount of either one surpasses the greatest suffering in this world.12

6) The increases of grace, of which the soul is deprived in this life because of venial sins, will have a repercussion in eternity. The soul in heaven will have a lesser glory than it could have attained had it been more faithful to grace in this life. For that reason, for all eternity it will be giving less glory to God than it could have. The degree of glory is in direct relation to the degree of grace attained in this life.

It is above all necessary to conceive a great horror for venial sin. We shall never begin to make serious progress in our sanctification until we have done this. To this end, it will be of great help to consider often what we have said concerning its malice and consequences. We must return again and again to the battle against venial sin and never give it up even for an instant.

Actually, because of pauses and vacillations in the life of fervor and of constant vigilance, one readily cultivates indolence and cowardice. It is necessary to be faithful to the examination of conscience, both general and particular; to increase one's spirit of sacrifice; to be faithful to the practice of prayer; to safeguard external and internal recollection to the extent that the duties of our state permit; and to remember the example of the saints, who would rather have died than commit a deliberate venial sin. When we have succeeded in cultivating this disposition in our soul in a permanent and habitual manner, when we are disposed with promptness and facility to practice any sacrifice necessary to avoid deliberate venial sin, we shall arrive at the second negative degree of piety, which consists in flight from venial sin. It is not an easy task. If in the first degree—the avoidance of mortal sin—such a great struggle was necessary, what can we say about the avoidance and flight from venial sin? But however difficult it may be, it is possible to approach that ideal by means of a constant struggle and humble prayer until one has reached the same status as that which was achieved by the saints.

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12Cf. Suppl., Quaestio de Purgatorio, a. 3.
evil it may be. There is a great difference between the two. In theory the
distinction between venial sin and imperfection seems very clear. In practice,
nevertheless, the fully voluntary imperfection has harmful effects on the
spiritual life and is of itself sufficient to impede the flight of the soul to
sanctity. St. John of the Cross treats of this matter with great clarity when
he distinguishes between venial sin and imperfection:

But all the other voluntary desires, whether they be of mortal sin, which
are the gravest, or of venial sin, which are less grave, or whether they be only
of imperfections, which are the least grave of all, must be driven away every
one, and the soul must be free from them all, howsoever slight they be, if
it is to come to this complete union; and the reason is that the state of the
divine union consists in the soul’s total transformation, according to the
will, in the will of God, so that there may be naught in the soul that is contrary
to the will of God, but that, in all and through all, its movement may be that
of the will of God alone. . . . For if this soul desired any imperfection that
God wills not, there would not be made one will of God, since the soul would
have a will for that which God has not.

It is clear, then, that for the soul to come to unite itself perfectly with
God through love and will, it must first be free from all desire of the will,
howsoever slight. That is, it must not intentionally and knowingly consent with
the will to imperfections, and it must have power and liberty to be able not
do so to consent intentionally. I say “knowingly,” because, unintentionally and un-
knowingly, or without having the power to do otherwise, it may well fall into
imperfections and venial sins, and into the natural desires wherever we have
spoken; for of such sins as these which are not voluntary but surreptitious it
is written that the just man shall fall seven times in the day and shall rise up
again.

But of the voluntary desires, which, though they be for very small things
are, as I have said, intentional venial sins, any one that is not conquered
suffices to impede union. I mean, if this habit be not mortified, for sometimes
certain acts of different desires have not as much power when the habits are
likewise proceed from a habit of imperfection. But some habits of volun-
tary imperfections, which are never completely conquered, prevent not only the
attainment of divine union but also progress in perfection.

These habitual imperfections are, for example, a common custom of much
speaking, or some slight attachment which we never quite wish to conquer—
such as that to a person, a garment, a book, a cell, a particular kind of food.
Tinkle-tinkle, fancies for tasting, knowing or hearing certain things, and such-like
habitations to it, is of as great harm to growth and progress in virtue as though
venial sins which do not proceed from a habitual indulgence in some harmful
will to attachment to something. For as long as it has this, there is no possibility
as that it will make progress in perfection, even though the imperfection be
extremely slight. For it comes to the same thing whether a bird be held by a
slender cord or by a stout one; even if it be slender, the bird will be as
well held as though it were stout, for so long as it breaks it not and flies not
away. It is true that the slender one is the easier to break; still, easy though
it be, the bird will not fly away if it be not broken. And thus the soul that has
attachment to anything, however much virtue it possesses, will not attain to the
liberty of divine union.13

As can be seen, St. John of the Cross points out the basic reason why it is
necessary to renounce absolutely all voluntary imperfections. At the same
time, he emphatically distinguishes between voluntary imperfections and those
which proceed from pure weakness or inadvertence. He does well to dis-

13The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. I, Chap. 11.
should fail to attain to such blessing because they have not shaken off some childish thing which God had hidden them conquer for love of him, and which is nothing more than a thread or a hair. And, what is worse, not only do they make no progress, but because of this attachment they fall back, lose that which they have gained, and retrench that part of the road along which they have traveled at the cost of so much time and labor; for it is well known that, on this road, not to go forward is to turn back, and not to be making progress is to be going down. This our Lord desired to teach us when he said: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." He that takes not the trouble to repair the vessel, however slight the crack in it, is likely to spill all the liquid that is within it. The Preacher taught us this clearly when he said: "He that containeth small things shall fall by little and little." For, as he himself says, a great fire cometh from a single spark. And thus one imperfection is sufficient to lead to another; and these lead to yet more; wherefore you will hardly ever see a soul that is negligent in conquering one desire, and that has not many more arising from the same weakness and imperfection that this desire causes. In this way they are continually falling; we have seen many persons to whom God has been granting the favor of leading them a long way, into a state of great detachment and liberty, yet who, merely through being occupied in indulging some slight attachment, under the pretext of doing good, or in the guise of conversation and friendship, often lose their spirituality and desire for God and holy solitude, fall from the joy and wholehearted devotion which they had in their spiritual exercises, and cease not until they have lost everything; and this because they broke not with that beginning of sensual desire and pleasure and kept not themselves in solitude for God.  

14These words need explanation. The merits which one gains before God are never diminished, no matter how many venial sins are committed. As long as there is no sin before God, as does the habitual state or degree of the infused habits. St. Thomas expressly teaches this in regard to charity (Summa, II-II, q. 24, a. 10). The reason is that the conservation of a thing depends upon its cause. Now the cause of the acquired virtues is human acts; whence, if those human acts cease, the acquired virtues diminish and can ultimately disappear entirely. But this does not happen in regard to charity, because charity, as an infused virtue, has not been caused by human acts but by God alone. Whence it follows that even when the venial sin does not diminish the habit of charity nor, consequently, that of the other infused virtues, either effectively or as regards merit. Consequently, with the even greater reason one would have to say that simple imperfections do not diminish the infused virtues.

Nevertheless, when rightly understood, the statement of St. John of the Cross cannot be taken literally. We must understand that the imperfections of the soul (although the infused habits and acquired merits remain integral) and completely destroy the supernatural life. St. Thomas also admits at the end of the imperfections) indirectly diminish charity by predisposing it for its complete destruction through mortal sin.

It is therefore absolutely necessary to wage an unceasing battle against our voluntary imperfections if we wish to arrive at perfect union with God. The soul must use all its efforts and all its energies to make them disappear. It must tend always toward the more perfect and try to do all things with the greatest possible intensity. Naturally, this greater intensity should not be considered as a physical or organic intensity, as if it were necessary to keep one's nervous system in a state of constant tension or to make an act of love of God accompanied by organic psychic intensity. We are referring here simply to the perfection of one's motives which lead one to act: doing all things with the greatest possible purity of intention, with the greatest possible desire of glorifying God, with the ardent desire that God's action induce or dominate us completely, that the Holy Spirit take complete control of our soul and do with us as he wishes in time and in eternity, without taking any account of our own tastes or desires. It consists simply in an ever more perfect and docile abandonment to the will of God until we are led by him without the least resistance. And this will not occur before the total death of our human egoism and our full transformation in Christ, which will enable us to say with St. Paul: "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

It is evident that this profound transformation of our being and this complete death of our ego is an enterprise that surpasses human power, even assisted by ordinary grace. As long as man takes the initiative in his Christian life through the simple practice of the acquired virtues in a human mode, it is impossible to attain that profound purification of our innermost being. It is necessary that the Holy Ghost himself effect this transformation in its double aspect of the negative and the positive. St. John of the Cross expressly states this, and the obvious conclusion which follows is that sanctity is impossible outside the mystical life.  

15The following words of St. John of the Cross are proof of the necessity of mysticism for Christian perfection: "Let it suffice here to have described these imperfections, among the many to be found in the lives of those that are in this first state of beginners, so that it may be seen how greatly they need God to set them free from them in the state of proficients. This he does by bringing them into the dark night whereof we now speak; wherein he weans them from the breasts of these sweetmesses and pleasures, gives them pure aridity and inward darkness, takes from them all these pleasures, and for a time makes them use these indulgences and puerilities, and by very different means causes them to win the virtues. For, however assiduously the beginner practices the mortification in himself of all these actions and passions of his, he can never completely succeed—very far from it—until God shall work it in him passively by means of the purgation of the said night" (The Dark Night, Bl. I, Chap. 7).
3: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DEVIL

The second enemy against whom we must struggle is the devil. Because of its great importance, we shall study this question in great detail, but presupposing the teaching of dogmatic theology concerning the existence of the devil, their nature and the reason for their enmity against us. We shall concentrate especially on the diabolical attacks upon souls, which can be divided into three basic types: temptation, obsession and possession.

TEMPTATION

According to St. Thomas, the proper office of the devil is to tempt. Nevertheless, he immediately adds that not all temptations that a man suffers proceed from the devil. Some of them are the result of man’s own concupiscence, as St. James says: “But everyone is tempted by being drawn away and enticed by his own passion” (Jas. 1:14). It is true, however, that many temptations do proceed from the devil as a result of his hatred of men and his pride against God. Divine revelation expressly states: “Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high” (Eph. 6:11-12), and St. Peter compares the devil to a roaring lion who goes about, seeking someone to devour.6

There is no fixed rule or clear sign whereby one can distinguish whether a temptation proceeds from the devil or from some other cause. However, if the temptation is sudden, violent and tenacious; if there has been no proximate or remote cause which could have produced it; if it causes a profound disturbance in the soul or suggests the desire for marvelous and spectacular things, incites one to lose confidence in superiors or not to reveal anything concerning it to one’s spiritual director—in such circumstances one can surmise that this intervention was caused in some way by the devil.

God, as St. James teaches, never tempts anyone by inciting him to evil.8 When Scripture speaks of the temptations from God, it uses the word in a wide sense to designate a simple experiment or test of a person, not in respect to God’s knowledge (which is ignorant of nothing), but with respect to the knowledge and benefit of man himself. God permits us to be incited to evil by our spiritual enemies in order to give us an occasion for greater merit; he will never permit us to be tempted above our strength. “God is faithful,” says St. Paul, “and will not permit you to be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also give you a way out that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). There are countless advantages to a temptation which has been conquered with the help and grace of God. Victory over temptation humiliates Satan, makes the glory of God shine forth, purifies our soul, fills us with humility, repentance and confidence in the divine assistance. It obliges us to be always vigilant and alert, to mistrust ourselves, to expect all things from God, to mortify our personal tastes. It arouses us to prayer, helps us grow in experience, and makes us circumspect and cautious in the struggle against our enemy. With good reason does St. James say: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been tried, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him” (Jas. 1:12). But to obtain all these advantages, it is necessary to exercise oneself in the struggle in order to obtain victory with the help of God. To this end, it will be of great help to us to know the strategy of the devil and how to react against it.

Perhaps in no other page of Scripture is the strategy of the devil as a tempter depicted so clearly as in the moving description of the temptation of Eve, which resulted in the ruin of all humanity. Let us examine the biblical account and draw from it some important conclusions.

The tempter is not always at our side. Some of the Fathers and theologians taught that, in addition to the guardian angel who is assigned by God to each person, there is also a devil assigned by Satan to tempt us to evil. But this supposition cannot be substantiated by any clear and indisputable text in Sacred Scripture. It seems more probable that the presence of the devil is not permanent and continual, but that he approaches only in times of temptation. This seems to be implied in certain biblical narratives, especially that concerning the temptations of Christ, because after the temptations Scripture expressly states: “And when the devil had tried every temptation, he departed from

238

6Cf. Summa, I, q. 114, a. 2.

7Cf. I Pet. 5:8.

him for a while” (Luke 4:13). But although the devil sometimes departs from us, it is certain that many other times he tempts us. And although on certain occasions the attack occurs suddenly and without warning, at other times the devil insinuates himself surreptitiously, not proposing the object of his temptation at once, but leading up to it by a conversation with the soul.

Thus he said to the woman: “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1). As yet he is not tempting the woman, but the conversation is already in the area of the matter which he has in mind. His tactics are the same today as always. To persons particularly inclined to sensuality or to doubts against the faith, he will ask in general terms and without as yet inciting them to evil, concerning the problem of religion or of purity: “Is it true that God demands the blind consent of your intellect or the complete repugrence of all your natural appetites?”

**Response**

If the soul recognizes that the simple posing of the question represents a danger, it will refuse to converse with the tempter but will turn its thoughts and imagination to other matters. Then the temptation is thwarted in its very earliest moment, and an easy victory is won. The tempter withdraws in disgrace. But if the soul imprudently enters into conversation with the tempter, it is exposed to the great danger of succumbing.

This was Eve’s mistake: “The woman answered the serpent, ‘Of the fruit of all the trees in the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden,’ God said, ‘you shall not eat, neither shall you touch it, lest you die’” (Gen. 3:2-3).

The soul recognizes that God strictly forbids it to perform that action, to toy with that doubt, to arouse that desire, or to nourish that thought. The soul does not wish to disobey God, but it is wasting time in recalling that it ought not to do that. How much more simple it would be if it never had to recall its moral obligations at all but could destroy the temptation at the very start, without being bothered with weighing the reasons why it ought to do so.

**Invitation**

The soul has yielded ground to the enemy, and now the enemy gathers his forces to make a direct attack. “But the serpent said to the woman, ‘No, you shall not die; for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Gen. 3:4-5).

The devil presents an enchanting possibility. Behind the sin is hidden an ineffable happiness. He would not suggest to our soul that it will be as God, but he tells us that the soul will be happy if once more it abandons itself to sin. “In any case,” the tempter adds, “God is infinitely merciful and will readily forgive you. Enjoy the forbidden fruit once again. No evil will come to you. Do you not remember your past experiences, how great was your enjoyment then and how easy it was to depart from sin by immediate repentance?”

If the soul listens to these diabolical insinuations, it is lost. There is still time to withdraw, because the will has not yet given its consent, but if the soul does not terminate this conversation, it is in the proximate danger of falling. Its forces are gradually being weakened, the graces of God are becoming less intense, and sin presents itself as more and more desirable and fascinating.

“Now the woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for the knowledge it would give” (Gen. 3:6). The soul begins to vacillate and to be deeply disturbed. The soul does not wish to offend God, but the temptation is so alluring that a violent battle ensues and sometimes is prolonged for a long period of time. If the soul, in its supreme effort and under the influence of an actual grace (of which it is unworthy because of its imprudence), decides to remain faithful to its duty, it will be basically victorious; but its forces are disturbed, and it has venial sin on its conscience (a sin of negligence, semi-consent or vacillation in the face of evil). But only too often a soul which vacillates to this extent will take the fatal step to mortal sin.

“She took of his fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband and he ate” (Gen. 3:6). The soul has succumbed to the temptation. It has committed sin, and often, either Because of scandal or complicity, it has caused others to sin.

How different the soul finds sin to be as compared with what the devil has suggested! As soon as the sin is completed, the soul experiences a great deception which casts it into misery and the darkest emptiness. “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves coverings” (Gen. 3:7). The poor soul is now aware of the fact that it has lost everything. It stands completely naked before God, without sanctifying grace, without the infused virtues, without the gifts of the Holy Ghost, without the indwelling of the Trinity. It has lost all the merits that it has ever acquired during its whole life. There has been an instantaneous death of the supernatural life, and all that remains is bitter deception and the sneering laughter of the tempter.

Immediately the soul hears the terrible voice of conscience which reproaches it for the sin that has been committed. “When they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called the man and said to him: Where are you?” (Gen. 3:8-9). This question, which the sinner’s conscience also formulates, has no answer. The question, which the sinner’s conscience also formulates, has no answer. The question, which the sinner’s conscience also formulates, has no answer.

The struggle against the devil vacillation consent disillusion
Let us now investigate what the soul ought to do before, during and after temptation. The fundamental strategy for preventing temptation was suggested by our Lord when he said to the disciples in Gethsemane: "Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). This means that both vigilance and prayer are necessary even before temptations arise.

As regards vigilance, the devil never completely abdicates in his battle to win our soul. If sometimes he seems to leave us in peace and not tempt us, it is only to return to the attack when we least expect it. During the periods of calm we must be convinced that the battle will be resumed and perhaps with greater intensity than before. Therefore, it is necessary to keep an alert vigilance lest we be taken by surprise. This vigilance is manifested in the avoidance of all the occasions of sin, in trying to anticipate unexpected assaults, in the practice of self-control—especially of the sense of sight and of the imagination—in the particular examen, in the frequent renewal of one's firm resolutions never to sin again, in avoiding sloth, and the mother of vice. We are in the state of war with the devil, and we cannot abandon our post unless we wish to be overtaken during a moment of weakness or carelessness.

But vigilance alone is not enough. To remain in the state of grace and thereby to be victorious against all temptations requires an efficacious grace from God, obtained only through prayer. The most careful vigilance and the most earnest efforts would be totally inefficacious without the help of God's grace. But with his grace victory is infallible. As we have said, efficacious grace does not fall under the merit of strict justice, and for that reason it is not owed to anyone, even to the greatest saints. But God has given us his word that he will infallibly grant us this grace if we ask for it with prayer that fulfills the necessary conditions. This should make it evident how important is the prayer of petition. With good reason does St. Alphonsus say in regard to the absolute necessity of efficacious grace that it can be obtained only through prayer: "He who prays, will be saved; and he who does not pray, will be condemned." This is the reason why Christ taught us to ask God in the Our Father: "And lead us not into temptation." It is also reasonable that in this preventative prayer we should invoke the Blessed Mother, who crushed the serpent's head with her virginal heel, and our guardian angel, who has as one of his principal duties to defend us against the assaults of the devil.

During temptation the conduct of the soul can be summarized in one important word: resist. It does not suffice merely to remain passive in the face of temptation; positive resistance is necessary. This resistance can be either direct or indirect. Direct resistance is that which faces up to the temptation itself and conquers it by doing the precise opposite from that which is suggested. For example, to begin to speak well of a person when we are tempted to criticize him, to give a generous alms when our selfishness would prompt us to refuse, to prolong our prayer when the devil suggests that we shorten it or abandon it altogether. Direct resistance can be used against any kind of temptation, except those against faith or purity, as we shall see in a moment.

Indirect resistance does not attack the temptation but withdraws from it by distracting the mind to some other object which is completely distinct. This type of resistance is especially indicated in temptations against the faith or against purity, because in these cases a direct attack would very likely increase the intensity of the temptation itself. The best practice in these cases is a rapid and energetic but calm practice of a mental exercise which will absorb our faculties, especially the memory and imagination, and indirectly withdraw them from the object of the temptation. The important thing is to find some hobby or pastime or activity that is interesting enough to absorb one's attention for the moment.

Sometimes the temptation does not immediately disappear, and the devil may attack again and again with great tenacity. One should not become discouraged at this. The insistence of the devil is one of the best proofs that the soul has not succumbed to the temptation. The soul should resist his attacks as often as is necessary but always with great serenity and interior peace, being careful to avoid any kind of nervousness or disturbance. Every assault repulsed is a source of new merit before God and greater strength for the soul. Far from becoming weakened, the soul gains new energies. Seeing that he has lost, the devil will finally leave the soul in peace, especially when he sees that he has not been able to disturb the interior peace of the soul, which sometimes is the only reason he caused the temptations in the first place.

It is always advisable to manifest these things to one's spiritual director, especially if it is a question of very tenacious temptations or those which have occurred repeatedly. The Lord usually recomposes this act of humility and simplicity with new and powerful helps. For this reason we should have the courage to manifest our conscience frankly and honestly, above all when we feel inclined to remain silent about these matters. One should never forget the teaching of the masters of the spiritual life: "A temptation which is declared is already half conquered."

When the temptation is over, one of three things has happened: the soul has been victorious, it has yielded to the temptation, or it remains in a state of doubt. If the soul has conquered and is certain of it, it has done so only with the help of God's grace. It should therefore give thanks and ask for a continuation of divine help on other occasions. This could be said very briefly and simply, as in the following short prayer: "Thanks be to thee, O God; I owe all to thee; continue to aid me in all dangerous occasions and have mercy on me."

If the soul has fallen and has no doubt about it, it should not become disheartened. It should remember the infinite mercy of God and the lesson of the prodigal son, and then cast itself in all humility and repentance into the
NEGATIVE ASPECT

arms of the Father, asking him for forgiveness and promising with his help never to sin again. If the fall has been serious, the soul should not be content with a simple act of contrition, but should approach the sacrament of confession and use this sad experience of sin to redouble its vigilance and to intensify its fervor in order not to sin again.

Doubts

If the soul remains in doubt as to whether or not it has given consent, it should not examine its conscience minutely and with scrupulousness, for this may possibly provoke the temptation anew and even increase the danger of falling. Sometimes it is better to let a certain period of time pass until the soul becomes more tranquil, and then examine one’s conscience carefully as to whether or not sin has been committed. In any event, it is well to make an act of contrition and to make known to the confessor at the proper time the temptation that has been encountered, admitting one’s guilt as it appears in the sight of God.

What should be done, however, in the case of those persons who receive Communion daily? May they continue to receive Communion until the day of their weekly confession, even if they are in doubt as to whether they have consented to a temptation?

It is impossible to give a categorical answer which will apply to all souls and to all possible circumstances. The confessor will have to make a judgment by taking into account the temperament and habitual dispositions of the penitent, and then apply the moral principle which governs the particular case. For example, if the habitual attitude of a soul is to die rather than to sin, and at the same time the soul has a tendency to scrupulosity, the confessor should advise the penitent to continue daily Communion, to ignore the doubts, and to make an act of contrition for any guilt that could have been incurred. If, on the other hand, it is a question of a soul which is accustomed to fall readily into mortal sin, of a lax conscience which is in no wise scrupulous, the presumption is against the soul, and it is probable that the soul has consented to the temptation. This soul should not be permitted to continue to receive Communion without sacramental absolution. In either case, the penitent should obey with all humility the advice of the confessor or spiritual director, without any contradiction or discussion.

DIABOLICAL OBSESSION

Simple temptation is the common manner in which Satan exercises his diabolical influence in the world. No one is exempt from temptation, not even the great saints. The soul experiences the attacks of the devil in all the phases of the Christian life. The manner may vary, the strategy may change, there may be greater or less intensity, but the fact of temptation remains throughout the whole of the spiritual life. Even our Lord consented to be tempted in order to teach us how to conquer the enemy.

But sometimes the devil is not content with simple temptation. At times, with God’s permission, he focuses all his infernal power on advanced souls who are scarcely impressed by ordinary temptations. He does this by means of obsession and sometimes by corporal possession of his victim. The basic difference between these two forms of diabolical influence is that obsession is a diabolical action which is extrinsic to the person who suffers it, while possession signifies that the devil has actually entered the body of the victim and governs it from within, as one would drive a machine.

Obsession occurs whenever the devil torments a person from without and in a manner that is so intense, sensible and unequivocal that there can be no doubt about his presence and his action. In simple temptation the diabolical action is not so evident; absolutely speaking, it could be due to other causes. But in true and authentic obsession, the presence and activity of Satan is so clear and unequivocal that neither the soul nor the director can have the least doubt of it. The soul is aware of its own vital activity and government of its bodily organs (something which disappears in cases of possession), but it is at the same time clearly aware of the external activity of Satan, who tries to exert incredible violence on the soul.

Obsession is the attack of the enemy who attempts to enter into a citadel of which he is not yet the master. Possession, on the other hand, is the enemy already within the citadel and governing it despotically. The citadel in the first instance is the soul; in the second instance it is the body. There is, therefore, a notable difference between these two forms of diabolical influence. One is exterior and the other is interior. The latter is directed to the body, which the devil moves and agitates; the former is directed to the soul and has for its purpose to lead the soul to evil. Therefore, obsession is more to be feared than possession, because the enslavement of the body is infinitely less fearsome than that of the soul.4

Obsession can be either internal or external. The first affects the interior faculties, especially the imagination; the second affects the external senses in various manners and degrees. Rarely does it happen that there is only an external obsession, since the intention of the devil is to disturb the peace of the soul through the senses. Nevertheless, there are cases in the lives of the saints in which the most furious external obsessions were unable to destroy the peace of their soul.

Internal obsession is distinct from ordinary temptations only by reason of its violence and duration. Although it is difficult to determine exactly where simple temptation ends and true obsession begins, nevertheless, when the dis-

4M. J. Rioux, La Mystique Divine, III, Chap 9, n. 3.
The Struggle Against the Devil

Causes of Obsession

1) The permission of God, who wishes thereby to test the virtue of a soul and to increase its merits. In this sense it is equivalent to a passive trial or a mystical night of the soul, and there is scarcely any saint from Job to the Curé of Ars who has not experienced this to some degree.

2) The envy and pride of the devil, who cannot bear the sight of a soul that is trying to sanctify itself and to glorify God to the best of its ability, thereby leading a great number of other souls to salvation or perfection.

3) Although more remotely, obsession may also be due to the natural predisposition of the person obsessed, which gives the devil an occasion to attack the individual at his weakest point. This reason is of no value in regard to external obsession, which has nothing to do with the temperament or natural predispositions of the obsessed, but it is valid for internal obsession, which finds a fertile soil in a melancholy temperament or in one which is inclined to scruples, anxiety or sadness. Nevertheless, however violent the obsession, it never deprives the subject of his liberty, and with the grace of God he can always overcome it and even derive benefit from it. It is only for this reason that God permits it.

Advice for the Director

One needs much discretion and perspicacity to distinguish true obsession from the various kinds of nervous illness and mental unbalance which are very similar to it. It would be foolish and even heretical to deny absolutely the reality of diabolical action in the world, especially since it is expressly mentioned in the sources of revelation and has been proved countless times by the experiences of many saints. In modern times there has been a tendency to exaggerate the purely natural causes of all phenomena, and with good reason one could lament that perhaps the most alarming victory of the devil is that he has succeeded in destroying the belief in his terrible power. There can be no doubt that many apparently diabolical phenomena are due to natural causes, and it is a fundamental principle advocated by the Church that one may not attribute to the supernatural or preternatural order anything that can probably be explained by purely natural causes.


Obession may be due to any one of the following causes:

1) The permission of God, who wishes thereby to test the virtue of a soul and to increase its merits. In this sense it is equivalent to a passive trial or a mystical night of the soul, and there is scarcely any saint from Job to the Curé of Ars who has not experienced this to some degree.

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The director will proceed prudently if he observes the following rules:

1. Obsession usually occurs only in souls that are far advanced in virtue. As regards ordinary souls, and they are by far the majority of pious Christians, the devil is content to persecute them with simple temptations. Therefore, the director should first investigate the type of soul with which he is dealing, and in this way he will be able to conjecture as to the diabolical or purely natural origin of the apparent obsession.

2. The director should also investigate carefully whether he is dealing with a soul that is normal, balanced, of sound judgment and an enemy of any kind of exaggeration or sentimentality; or whether, on the contrary, he is dealing with a disquieted, unbalanced, weak spirit, with a history of hysteria, tormented by scruples, or depressed by reason of an inferiority complex. This rule is of exceptional importance, and very often it is the decisive rule for making a decision. Nevertheless, the director should avoid making a hasty judgment. Diabolical obsession could also occur in a person who is hysterical or unbalanced. It will be very difficult to differentiate between the manifestations of diabolical influence and those which follow from a nervous disorder, but it is possible to do so, and the director should not yield to the temptation of over-simplifying the matter by attributing everything to one cause or the other. He should give to the patient the moral counsels and rules which pertain to his office as a director of souls and then refer the individual to a trustworthy psychiatrist who can treat the other manifestations which proceed from a mental disorder.

3. The authentic manifestations of true diabolical obsession will be sufficiently clear if they are revealed by visible signs such as the moving of an object by an invisible hand, the marks of bruises or wounds which proceed from an invisible attack, etc. These effects cannot be attributed to any purely natural cause, and when the person who suffers them gives all the signs of equanimity, self-possession, sincerity and true virtue, the director can be certain that he is dealing with a case of obsession. We have already said that the devil does not usually obsess the ordinary soul; nevertheless, God sometimes permits diabolical obsession in these souls or even in hardened sinners as a salutary expiation for their sins or to give them a vivid idea of the horror of hell and the necessity of abandoning sin to be freed from the slavery of the devil. But ordinarily only souls of advanced virtue suffer the obsessive attacks of the devil.

4. Once it has been proved that one is dealing with a case of diabolical obsession, the director should proceed with the greatest possible patience and tenderness. The tormented soul needs the assistance and advice of someone to whom it can give its complete confidence and one who will in turn speak to the soul in the name of God.

The director's principal concern should be to encourage the soul and to raise its spirits. He will make the soul understand that all the attacks of hell are futile as long as the soul places all its confidence in God and does not lose its interior serenity. He will speak of the foolishness and imprudence of the devil, who will do nothing by these attacks except increase the merits of the soul. He will remind the soul that God is with it and will help it conquer: "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Also, at the side of the suffering soul is Mary, our tender Mother, as well as the guardian angel, whose power is greater than that of the devil. He will advise the soul never to lose its tranquility, to hold the devil in utter disdain, to fortify himself with the sign of the cross and the other sacramentals, especially holy water, which has great efficacy against the attacks of the devil. Above all, he will warn the soul never to do anything that the devil suggests, even if it appears good and reasonable. He will demand a detailed account of everything that happens and will never permit the soul to conceal anything, however difficult and painful it may be to reveal it. Finally, he will try to make the soul understand that God frequently uses the devil as an instrument for purifying the soul and that the best way of co-operating with the divine plan is to abandon oneself entirely to God's holy will and to remain in a state of humble submission, ready to accept anything that God may decree and to ask only the grace of never yielding to the violence of the temptations but to be faithful until death.

5. In more serious and persistent cases, the director will use the exorcisms prescribed in the Roman Ritual or other formulas approved by the Church. But he will always do this in private and even without advising the patient that he is going to exorcise him, especially if he fears that this knowledge would cause a great disturbance to the soul. For a solemn exorcism it is necessary to obtain express permission from the local ordinary and to use the prescribed precautions.

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DIABOLICAL POSSESSION

Much more impressive than obsession but less dangerous and less frequent is diabolical possession. The fundamental difference between the two, as we have already stated, consists in the fact that the first usually comprises a series of external attacks from the devil while the second is a true taking of possession of the body of the victim by Satan.

The existence of diabolical possession is an indisputable fact that pertains to the deposit of faith. Various cases of authentic diabolical possession are described in the gospels, and it is one of the most impressive characteristics of

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"Cf. Codex Iuris Canonici, can. 1151-52."
the divine mission of Christ that he had power over the devils. Christ interrogated them with authority: “What is your name?” And he said to him, “My name is Legion, for we are many” (Mark 5:9). He obliged them to leave their victim: “And Jesus rebuked him saying, ‘Hold thy peace, and go out of the man’” (Mark 1:25). He forbade them to acknowledge his Messianic mission: “And he charged them strictly not to make him known” (Mark 3:12). He freed a great number of those who were possessed: “And they brought to him all the sick suffering from various diseases and torments, and those possessed . . . and he cured them” (Matt. 4:24). He conferred on his disciples the power to cast out devils: “Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, cast out devils” (Matt. 10:8). And the disciples exercised this power frequently: “Lord, even the devils are subject to us in thy name” (Luke 10:17). St. Paul also exercised this power: “Paul being very much grieved, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I order thee in the name of Jesus Christ to go out of her.’ And it went out that very moment” (Acts 16:18).

In the long history of the Church countless cases of diabolical possession are recorded, as well as the intervention of the saints in liberating the victims. The Church has even instituted official rituals of exorcism which appear in the Pontifical and the Roman Ritual. For that reason one could not, without great temerity and probably not without heresy, deny the fact of diabolical possession. There is no inconvenience whatever in maintaining the metaphysical possibility of diabolical possession because it does not involve any contradiction; nor is there any physical difficulty because possession does not surpass the powers of the devil; nor is there any moral obstacle because God permits it either as a punishment for sin or for some greater good.

**THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DEVIL**

However it may be manifested, the presence of the devil is restricted exclusively to the body. The soul remains free, and even if the exercise of conscious life is suspended, the soul itself is never invaded. Only God has the privilege of penetrating into the essence of the soul, by his creative power and by establishing his dwelling there through the special union of grace. Nevertheless, the primary purpose of the violence of the devil is to disturb the soul and to draw it to sin. But the soul always remains master of itself, and if it is faithful to the grace of God, it will find an inviolable sanctuary in its free will.

Two periods can be distinguished in diabolical possession: the period of crisis and the period of calm. The periods of crisis are manifested by the violent onslaught of evil, and its very violence prevents it from being continual or even very prolonged. It is the moment in which the devil openly reveals himself by acts, words, convulsions, seizures of anger or impurity, obscenity or blasphemy. In the majority of cases, the victims lose consciousness of what is happening to them during this seizure, as happens in the great crises of certain mental disorders. When they regain consciousness they have no recollection of what they have said or done, or rather, of what the devil has said or done in them. Sometimes they perceive something of the diabolical spirit at the beginning of the seizure when he begins to use their faculties or organs.

In certain cases, nevertheless, the spirit of the possessed remains free and conscious during the most serious crisis, and witnesses with astonishment and horror the despotic usurpation of its body by the devil. This is what happened to the saintly Father Surin who, after he exercised the Ursulines of Loudun, was himself possessed and remained in this diabolical slavery for twelve years. In an interesting letter written to the Jesuit, Father D'Attichy, at Rennes, on May 3, 1635, Father Surin gives a moving description of his interior state. We shall quote a section of this letter because of the importance of the testimony.

I cannot say what happens to me during this time but how that spirit is united to my soul without depriving me of consciousness or of liberty. He is there as another, and it then seems that I have two souls, one of which, deprived of the use of the bodily organs and remaining as it were at a distance, watches what the other one does. The two spirits struggle on the same field of battle, which is the body. The soul is, as it were, divided; open on the one hand to diabolical impressions, and abandoned on the other hand to its own movements and to those of God. In one and the same instant I experience a great peace under the approbation of God, and I do not in any way consent to the feeling of expulsion which moves me, on the other hand, to separate myself from God, to the great surprise of those who watch me. I am at the same time filled with happiness and overwhelmed with a sorrow which is expressed in complaints and groans, according to the caprice of the devil.

I feel in myself the state of condemnation and I fear it.

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250 Cf. St. Thomas, *In II Sent.*, dist. 8, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1.

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*Period of crisis*
This strange soul which appears to be mine is transfixed with despair as with so many arrows, while the other soul, filled with confidence, disdains these impressions and curses with all its liberty him who causes them. I realize that the cries that come forth from my mouth proceed equally from these two souls, and it is impossible for me to say whether it is happiness or fury that causes them. The trembling which invades me when the Eucharist approaches me seems to come from the horror which its proximity arouses in me and from a respect filled with tenderness, although I cannot say which of these two sentiments predominates. If, at the instigation of one of those two souls, I wish to make the sign of the cross over my mouth, the other soul forcefully restrains my arm and makes me take the fingers between my teeth and bite it in a kind of fury. During these seizures my consolation is prayer, and I have recourse to it while my body rolls around on the floor and the ministers of the Church speak to me as to a devil and pronounce curses over me.

I cannot tell you how happy I feel at being a devil of this kind, not because of any rebellion against God, but because of the punishment which reveals to me the state to which sin has reduced me. And while I apply to myself the maladies which are pronounced, my soul can lose itself in its nothingness. When the other possessed person sees me in this state, they must see how they triumph and can say, "Doctor, heal thyself; now ascend to the pulpit and be the savior of the world." My state is such that there remain very few actions in which I have been constrained to stop suddenly; at table I cannot be the food to myself. If I go to confession, I forget my sins; and I know that the devil is within me as in his house, coming and going as it pleases him. If I wake up, there he is waiting for me; if I pray, he distracts my thoughts as he wishes. When I sleep, and he takes glory through the mouths of other possessed persons in the fact that he is my master, which I cannot actually deny.

The Struggle Against the Devil

Lest we expose ourselves to the derision of the incredulous, it is necessary to be extremely cautious and prudent in making any pronouncements concerning the authenticity of a diabolical possession. There are countless nervous disorders which present external symptoms that are very similar to those of possession, and there are also some poor unbalanced souls or perverse spirits that have a remarkable facility for simulating the horrors of possession, to such an extent that they could deceive even the most circumspect observer. Fortunately, the Church has given us wise rules for discerning fraud and for making judgments that are certain. The first thing to be recognized is that authentic cases of possession are very rare, and it is much better and less inconvenient in practice to make a mistake on the side of incredulity than to be too anxious to admit diabolical possession, which could cause a great deal of ridicule. The extreme agitation of the victim, the blasphemies which he utter, the horror which he manifests for holy things—none of these are of themselves sufficient proof. These symptoms give nothing more than a conjecture of the possibility of diabolical possession, but they are never infallible signs because they could proceed from malice or from some natural cause.

In the chapter which deals with exorcism, the Roman Ritual, after recommending prudence and discretion before making a judgment, indicates certain signs which allow for a diagnosis to ascertain the authenticity of diabolical possession: to speak in a strange and unknown language, or to understand perfectly one who speaks in an unknown language; or to receive hidden or distant things; or manifest strength which is beyond one's age and condition. There are other similar symptoms, and the more numerous they are the greater proof they offer of a true diabolical possession. We shall explain a few of these signs in detail.

As regards the speaking or understanding of unknown languages, one must be cautious in evaluating this symptom. Experimental psychology has recorded surprising instances of pathological persons who suddenly began to speak in a language of which they had been completely ignorant but which they had once learned and forgotten at some time in their life, or which they had heard spoken by those who knew the language.

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Ordinarily, possession occurs only in sinners and precisely as a punishment for sin. There are exceptions, however, as in the case of Father Surin and Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified (an Arabian Carmelite who died in the odor of sanctity at Bethlehem in 1878 and whose cause for beatification has been inaugurated). In these cases the diabolical possession was used by God as a means of purification.

Possession is always regulated by divine permission. If the evil spirits could possess human beings at their own good pleasure, the whole human race would be their victims. But God constrains the devils, and they can exert their violence only in the measure and on the occasions which God permits. It is difficult in practice to specify the precise point of departure and the final purpose of a determined case of possession; in many instances it is a secret which God reserves to himself. Nevertheless, we can point out certain principal causes which are verified in cases of diabolical possession:

1) However strange it may seem, there have been instances in which possession occurred at the request of the victim. Sulpicius Severus recounts that a holy man who possessed a marvelous power over the devils was once tempted by vainglory, as a result of which he asked God to deliver him to the power of the devil and let him experience what had been suffered by the victims that he had cured. Immediately the devil took possession of him and caused him to suffer all the violence of diabolical possession for a period of five months. At the end of this time the man was liberated, not only from the power of the devil, but from every feeling of vanity.

On other occasions the petition was made with good intentions, especially by pious women under the pretext of suffering for Christ. This petition is most imprudent, of course, nor does it avail to cite the example of some of the saints, who are more to be admired than imitated, for it presupposes a special inspiration from God it would be temerarious to presume.

At other times the petition has been directed to the devil himself, in order to establish a kind of pact or agreement with him in exchange for some temporal advantage. The unfortunate ones who dare to do this voluntarily give themselves to the devil, and as a just punishment from God it will be most difficult to liberate them. Such persons place themselves in great danger of eternal damnation.

2) The most frequent cause of possession is punishment for sin. God does not always permit so great an evil except as a punishment and as a means to inspire a great hatred of sin. The punishment of diabolical possession seems to have a special efficacy in regard to certain sins.

Thyrey, who is a specialist in this matter, points out the following sins:

12St. Thomas, In II Sent., dist. 8, q. 1, a. 5, ad 5.

as especially deserving of punishment by diabolical possession: infidelity and apostasy, the abuse of the Blessed Sacrament, blasphemy, pride, excesses of lust, envy and avarice, persecution of the servants of God, impurity of children toward their parents, violent anger, contempt of God and holy things, curses and pacts whereby one gives oneself to the devil. In general, horrible crimes predispose to this terrifying slavery in which the body of a man becomes the dwelling place of the devil. History offers examples of this type of punishment which gives sinners a foretaste of hell.

3) Although it is not very frequent, there have been cases in the lives of the saints in which diabolical possession was permitted by God for the purification of a holy soul. The most notable case is that of Father Saurin. When God abandons the body of one of his servants to the cruelty of the devil, it is to sanctify the soul which loves God and wishes to serve him with all its power. This terrifying trial has a marvelous efficacy for inspiring a horror of the devil, a fear of God's judgment, humility and the spirit of prayer. God sustains these faithful servants with his grace when they find themselves subjected to such violent attacks from the devil. This possession is also useful for one's neighbor. The sight of a creature who suffers the most atrocious attacks enables one to understand, on the one hand, the hatred and fury of the devil against man and, on the other hand, the merciful protection of God, as is evident in the case of Job.

Another lesson no less important can be learned from diabolical possession. The horrible fury of the devil in his attacks upon the bodies of those possessed is a prelude to condemnation and serves to remind us how worthy of compassion are the souls enslaved by sin and thereby placed in the vestibule of hell. As St. Augustine remarks, carnal men are more fearful of present evils than of future evils, and for that reason God wounds them at the present time in order to make them understand what will be the terrible punishments in eternity. Finally, possession serves to emphasize the divinity of Christ, the power of the Church and the merits of the saints. The devils tremble at the name of Jesus, at the exorcisms of his priests, and at the invocation of the great servants of God.

REMEDIES

Whatever will weaken the power of the devil over a person can be utilized as a general and remote remedy against diabolical possession. But more proximately and specifically the Roman Ritual specifies certain principal remedies which we can summarize as follows:

Sacramental confession. Since the usual purpose of diabolical possession is punishment for sin, it is necessary above all to remove the cause of possession by a humble and sincere confession. It will have a special efficacy if it is a
general confession of one's whole life, because of the humiliation and renewal of soul which it presupposes.

Holy Communion. The Roman Ritual recommends frequent Communion under the direction and advice of a priest. One can readily see that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist will have a special efficacy for liberating the unfortunate victims from their slavery. Holy Communion, however, should not be given to a possessed person except in moments of calm, and one must also take great care to avoid any danger of irreverence or profanation, as the Ritual prescribes.

Fasting and prayer. A certain type of devil cannot be cast out except through fasting and prayer (Matt. 17:20). Humble and persevering prayer, accompanied by fasting and mortification, obtains from heaven the grace of a cure. This particular remedy should never be omitted, even when all the others are used.

The sacramentals. Objects blessed by the prayers of the Church have a special power against the devil. Holy water has particular efficacy, as has been verified on countless occasions. St. Teresa was most faithful in the use of holy water because she had witnessed its extraordinary power against the attack of the devil.

The cross. The Ritual prescribes that the exorcist should have a crucifix in his hand or before his eyes. It has been verified many times that the devil will flee merely at the sight of a crucifix. The sign of the cross has always been used by Christians as a safeguard against the devil. And the Church, who uses the sign of the cross for most of the blessings which she confers, makes special use of it in the rite of exorcism. It frequently happened in the lives of the saints that they cured possessed persons simply by tracing over them the sign of the cross.

Relics of the saints. The Roman Ritual also recommends the use of relics in the rite of exorcism. Contact with these holy relics is like heaping coals of fire upon the demons. The most precious and venerated of all relics, and those which inspire the greatest horror in the demons, are the particles of the true Cross, because they remind the demons of the definitive victory which Christ won over them on Calvary.

The holy names of Jesus and Mary. The name of Jesus has a sovereign power to put the devil to flight. He himself promised in the gospel: "In my name they shall cast out devils" (Mark 16:17). The apostles used the Holy Name in this respect: "I order thee in the name of Jesus Christ to go out of her." And it went out that very moment" (Acts 16:18). The saints were accustomed to use their power over the devil by invoking the Holy Name and making the sign of the cross.


15Cf. The Life, Chap. 31; see also the formula for the blessing of water as given in the Ritual.
The name of Mary is also terrifying to the devils. The examples of its salutary efficacy are innumerable and fully justify the practice of Christian piety which sees in the invocation of the name of Mary a powerful remedy against the attacks of the devil.

In addition to the means which we have described, and which any Christian can use as remedies against the power of the devil, the Church has also instituted other official means whose use is reserved to her ministers. These are the various exorcisms which we shall briefly describe.

In virtue of the power over the devil which the Church received from Christ, she instituted the order of exorcist, which is the third of the four minor orders. At the moment of conferring this order, the bishop hands the ordinand the book of exorcisms, saying these words: Accipite et commendate memoriam et habete potestatem imponendi manum super energumenos sive baptizatus sive catechumenos. From that moment, the ordinand has the power of casting out devils. However, since the use of this power presupposes much knowledge, virtue and discretion, the Church does not permit that it be used publicly and solemnly except by priests expressly designated by the bishop. In private, any priest may use the rite of exorcism, but in this case the exorcism is not a sacramental properly speaking but simply a private prayer, and its efficacy is therefore much less.

Another possibility is the use of adjuration, which can be used in private even by the laity under the proper conditions. It has for its purpose to cast out the devil by invoking the name of God. It should be noted, however, that this adjuration is never to be used in a tone of supplication to the devil, which would presuppose a certain benevolence or submission to him, but it should be given in a tone of authority which presupposes a disdain and contempt for the devil.13

The Roman Ritual prescribes the procedure to be followed in solemn exorcism and gives prudent advice to the exorcist. But since this material is not of interest for the general public we shall not treat of it in detail. It is sufficient to remark that it is especially necessary to verify with certainty the reality of diabolical possession and then, once verified, to obtain the express permission of the bishop for the exorcism. In addition, the exorcist should prepare himself carefully by means of sacramental confession, fasting and prayer, and then perform the rite in a church or chapel (and only in exceptional circumstances in a private home), in the company of serious and pious witnesses (but only a few), and with sufficient assistants who will be able to control the patient in moments of crisis. The interrogations should be made with authority, but they should be few in number, as is indicated in the Roman Ritual. The witnesses will observe silence and remain in prayer but should never interrogate the devil. The sessions should be repeated as often as is necessary until the devil is cast out. Once this has taken place and the liberation of the patient is verified, the exorcist should petition God to command the devil never again to enter the body which he has just left. He should give thanks to God and exhort the liberated patient to bless God and carefully to avoid sin lest he fall again under the domination of the devil.18

13Cf. Codex Juris Canonicorum, can. 1151-3.
18Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 90, a. 2.
4: THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE WORLD AND THE FLESH

As it came from the hands of God, the world and all things in it were good. So we read in Genesis that at each new production of creatures in the six phases of creation, God looked upon what he had made and saw that it was good. But with the fall of our first parents and the tragedy of original sin, not only was the human race wounded in the sinful act of Adam and Eve, but the created universe has been marked with evil and thrown into disorder. As man’s lower faculties and powers rebelled against the rule of reason enlightened by faith, so also the universe and all things in it, meant originally by God to be perfectly subject to man, are now difficult to control and at times are enemies of man and obstacles to his temporal and eternal welfare.

Nevertheless, it would not be exact to brand all created things as evil. In themselves they are good but can be used by man as instruments of spiritual destruction, depending on the use man makes of them or the great power for evil which is latent in them.

THE WORLD AS MAN’S ENEMY

The world as such is no obstacle to salvation and sanctity. Many Christians who were in the world and very much a part of the world have become great saints. The world can be an occasion for goodness or for evil, and therefore the only sense in which the world becomes the enemy of the Christian is when he becomes so attached to it that it prevents him from the perfect and total love of God. Therefore, for the person who is excessively attached to created things or for the individual who is too weak to resist the allures of creatures, the world becomes a formidable enemy of holiness.

When we speak of the world as an enemy of the Christian and an obstacle to his sanctification, we are referring not so much to the world itself as to the worldly or mundane spirit manifested by those who live in complete neglect of God and excessive attachment to created things. Thus it may happen that entire cities or nations are infected with a mundane spirit, living only for the pleasures and satisfactions which can be drawn from creature things. It is this milieu or environment which presents a great obstacle to the Christian who is earnest about making progress in holiness through detachment and the positive practice of virtue.

The worldly spirit is generally manifested in four principal ways. The first and most deceptive is that of the false maxims which are directly opposed to the precepts of Christ. The world exalts pleasure, comfort, riches, fame, violence and might. It advises its followers to enjoy life while they can, to make the most of what the world has to offer, to find security and the maximum bodily comfort, to forget about tomorrow and give not a thought to a life hereafter. So far has this perversion of true values been carried that a common thief is considered to be efficient and adept in business, an agnostic or atheist is a man who thinks for himself, a person who rejects all authority and objective morality is one who values his personal freedom, and a woman of loose morals is considered sophisticated and mature.

The second manifestation of the mundane spirit is found in the ridicule and persecution of those who strive to live honestly and decently. The sensible person not only declares himself free of all moral restrictions and lives as he pleases, but he makes a mockery of any authority or law that would guide people along the path of self-control and obedience. Not wanting to observe the law himself, he cultivates a special hatred for those who honestly strive to lead good lives.

The third manifestation of a worldly spirit is found in the pleasures and diversions of those who observe no control in regard to their lower appetites. The excesses in the use of sex, drugs, alcoholic drinks and food are accepted as being in good taste socially. The theater, magazine and other media of entertainment know no restriction except the strong arm of the law or the stunted indignation of the public. The abnormal becomes normal in the lives of these persons.

The fourth mark of a mundane spirit is the scandal and bad example which confront the earnest Christian at every turn. And it is not a question merely of malicious and irreverent persons who give scandal by their evil lives, but what is even worse, scandal is sometimes given by those who, because of their Christian belief or state in life, should be examples of virtue. With good reason did St. John complain that “the whole world is seated in wickedness” (I John 5:19). And Jesus himself warned: “Woe to the man through whom scandal does come!” (Matt. 18:7).
The most efficacious remedy against the pernicious influence of the world and worldly persons is to flee, but since the majority of Christians must live in the world and still pursue Christian perfection, it is necessary that they strive to acquire the mind and spirit of Christ, who also lived in the world but was opposed to it spiritually. Of the various remedies for avoiding contamination by the world, we can emphasize the following:

1) Avoid dangerous occasions. "He who loves danger will perish in it." The world is filled with occasions of great danger to the spiritual life and to salvation. Whether it be a question of worldly possessions, mundane pleasures or creature attachments, the Christian must at any cost keep himself from all possible temptation. The occasions that are sinful for one may not be so for another, and for that reason it is difficult to make any universal laws in this matter. Nevertheless, there are some occasions which are so poisonous that they would be harmful to any Christian. As for the rest, each one must learn by experience where his weaknesses lie and then take the necessary steps by way of self-denial and self-control. And when in doubt, the honest Christian will base his practical judgment on whether or not the occasion in question would be dangerous for the average good Christian. If so, he also should avoid it. Still another rule of thumb is to ask oneself: "What would Jesus do?" It is likewise helpful to remember the admonition of St. Paul, to the effect that not all things that are lawful are prudent. In other words, there are times when the Christian will find it necessary to avoid occasions which in themselves are not evil or especially dangerous.

2) To verify one's faith. St. John says: "This is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith" (1 John 5:4). Faith is not only an intellectual assent to certain dogmas and mysteries; when it is perfected it gives us an attitude of mind or a way of judging things in a divine manner. It enables us to see things through the eyes of God, so to speak. A strong faith will enable the Christian to keep God in all things and also to walk through great dangers unharmed, because he is able to rise above those things that are temptations for others. A strong faith will also enable the Christian to withstand the taunts and ridicule of worldly persons. In many works of art the martyred saint is surrounded by persecutors who wear a cynical smile or leer on their faces. But the saint remains steadfast and tranquil amidst all manner of attack and suffering, because the eyes of his soul, through the light of faith, can peer into eternity and be focused on the divine.

3) Meditation on the vanity of the world. The world passes quickly, and life passes even more quickly. There is nothing stable and permanent in the world's judgments or friendships; there is nothing completely satisfying in its delights. Those who are applauded today are criticized tomorrow; the evil prosper, for they have their reward in this world. But the Christian, who realizes that he has not here a lasting city but is a traveler to the eternal fatherland, knows that only God is changeless and only his justice and truth will remain forever. For that reason, only he who does the will of God "abides forever" (J John 2:17).

4) Disregard for human respect. To be concerned about "what they will say" is one of the attitudes which is most unworthy of a Christian. Jesus said explicitly that he would deny before his heavenly Father anyone who denies him before men (Matt. 10:33). It is therefore necessary for the Christian to take a firm stand in this matter and to follow the injunction of Christ to the letter: "He who is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30). And St. Paul warns that he is not a disciple of Christ who would be concerned about pleasing men (Gal. 1:10). One who desires to reach sanctity must be absolutely indifferent to what the world may think or say. His only concern must be to do the will of God, cost what it may. And it is best to make this decision from the very first, so that all may know at the outset where one stands. We have been warned by Christ that the world will hate and persecute us (John 15:18-20), but if the world sees that we stand firm in our decision to follow Christ and his laws, it will ultimately leave us in peace and consider the battle lost. The best way to conquer the world is not to yield a single pace, but to take an unwavering stand in renouncing its false maxims and its vanities.

THE INSATIABLE DESIRE FOR PLEASURE

The world and the devil are our principal external enemies, but we bear within ourselves an internal enemy which is a thousand times more terrible: our own flesh. The world can be conquered with relative ease by disdaining its pomps and vanities; the devil cannot withstand the supernatural power of a little holy water; but our flesh has declared war against us without ceasing, and it is most difficult to withstand its terrible attacks.

Our flesh wages war against us in two distinct manners, and thus becomes the greatest enemy of our soul: by its instinctive horror of suffering and by its insatiable desire for pleasure. The first is perhaps the greatest of all obstacles to one's own sanctification, which necessarily presumes the perfect renunciation of self and heroic abnegation; the second can compromise our
eternal salvation. It is therefore most urgent to point out the manner in which to counteract and nullify those two dangerous tendencies.

We shall begin with the latter, which is of more necessary and universal application, since it is the proper and characteristic tendency of our sensuality, while the horror of suffering is nothing more than a logical consequence and the negative aspect of this desire. Victory over the desire for pleasure is necessary for all Christians in general, not only for those who are striving for sanctification. We flee from pain because we love pleasure, and the tendency to pleasure is what is known as concupiscence.

Following Aristotle, St. Thomas defines concupiscence as the appetite for pleasure. It resides properly in the sensitive appetite, but the soul also shares in it because the intimate union between soul and body causes a sensible good to be likewise a good of the whole composite.\(^2\)

Pleasure, even sensible bodily pleasure, is not evil of itself. As the author of nature, God has placed pleasure in the exercise of certain natural operations, and especially those which pertain to the conservation of the individual and of the species. He does this in order to facilitate the use of those faculties and to stimulate man to their exercise. In the beginning the lower appetites were completely under the control of reason, but as a result of original sin, concupiscence, or the appetite for pleasure, often rises against the demands of reason and impels us to sin. No one has expressed with greater clarity and emphasis than has St. Paul this combat between the flesh and the spirit, this bloody and unceasing battle which all of us have to wage against ourselves in order to subject our bodily instincts to the control of reason illumined by faith.\(^3\)

A difficulty arises in attempting to designate the boundary which separates honest pleasure from disordered and forbidden pleasure, and how to keep oneself always within the boundaries of the former. The difficulty becomes evident if one observes that the use of lawful pleasures frequently serves as an occasion or incentive to disordered and unlawful pleasures. For this reason, Christian mortification has always advocated that one deprive himself of many lawful things and of many honest pleasures, not to put sin where there is no sin, but as a defense of good, which is endangered if one imprudently approaches the borderline of evil.

The satisfactions granted to one sense awaken the appetite of other senses. The reason for this is that sense pleasure, which is localized in the external senses, is diffused throughout the entire body, and when one or another of these senses is stimulated, the whole organism vibrates. This is particularly true of the sense of touch, which is present in every part of the body and, since original sin, tends to animal pleasure with a violence and intensity which are much greater than in the other senses.

In spite of the variety of bodily instincts, the principal struggle revolves around those two tendencies which are necessary for the conservation of the individual and of the species: nutrition and generation. The other sensitive inclinations are almost always placed at the service of these two, in which concupiscence seeks only pleasure without any concern for the providential and moral purpose, the conservation of the individual and the species. Hence if reason does not intervene to keep these instinctive appetites within just limits, they can easily lead to the ruin of the individual and the species.

The following passage, taken from Bossuet, points out the two excesses which are the shame of man:

The pleasure for food is captivating; instead of eating to live, they seem, as was said by an ancient writer and later by St. Augustine, to live only to eat. Even those who know how to regulate their desires and take food out of the necessity of nature, deceived by pleasure and seduced by gifts, go beyond the just limit they allow themselves to be conquered insensibly by their appetite, and they do not believe that they have ever satisfied their needs completely until the food and drink have satisfied their taste. As St. Augustine says, concupiscence never knows where the need ends. There is here a sickness which the contiguity of the flesh produces in the spirit; a sickness against which one should never cease to struggle nor to seek a remedy by means of sobriety and temperance, fasting and abstinence.

And who would dare to think of those other excesses which are presented in a much more pernicious manner for that other pleasure of the senses? Who would dare to speak or think of them, since one cannot speak without shame nor think of them without danger, even to abominate them and to curse them? Who would dare to speak of that deep and shameful wound of nature, Christian mortification has always advocated that one deprive himself of many lawful things and of many honest pleasures, not to put sin where there is no sin, but as a defense of good, which is endangered if one imprudently approaches the borderline of evil.

These two types of shameful pleasures are intimately related. The pleasures of the table prepare for those of the flesh; gluttony is the threshold of lust. Sacred Scripture associates them frequently, and experience confirms daily the truth of the words of Scripture.\(^4\) The root of this mutual and pernicious influence can be found in the physiological structure of man.

\(^2\) *Summa, I-II, q. 3, a. 1.*

\(^3\) *Cf. Rom. 7:14-25; II Cor. 12:7-10.*

\(^4\) *Bossuet, Traité de la concupiscence.*

\(^5\) *Prov. 20:1; Sirach 19:2; Eph. 5:18.*
It is incredible how much harm an unmortified appetite can cause in us, not only as regards perfection, which is absolutely impossible without mortification, but even as regards our eternal salvation. Such a subjection to the very slime of the earth is diametrically opposed to Christian perfection. The sensual man not only is not united with God, but he loses the taste for divine things, as St. Paul teaches, for his life is in the pleasures of the body. A slave of his bodily members, he has abandoned the heights of the spirit to bury himself in the vilenesse of the flesh. If he preserves the light of the intellect and the use of reason, it is only for human things, and to satisfy his appetites and senses in a manner that is more and more refined and degenerate. The world of faith is closed to him, and he sees in it nothing but contradiction and impossibilities. There are many degrees in this blindness of the spirit, as there are in carnal slavery, but in almost every instance there is a mutual and inevitable proportion.

All that we have said regarding the evil effects of sensuality in general is particularly true of the degradation caused by impurity. It subverts the senses completely and takes the eyes of the soul away from heaven and the judgment of God. As Bourdaloue says:

To wish that a carnal man have reasonable thoughts is to wish that the flesh become spiritual; and that is why the Apostle concludes that a man possessed by his passion, however intelligent he may appear in other matters, does not know and does not understand the things of God, because he has nothing to do with those things which constitute his unhappiness. And so it is that men who are slaves of sensuality, when passion impels them, close their eyes to all human and divine considerations. Especially do they lose three fundamental types of knowledge: knowledge of themselves, knowledge of their sins, and knowledge of God.

The struggle against one’s sensuality ends only with life itself; but it is especially violent at the beginning of the spiritual life, during the purgative way, and particularly if the individual has turned to God after a life of sin. Reason itself suggests certain remedies which are useful, but the most efficacious remedies proceed from faith and are strictly supernatural. The following are the principal remedies, both natural and supernatural:

1) To mortify oneself in things that are lawful. The first precaution which must be taken in the struggle against one’s sensuality is that of never going to the limit in regard to satisfactions that are permitted. To say that we shall stop in time and that with the use of reason we shall recognize the necessary limitation before sin begins is both foolhardy and dangerous. Of all those who attempt this, scarcely one succeeds in preserving self-control. With good reason does Clement of Alexandria say that those who do everything that is permitted will very readily do that which is not permitted.

On the other hand, what relationship can there be between perfection and a conduct that disregards advice and heeds nothing except strict commands? It is incredible how far one can go in the mortification of one’s tastes and desires without injuring, but rather augmenting, the health of the body and the benefit of the soul. If we wish to keep ourselves far from sin and walk toward perfection in giant strides, it is necessary to restrict and reject a great number of satisfactions which would delight our eyes, our ears, our taste, our touch and our sense of smell. We shall return to this subject when we speak of the purification of the external senses.

2) To cultivate a love of suffering and the Cross. There is nothing which serves as a better safeguard against the attacks of sensuality than to suffer with calmness and equanimity of soul the pangs of sorrow and pain, and even to impose them upon oneself voluntarily. Such has always been the practice of the saints, who sometimes reached unbelievable extremes in the practice of Christian mortification. The reward for such privations is truly remarkable even here on earth. The moment arrives in which they can no longer suffer because they find their pleasure in suffering.

3) To combat sloth. The seed of sensuality finds fertile ground in a soul that is unoccupied and slothful. Sloth is the mother of all vices, as we read in Scripture, but in a special way it is fertile ground for sins of the flesh. He who wishes to preserve himself from the attacks of concupiscence must endeavor to keep himself occupied at all times in some useful and beneficial exercise. And of all occupations, those of an intellectual type are particularly apt for controlling sensuality. The reason is that the application of one faculty weakens the exercise of the other faculties, in addition to the fact that intellectual operations withdraw from the sensual passions the object on which they feed. It is a fact verified by daily experience that the sins of the flesh weaken the spirit, while temperance and chastity admirably predispose one for intellectual work.

4) To flee dangerous occasions. This is the most important and decisive of all the purely natural remedies. Even the most energetic will is disposed to succumb when subjected imprudently to an occasion of sin. St. Augustine wrote a dramatic page concerning this matter when writing to his friend, Alippius. Sincere resolutions and unswerving determination are

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81 Cor. 2:14.
83 Bourdaloue, Serm. sur l'Impureté.
of no avail; everything is lost in the face of the terrifying fascination of an occasion of sin. The senses are aroused, the imagination is excited, passion is strongly stirred, self-control is lost, and the fatal fall takes place. It is especially necessary that one exercise scrupulous vigilance over the sense of vision, according to the axiom: “What the eyes do not see, the heart does not desire.” Some temptations are easily kept under control and are directed toward the good as long as the eyes do not see anything that would arouse concupiscence, but they readily fall before a suggestive image. Persons of this type must flee as from a pestilence anything that could make an impression on the sense of sight. Otherwise, a fall is almost certain to follow.

5) **To consider the dignity of the Christian.** Because of his rational nature man is a thousand times superior to the animal. Will he, then, let himself be carried away by the shameful sensuality which he shares in common with beasts, and disdain his human dignity? And a thousand times superior to man’s human dignity in the natural order is his Christian dignity, which is strictly supernatural. Through grace man is elevated to a certain manner to the level of divinity. He has received a mysterious but real participation in the very nature of God, which makes him truly God’s son by a kind of intrinsic adoption, not at all like human adoption, which is purely extrinsic. In the divine adoption through grace it can be said that the very blood of God courses through the veins of the Christian. As long as he remains in this state he is an heir of heaven by proper right (Rom. 8:17); his dignity is such that it surpasses immeasurably all creation, including the nature of the angels.12 For that reason, St. Thomas states that the supernatural good of an individual soul, proceeding as it does from sanctifying grace, is of more value than the natural good of the entire universe.13

Is it possible, then, that a Christian who seriously believes these things would let himself be governed by his vile passions, that he would in one act cast away his divine grandeur and reduce himself to the level of a brute animal? St. Paul finds no other argument of greater force than this one to lead the early Christians from the disorders of the flesh: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? . . . Or do you not know that your members are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought at a great price. Glorify God and bear him in your body” (1 Cor. 6:15-20).12

6) **To consider the punishment of sin.** If the nobility of these sublime motives is too exquisite to make an impression on intellects that have been dulled by sin, it will be useful to offer other lesser motives. The first of these is the consideration of the punishment which awaits gluttony and lust in purgatory or in hell. Sacred Scripture offers abundant examples. The psalmist asks God to make the fear of his judgment penetrate into his flesh so that he will remain faithful to God’s commandments (Ps. 118:120). St. Paul chastised his body and reduced it to subjection lest, having preached to others, he himself should be rejected (1 Cor. 9:27). Against the passionate impulse of the flesh in pursuit of pleasure, there is nothing more opportune than the remembrance of the terrible torments which await the flesh in hell or the poor soul in a prolonged purgatory.

Even if a person rise from his sin and obtain forgiveness (and this for many is very uncertain), there still remains the debt of temporal punishment which must be paid either in this life with penance, or in the next life with the terrible pain of purgatory. In either case, the suffering which will have to be endured far exceeds the pleasure which the individual enjoyed in sinning. From this point of view alone the sinner should realize that it is a very poor risk.

7) **The remembrance of the passion of Christ.** Motives which are inspired by love and gratitude are much more noble than those which originate in fear. Jesus was nailed to the cross because of our sins. The sinner crucifies Christ anew and revives the cause of his death. The most basic gratitude toward the Redeemer ought to keep a man from sin. And even if it were true that our sin had nothing to do with the pain which Jesus suffered on Calvary, the consideration of the Savior crowned with thorns ought to make us ashamed of seeking our bodily delight, as St. Bernard reminds us.13 St. Paul insists on this argument, and makes mortification of the flesh the decisive proof of truly belonging to Christ.14 And St. Peter reminds us that, since Christ suffered in the flesh, it is necessary to break with sin.15

8) **Humble and persevering prayer.** Without the grace of God it is impossible to triumph completely over our concupiscence. This grace is in-fallibly promised to prayer that fulfills the required conditions, as is evident from the teaching of Sacred Scripture. The author of the Book of Wisdom acknowledges that he cannot remain continent without the help

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12This refers to the angelic nature as such, and not as endowed with sanctifying grace.

13Summa, I-II, q. 113, a. 9, ad 2.

14Cf. Fifth Sermon on the Feast of All Saints, n. 9 (P. L. 183: 480).


of God, which he implores with humility. Sirach begs to be preserved from concupiscence and lustful desires. St. Paul asks three times of the Lord that he free him from the thorn of the flesh, and the Lord answers that his grace is sufficient and that in his weakness he will arrive at the culmination of strength. This is equivalent to saying that he should have recourse to prayer, the ordinary source of grace.

9) Devotion to Mary. Mary immaculate, the Queen of angels, is also the mediatrix of all graces and the refuge of sinners. A tender devotion to our heavenly Mother and an ardent appeal to her in the hour of danger is a guarantee of victory.

10) Reception of the sacraments. This is the most certain and efficacious remedy against all types of sin, but especially against the attacks of concupiscence. The sacrament of penance not only erases our past sins, but it gives us strength to protect ourselves from future sins. The soul that is enslaved by the vices of the flesh should approach this fountain of purification and should regulate the frequency of confession according to the strength it needs in order not to fall again. The practice of waiting until one has fallen and then to approach confession simply to rise again is a mistaken one, because in this way the individual will never completely uproot the vicious habit. Rather, the habit will become more deeply rooted by the repetition of acts.

It is necessary to anticipate possible falls and to approach the sacrament of penance when one notes that he is weakening and is losing strength. In this way he can regain his strength and thereby avoid the fall which threatened him. If it is necessary at the beginning to go to confession two or three times a week in order to achieve this result, one should not hesitate to do so. Even the greatest diligence is little enough when it is a question of freeing oneself from this type of slavery and of beginning to breathe the pure air of the glorious liberty of the sons of God. It will also prove helpful to have a definite confessor to whom one can reveal his soul completely and from whom he can receive the necessary advice. If one must give an account of his soul to a particular confessor, that very fact will bind the wings of his imagination and will act as a brake on the impetus of the passions.

Holy Communion has a supreme efficacy against the concupiscence of the flesh. In it we receive the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. He diffuses over us the graces of fortitude and resistance against the power of the passions. His most pure flesh is placed in contact with our sinful flesh to spiritualize and divinize it. It is not in vain that the Eucharist has been called the Bread of Angels. The young especially need this divine remedy to counteract the ardor of their passions. Experience in the direction of souls shows clearly that there is nothing so powerful and efficacious for keeping a young person in temperance and chastity as frequent or daily Communion.

THE HORROR OF SUFFERING

This is the second aspect of the struggle against our own flesh. The insatiable desire for pleasure is a great obstacle to our eternal salvation; the horror of suffering, while not opposed so directly to salvation, is a great impediment to sanctification. The majority of souls who halt along the way to perfection do so because they have not dominated their horror for suffering. Only he who has determined to combat this tendency with an unwavering energy will arrive at the height of sanctity. This, says St. Teresa, is an absolutely indispensable condition for reaching perfection. He who does not have the spirit for this can renounce sanctity, because he will never reach it.

St. John of the Cross gives to the love of suffering an exceptional importance in the process of one's sanctification. Above all, it is necessary to have a clear idea about the necessity of suffering, both to make amends for sin and for the sanctification of the soul. We shall examine these two aspects separately.

It is a simple matter to prove this aspect of suffering. The balance of divine justice, which has been disturbed by original sin and was re-established by the blood of Christ, whose merits are applied in baptism, was again disturbed by actual sins. Actual or personal sin places the weight of pleasure on the scale of justice, for every sin carries with it some pleasure or satisfaction, and this is what the sinner seeks when he commits sin. It is therefore necessary from the very nature of things that the equilibrium of divine justice be re-established by the weight of sorrow which is placed on the other scale.

The principal reparation was effected by Christ's sorrowful passion and death, whose infinite value is applied to us by the sacraments; but the Christian, as a member of Christ, cannot separate himself from the divine Head. Something is lacking to the passion of Christ, as St. Paul dared to say (Col. 1:24), which must be contributed by the members of Christ co-operating in their own redemption. Sacramental absolution does not free us from all the guilt of punishment which is due to our sins, except in the case of a most intense
sorrow, which is rarely given, and therefore it is necessary to pay back either in this life or in the next unto the last farthing (Matt. 5:26).

Sanctification consists in the ever more intense incorporation with Christ. It is truly a "Christification," for which every Christian ought to strive under pain of not reaching sanctity. When all is said and done, the saint is a faithful reproduction of Christ; he is another Christ.

Now the way to unite ourselves with Christ and to be transformed in him was traced for us by Christ himself. "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). There is no other way; it is necessary to embrace suffering, to take up one's cross, and to follow Christ to the height of Calvary; not to see there how they crucified him, but to be crucified at his side. There is no sanctification without crucifixion with Christ. As a matter of fact, all the saints bled. And St. John of the Cross was so convinced of this that he wrote the following strong words: "If at any time, my brother, anyone should persuade you, be he a prelate or not, of a doctrine that is wider and more pleasant, do not believe him, and do not accept the doctrine even if he were to confirm it with miracles, but rather penance and more penance and detachment from all things. And never, if you wish to possess Christ, seek him without the cross." 29

The excellence of Christian suffering is evident from a consideration of the great benefits which it brings to the soul. The saints are perfectly aware of this, and for that reason a thirst for suffering consumes them. If well considered, sorrow and suffering ought to be more attractive to the Christian than pleasure is to the pagan. The suffering passes, but that one has suffered will never pass; it leaves its mark for all eternity. The following are the principal benefits which follow from Christian suffering:

- We have already mentioned reparation. The guilt of punishment, which remains as a sad remembrance of the soul's sin once the sin has been pardoned, has to be repaid at the cost of suffering in this life or in the next. It is an extraordinary grace of God to enable us to repay our debt in this life, where we shall suffer much less than in purgatory, and shall at the same time greatly increase our supernatural merit and our degree of glory in heaven.

- St. Paul spoke from his own experience when he wrote to the Corinthians: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. 9:27). The flesh tends to dominate the spirit. Only by means of severity and privations can one reverse the order and make the flesh serve the role of the slave and leave the soul at liberty. It is a fact proved many times in practice that the more comforts and pleasures one gives to the body, the more demanding the body becomes. St. Teresa warned her nuns of this because she was convinced of the great importance it had in the spiritual life. When one subjects the body to a schedule of suffering and severe restrictions, he succeeds in reducing its demands to the minimum. To arrive at a happy state, it is well worth the suffering to impose privation and voluntary penances upon oneself.

There is nothing that makes us understand more clearly that the earth is a desert than the pains of suffering. Through the crystal of our tears the atmosphere of this world appears dark and gloomy. The soul raises its eyes to heaven, it sighs for the eternal fatherland, and it learns to disdain the things of this world, which are not only incapable of filling its infinite aspirations for perfect happiness, but it surrounds them with thorns.

As gold is cleansed and purified in the furnace, so the soul is made more beautiful and glorious by the harsh limes of suffering. Every sin, however insignificant it may appear, is a disorder and by that very fact is a deformity and ugliness of the soul, since the beauty of the soul consists in the splendor of order. Consequently, whatever by its nature tends to destroy sin or to erase its marks in the soul must, by that very fact, beautify the soul. For this reason does suffering purify and beautify our soul.

God never ignores the tears and sighs of a heart that is afflicted with sorrow and suffering. Omnipotent and infinitely happy in himself, he cannot be overcome except by the weakness of one who suffers. He himself declares in Sacred Scripture that he does not know how to refuse those who come to him with tearful eyes. Jesus worked the stupendous miracle of raising the dead to life because he was moved by the tears of a widow who mourned the death of her only son (Luke 7:11-17), of a father at the corpse of his daughter (Matt. 9:18-26), and of two sisters who were desolate at the death of their brother (John 11:1-44). And he proclaimed those blessed who weep and mourn because they shall be comforted (Matt. 5:5).

One of the most tremendous marvels of the economy of divine grace is the intimate solidarity between all men through the Mystical Body of Christ. God accepts the suffering offered to him by a soul in grace for the salvation of another soul or for sinners in general. Bathing this suffering in the redeeming blood of Christ, the divine Head of that member who suffers, he places it in the scale of divine justice which has been disrupted by the sin of the unfortunate soul, and if the soul does not remain obstinate in its blindness, the grace of repentance and pardon will restore the equilibrium and give peace to grace of repentance and pardon will restore the equilibrium and give peace to grace of repentance and pardon will restore the equilibrium and give peace to grace of repentance and pardon will restore the equilibrium and give peace to" 21

21 Cf. The Way of Perfection, Chap. 11.
22 Ibid., Chap. 11.
23 Cf. II Par. 34:27.
negative aspect

Assimilation to Jesus and Mary

This is the supreme excellence of Christian suffering. Souls illumined by God to understand the mystery of our incorporation in Christ have always felt a veritable passion for suffering. St. Paul considers it a very special grace to be able to suffer for Christ in order to be configured with him in his sufferings and in his death. He declares that he lives crucified with Christ and that he does not wish to glory except in the Cross of Christ in which he lives crucified to the world. And considering that the majority of men do not understand this sublime mystery of suffering, but flee from it as from a pestilence, he cannot but weep with compassion for such blindness.

And at the side of Jesus, the Redeemer, stands Mary, the co-redemptrix of the human race. Souls enamored of Mary feel a particular inclination to accompany her and to imitate her in her ineffable sorrow. Before the Queen of martyrs they feel ashamed that they have ever thought of their own comfort and pleasure. They know that, if they wish to be like Mary, they must embrace the Cross and do so with a true passion.

imaging Christ

We should note the special sanctifying efficacy of suffering from this last point of view. Suffering configures us with Christ in a perfect manner; and sanctity does not consist in anything else but configuration with Christ. There is, nor can there be, any way to sanctity which ignores or gives little importance to the crucifixion of self. With good reason does St. John of the Cross counsel that one should reject any doctrine that is broad and easy, even if it be substantiated by miracles. It is simply a question of repeating what St. Paul says to the Galatians: "If we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel to you other than that which you have received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8).

This is one of the principal reasons why there are so few saints. Many souls who strive for sanctity do not wish to enter upon the way of suffering. They would like to be saints, but with a sanctity that is comfortable and easy and would exempt them from the total renunciation of self to the point of crucifixion of self. And when God tests them with some painful affliction of spirit or persecutions and calumny or any other cross which, if well carried, would lead them to the heights of sanctity, they draw back in cowardice and abandon the way of perfection. There is no other reason which explains the ruin of so many souls who seem to wish to become saints. Perhaps they have even reached the point where they asked God to send them some cross, but it is later proved very clearly that what they wanted was a cross of their own choosing and, when they did not find it, they considered that they had been deceived and gave up the road to perfection.

It is therefore necessary to decide once and for all to embrace suffering as God wishes to send it to us: sickness, persecution, calumny, humiliation, disappointment, etc.; whatever he wishes and in the manner which he wishes. The attitude of soul must be one of a perpetual fiat, a total abandonment to God without reserve, a complete submission to God's loving providence so that he may do with the soul as he wishes, both in time and in eternity. But it is not easy to reach these heights. Frequently the soul has advanced gradually from one step to another until ultimately it reaches a passionate love for the Cross.

The following are the principal degrees manifested by a soul in its progress toward a thirst for suffering:

1) Never to omit any of our duties because of the suffering they cause us. This is the initial grade or degree, and it is absolutely necessary for all for the preservation of the state of grace. One who neglects a serious obligation without any more reason than the inconvenience or slight difficulty involved commits a mortal sin and thereby loses grace.

But even in the matter of light obligation, the omission of which would not destroy our union with God through sanctifying grace, it is necessary to perform our duties in spite of our natural repugnance for them. There are countless deluded souls who neglect some duty of their state in life and nevertheless ask permission of their confessors to practice certain penances and mortifications of their own choosing. The exact fulfillment of all our duties and obligations according to our state in life is the first degree which is absolutely indispensable for the crucifixion of self.

2) Resignation to the crosses which God permits or sends to us. The fulfillment of our duties and obligations in spite of the difficulties or inconvenience which they cause constitutes a meritorious grade or degree in the practice of the love of the Cross, but it is still more perfect to accept the crosses which God sends to us directly or permits to befall us. All these contradictions and trials which constitute the pattern of our daily life have a great value for sanctification if we know how to accept

24Cf. Trochu, Life of the Curé of Ars, Chap. 15.
25Cf. Phil. 1:29.
26Cf. Phil. 3:10.
30Cf. St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, "Letter to the Friends of the Cross."
them with love and resignation as coming from the hands of God. Actually, these things are utilized by divine providence as instruments of our sanctification. God frequently uses persons around us in our daily life who, in good faith, or even motivated by less noble motives, affright us in some way and thereby offer us an opportunity of performing some act which will be of great value in our progress to perfection. St. John of the Cross speaks of this to a religious in his famous Cautions: The first caution is that you should understand that you have to consent only in order that others may polish and exercise you. Thus... it is fitting that you should think that all are in the convent to test you, as they truly are; that some have to polish you by words, others by works, others by thoughts against you; and that in all these things you must be subject to them as the statue is to the artist who sculpts it, and the painting to the painter. And if you do not observe this, you will never know how to conquer your own sensuality and sentimentality, nor will you ever know how to conduct yourself well with the religious in the convent, nor will you ever attain holy peace, nor will you ever free yourself from your many evils and defects.62

3) To practice voluntary mortification. Resignation to the cross which God sends us is a noteworthy degree of love of the Cross, but it presupposes a certain passivity on the part of the soul which receives it. More perfect yet is the soul who takes the initiative and, in spite of the repugnance which nature feels, advances in the love of suffering by voluntarily practicing Christian mortification in its various forms. It is not possible to give a universal rule for all souls in this regard. The degree and intensity of voluntary mortification will be determined in each case by the state and condition of the soul which is being sanctified. In the measure that the soul corresponds more and more with his inspiration, the Holy Ghost will be more and more demanding, but at the same time he will increase the strength of the soul so that it can accept and carry out these inspirations. It is the duty of the spiritual director to watch over the soul and never impose sacrifices which are beyond the strength of the soul. He should especially take care lest he limit the soul's desire for immolation and oblige it to be retarded, instead of letting it fly on the wings of the eagle. If he were to do this, he would contract a great responsibility, and he would not be free from the punishment of God.63 St. John of the Cross warns.64 There is no other way to reach sanctity than that traced for us by Christ along the way to Calvary.

4) To prefer suffering to pleasure. There is something still more perfect than the simple practice of voluntary mortification; it is to have such a great love of suffering that one would prefer it to pleasure. However contrary this may seem to our weak nature, the saints succeeded in reaching these heights. A moment arrives in which they felt an instinctive horror for anything that would satisfy their tastes and comfort. They were not content unless they were completely submerged in suffering. When everything went badly with them and the whole world persecuted and calumniated them, they rejoiced and gave thanks to God. If others applauded or praised them, they trembled as if God had permitted those things as a punishment for their sins. They hardly took any account of themselves at all, or of the heroism which such an attitude presupposes. They were so familiar with suffering that it seemed to them the most natural thing in the world to endure pain.

It is not impossible to reach these heights. Undoubtedly, they are the result of a general sanctification of the soul which is accustomed to live in a state of habitual heroism, but personal effort, aided by divine grace, can bring one closer and closer to this sublime ideal. St. John of the Cross has given us a marvelous rule for reaching this state. His words seem severe and are a torment to sensual ears, but they are only at this price that one can attain the treasure of sanctity:

To endeavor always to incline oneself, not to that which is easier, but to that which is more difficult; not to that which is tasteful, but to that which is more bitter; not to that which is more pleasing, but to that which is less pleasing; not to that which gives rest, but to that which demands effort; not to that which is a consolation, but to that which is a source of sorrow; not to that which is more, but to that which is less; not to the lofty and precious, but to the lowly and despisable; not to that which is to be something, but to that which is to be nothing; not to be seeking the best in temporal things, but the worst, and to desire to enter in all nakedness and eminence and poverty through Christ in whatever there is in the world.65

5) To offer oneself to God as a victim of expiation. It would seem that it is impossible to go farther in love of the Cross than to prefer sorrow to pleasure. Nevertheless, there is still another more perfect and more exquisite degree in the love of suffering: the act of offering oneself as a victim of expiation for the sins of the world. At the very outset, we must say with great insistence that this sublime act is completely above the ordinary way of grace. It would be a terrible presumption for a beginner or an imperfectly purified soul to place itself in this state. "To be called a victim is easy and it pleases self-love, but truly to be a victim demands a purity, a detachment from creatures, a heroism which is abandoned to all suffering, to all humiliation, to ineffable obscurity, that I would consider it either foolish or miraculous if one who is at the beginning of the spiritual life should attempt to do that which the divine Master did not do except by degrees."66

62 Cf. St. John of the Cross, Cautions, "First Caution against the Flesh."
63 Cf. The Living Flame of Love, Chap. 3.
64 Cf. The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. I, Chap. 13.
65 Cf. Pray, Christ in Our Neighbors, p. 50.
The theological basis of offering oneself as a victim of expiation for the salvation of souls or for any other supernatural motive such as reparation for the glory of God, liberating the souls in purgatory, attracting the divine mercy to the Church, the priesthood, one's country, or a particular soul, etc., is the supernatural solidarity established by God among the members of the Mystical Body of Christ, whether actual or potential. Presupposing that solidarity in Christ which is common to all Christians, God selects certain holy souls, and particularly those who have offered themselves knowingly for this work, so that by their merits and sacrifices they may contribute to the application of the merits of the redemption by Christ. A typical example of this can be found in St. Catherine of Siena, whose most ardent desire was to give her life for the Church. "The only cause of my death," said the saint, "is my zeal for the Church of God, which devours and consumes me. Accept, O Lord, the sacrifice of my life for the Mystical Body of thy holy Church." She was also a victim soul for particular individuals, as is evident from the salvation of her own father, the promise that none of her family would be lost, etc. Other examples of victim souls are St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Gemma Galgani and Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity.

The souls offered as victims are for Christ like a new humanity which is added to him, as Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity referred to it. In these souls he can renew the whole mystery of redemption. The Lord is wont to accept this heroic offering, and he leads these victims to a terrifying martyrdom of body and soul. Only with the help of extraordinary graces can they support for any length of time the incredible sufferings and pains they always terminate on the height of Calvary, totally transformed into Christ crucified. All of them at the height of martyrdom repeat the words which St. Thérèse pronounced on her bed of pain several hours before her death: "No, no, I do not repent of having abandoned myself to love." Such souls have a perfect knowledge of the redemptive efficacy of their martyrdom. A multitude of souls which, without this heroic offering, would have been lost for all eternity will obtain pardon from God and eternal life. The ability to contribute in this way to the application of the redemptive merits of Christ is a source of ineffable joy to these victim souls. In heaven they will form one of the most beautiful crowns of glory.

In practice, the offering of oneself as a victim for souls should never be permitted except to souls of whom the Holy Ghost asks it with a persistent and irresistible motion of grace. It would be a ridiculous presumption for a beginner or for a soul that is not yet purified. It should be noted that, rather than contributing to the sanctification of the individual (although it does add something), this particular act is ordained, rather, to the good of others. It means that the soul which would give itself in such a way for the salvation of its brethren in Christ must itself be very intimately united to him and must have traveled a great distance toward its own sanctification. It must be a soul that is well schooled in suffering and has a veritable thirst for suffering. Under these conditions the director could permit a soul to make this act of offering itself as a victim and thus, if God accepts it, be converted in its life into a faithful reproduction of the divine martyr of Calvary.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{38}History of a Soul, Chap. 1.}\]
5: ACTIVE PURIFICATIONS

In order to arrive at the intimate union with God in which sanctity consists, it is not sufficient to win a victory against sin and its principal allies, the world, the flesh and the devil; it is likewise necessary to achieve an intense and profound purification of all the faculties and powers of soul and body. It is not required, nor is it even possible, that such a purification be entirely previous to the intimate union with God. In the long road which the soul must travel to achieve sanctity, the purifying process is inseparably united with its progressive illumination and the intensity of its union with God. There is an intimate relation between them; in the measure that the soul is more and more purified, its light and love likewise increase.

NECESSITY OF PURIFICATION

The explanation is simple. When a soul desires of sanctifying itself begins the process of its spiritual life, it is already in possession of sanctifying grace, without which it could not even begin on the road to perfection. Together with grace, the soul has been enriched with the incomparable treasure of the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Trinity dwells in the soul as in a living temple, and the grace of adoption makes the soul an heir of heaven for all eternity.

But together with these grandeur and marvels, the soul is filled with imperfection and defects. Since grace does not of itself exclude anything more than mortal sin, it leaves man with all the natural and acquired imperfections which he had at the moment of his justification. The soul remains subject to every kind of temptation, evil inclination, acquired evil habits, etc., and the practice of virtue becomes difficult and arduous. The infused virtues, which the soul has received with sanctifying grace, give the possibility of performing the corresponding acts, but they do not rid the soul of its acquired evil habits nor of the natural indispositions which the soul may have in regard to the practice of virtue. These acquired habits and natural dispositions are destroyed only by the repetition of acts of the contrary virtues, thus ridding the faculty of the contrary evil habit and disposing it to work in conformity with virtue. When the supernatural habit no longer finds any resistance or obstacle to its exercise by reason of a natural contrary habit, the virtuous act will be produced with facility and delight. Until that time, it cannot be produced with facility, in spite of the supernatural habit from which it flows, because it lacks the physical disposition required in the faculty.

The reason for the resistance and rebellion of our nature against virtue must be sought in the dogma of original sin. Human nature, as it came from the creative hands of God, was perfect, a true masterpiece of divine wisdom, but original sin wounded it profoundly. St. Thomas explains this in the following words:

In original justice, reason perfectly controlled the inferior powers of the soul, and reason itself was perfected by God, to whom it was subject. The original justice was destroyed by the sin of the first man. At the same time, all the powers of the soul remained destitute, in a certain manner, in their own order, in which they were naturally ordained to virtue. And this destitution is called vulneratio naturae. Now there are four faculties of the soul which can be subjects of virtue: reason, in which prudence resides; the will, in which justice resides; the irascible appetite, the subject of fortitude; and the concupiscible appetite, where temperance reigns. Therefore, so far as reason was deprived of its order to truth, we have the wound of ignorance (vulneratio); so far as the will was deprived of its order to the good, we have malice (vulnerum malitiae); so far as the irascible appetite was deprived of its order to the arduous and difficult, it acquired weakness (vulnerum infirmitatis); and so far as the concupiscible appetite lost its order to delight moderated by reason, we acquired the wound of disorderly concupiscence (vulnerum concupiscientiae). And so these four wounds are inflicted by original sin on all human nature.

But as the inclination to the good of virtue diminishes in each one by actual sin, these wounds are also a consequence of the other sins; so far as by sin reason is dulled principally in the things it seeks to realize, the will is hardened toward the good, the difficulty in working well increases, and concupiscence is increased.

We are not speaking, therefore, of mortal wounds or a substantial corruption of nature, as was taught by the Protestant doctrine condemned by the Church, but of a diminution of the natural inclination to good which human nature had in the state of original justice, and a considerable increase of obstacles to virtue.

From this follows the necessity of a profound purification of the soul and of the sensible faculties in which evil habits and vicious inclinations are rooted. One must be completely depoiled of all these traces of sin which impede or make difficult the perfect union with God in which sanctity consists. In this process of purification God reserves to himself the better part (passive purifications); but man, with the help of grace, must make an effort to cooperate with the divine action and achieve as much as he can (active purifications).

1Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I-II, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2 and 3.
2Ibid., q. 85, a. 3.
NEGATIVE ASPECT

We have already indicated the manner in which we shall treat these last two chapters which deal with the negative aspect of sanctification. First, we shall study the active purification of the faculties, or that which man can and ought to do, with the help of grace, in order to purify himself of his imperfections. In the next chapter we shall examine the part which God plays in this purifying process through the passive purification.

PRELIMINARY IDEAS

We shall recall, first of all, some simple notions of rational psychology which are necessary for an understanding of this question.

EXTERNAL SENSES

The organs of these faculties are located in various external parts of the body and directly perceive the material characteristics of external things. Whatever the metaphysical possibility of other corporeal senses distinct from those which we actually possess, it is certain that at the present time we admit only five external senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. By reason of their point of departure, the principal external senses are sight and touch. Nothing appears so certain to us as what we have seen or touched, although illusions are possible. By reason of their necessity for physical life, the principal senses are touch and taste (therefore, they are not lacking even in the imperfect animals which lack the other senses). For the intellectual and social life, the principal senses are sight and hearing, because nothing so isolates us from society as blindness and deafness.

Sensation occurs through the immediate perception in the corresponding sense of the external qualities of those bodies which are proportioned to that sense (for example, color for the eye, odor for the sense of smell, etc.). The sensation is not received in the brain but in the corresponding end organ, such as the eyes or ears, etc. It is not something merely subjective but something real and objective, as experience demonstrates.

INTERNAL SENSES

These senses differ from the external senses by reason of the organ in which they reside and by reason of their proper objects. The internal senses are four in number, and they are distinct from one another: the common sense, the imagination, the estimative power and sensitive memory. All of these internal senses are localized in the brain, although science has not as yet agreed on the exact location in the brain.

The common sense is the faculty which perceives as our own and unites into one all the phenomena which are experienced sensibly in the organs of the external senses. For example, when a bell rings, the ear hears only the sound, the sight perceives the color and shape of the bell, and the sense of touch is able to note the vibrations. The common sense unites all of these sensations which are so disparate and apply them to the one object, namely, the bell which has sounded. It is, therefore, the common root of the external senses, as St. Thomas refers to it.

The imagination is the faculty which conserves, reproduces and composes or divides the images apprehended by the external senses. And thus it conserves the image of an object which the sensitive memory recognizes as already seen; it evokes or reproduces whenever it pleases; or it combines sensitive elements of different kinds to create an entirely new imaginary being, such as a mountain of gold. This last function is the reason why some psychologists speak of the creative faculty of the imagination, which can exercise itself either under control of the intellect or without it. The great artists usually have a strong creative imagination. When these creations are not controlled by the intellect and the will, they can produce extravagant results.

The estimative power is the faculty by which we apprehend sensible things as useful or harmful to ourselves. In virtue of this power the sheep knows instinctively that the wolf is its enemy. In animals, one speaks of a blind instinct which is purely natural and performs marvelous services for the conservation of the animal; in man, the estimative power is greatly influenced by the intellect, and this makes it more perfect and penetrating than it is in animals. For that reason, the human faculty is called the cognitive power or particular reason.

The sensitive memory is the organic faculty of recognizing the past as past, or a sensation as previously received. Its functions are to conserve the record of a thing, to reproduce or evoke it by means of reminiscence when necessary, or to recognize a thing as past or already seen. It is distinguished from the imagination in this: the imagination conserves and reproduces images but it does not recognize them as past; this is proper to the sensitive memory. Moreover, the imagination can create, as we have said, and this is something that the memory is incapable of doing because it is limited simply to the recollection of the things of the past precisely as past.

PURIFICATION OF THE EXTERNAL SENSES

The active purification of the external senses has for its purpose to restrain their excesses and to subject them to the rule of reason illumined by faith. A

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3Ibid., 1, q. 78, a. 4, ad 1 and 2.
4Cf. St. Thomas, ibid., a. 4; q. 81, a. 3; q. 83, a. 1.
disciplined human body is an excellent instrument for sanctification, but in the present state of fallen nature it is badly inclined and has an almost irresistible tendency to anything that can give pleasure to the senses. If it is not subjected, it becomes indomitable, and its demands become more and more excessive, until it constitutes an obstacle which is incompatible with the spiritual perfection of the soul. St. Paul speaks of the necessity of mortifying the body in order to be liberated from its tyranny and to assure one's own salvation: "I chastise my body and bring it in subjection, lest perhaps after preaching to others, I myself should be rejected" (1 Cor. 9:27). In another place he says that "they who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). St. John of the Cross insists on the Pauline doctrine and gives a profound reason which is intimately connected with the divine union to which the soul travels:

It is necessary to assume one truth, which is that the sense of the lower part of man, which is that whereby we are treating, is not and cannot be capable of knowing or comprehending God as God is. So that the eye cannot see him or anything that is like him; neither can the ear hear his voice or any sound that resembles it; neither can the sense of smell perceive a perfume so sweet as he; neither can the taste detect a savour so sublime and delectable; neither can the touch feel a movement so delicate and full of delight, nor ought like to it; neither can his form or any figure that represents him enter into the thought or imagination. Even as Isaiah says: "Eye hath not seen him, nor hath ear heard him, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" (Is. 54:4).

Hence in addition to the great inconvenience which follows when one does not have the corporal senses well mortified, it is evident that whatever these senses can convey to the soul is not God nor anything like him. Consequently, St. John of the Cross concludes with inflexible logic that "it would be, at the least, vain to set the rejoicing of the will upon pleasure caused by any of these apprehensions, and it would be hindering the power of the will from occupying itself with God and from setting its rejoicing upon him alone. This the soul cannot perfectly accomplish, except by purging itself and remaining in darkness as to rejoicing of this kind, as also with respect to other things."8

Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand this doctrine correctly in order not to draw erroneous conclusions. This doctrine does not mean to deprive the senses of their proper object but only to avoid placing one's joy and final repose in the sensible pleasure which these objects arouse without rising to God through them. Creatures are, in the words of St. John of the Cross, "mere crumbs or fragments which fall from the table of God."9 And when one considers in them this vestige or trace of God, they not only cease to be an obstacle to the sanctification of the soul, but they can be converted into true means and instruments for the divine union. The evil or the disorder lies in resting in creatures as if they were our ultimate end, presuming from their relation to God. But when we enjoy their beauty, or the pleasure which they give, in order more easily to rise to God, we can and ought to use them as excellent aids for our own sanctification.

St. John of the Cross, who has been unjustly accused of being an implacable enemy of the senses and the faculties, explains this doctrine as follows:

I said advisedly that, if the rejoicing of the will were to rest in any of these things, it would be vanity. But when it does not rest in them, but as soon as the will finds pleasure in that which it hears, sees and does, soars upward to rejoice in God, so that its pleasure acts as a motive and strengthens it to that end, then it is very good. In such a case one need not be so easily pruned by the thought and prayer, but the soul will profit by them and indeed should profit to the end that it may accomplish this holy exercise. For there are souls who are greatly moved by objects of sense to seek God.8

It is evident that the senses as such are not fixed, and do not rest in anything but sensible pleasure, without any further consideration for the higher things which escape the senses completely. Therefore, the soul must be vigilant and alert in order to rectify the intention and raise to God the pleasure which is experienced by the senses. St. John of the Cross tells us when these sensible pleasures are proper or not:

But much circumspection must be observed here, and the resulting effects must be considered, for frequently many spiritual persons indulge the recreations of sense aforementioned under the pretext of offering prayer and devotion to God, and they do this in a way which must be described as recreation rather than prayer, and which gives more pleasure to themselves than to God. And although the intention that they have is toward God, the effect which they produce is that of recreation of sense, wherein they find weakness and imperfection rather than revival of the will and surrender thereof to God.

I wish, therefore, to propose a test whereby it may be seen when these delights of the senses aforementioned are profitable and when they are not. And it is that whenever a person hears music and other things, and sees pleasant things, and is conscious of sweet perfumes, or tastes things that are delicious, or feels good touches, if his thought and the affection of his will are centered upon God and if that thought of God gives him more pleasure than the movement of sense which causes it, and save for that he finds no pleasure in the said movement, this is a sign that he is receiving benefit therefrom and that this thing of sense is a help to his spirit. In this way such things may be used, for in them such things of sense subserve the end for which God created and gave them, which is that he should be the better loved and known because of them.

But one that does not feel this liberty of spirit in these things and pleasures of sense, but whose will rests in these pleasures and feeds upon them, is greatly harmed by them and should withdraw himself from the use of them.

8The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. III, Chap. 24.
9Loc. cit.
10Cf. ibid., Bk. I, Chap. 6.

Ibid., Bk. III, Chap. 24.
For although his reason may desire to employ them in journeying to God, yet, inasmuch as his desire finds pleasure in them which is according to sense and their effect is ever dependent upon the pleasure which they give, he is certain to find hindrance in them rather than help, and harm rather than profit. And when he sees that the desire for such recreation reigns in him, he must mortify it; because the stronger it becomes, the more imperfection he will have and the greater will be his weakness.  

This magnificent doctrine needs no explanation or commentary. St. John is not attempting to annihilate the senses but to raise them to God through creatures. What must be avoided at any cost, under pain of compromising and making sanctification of the soul impossible, is final rest and complacency in creatures, seeking in them only the pleasure they can give to us. One must pass beyond them, while using them to rise to God, the supreme beauty and the greatest good, from whom creatures have received whatever goodness and beauty they possess.

Let us now consider the bodily senses one by one, in order to find out what needs to be rectified in them, and how they can be elevated and directed to God.

THE SENSE OF SIGHT

This is the most noble of all the external senses, but it is also the most dangerous because of the great seductive power it exercises upon the soul by means of its impressions. Let us examine the different classes of glances and the practical conduct which the soul should follow in each case.

1) **Glances that are seriously sinful.** Every voluntary glance toward a person or object which is a serious occasion of sin, especially if it is accompanied by an evil desire, is a grave sin. The gospel expressly states: "But I say to you that anyone who so much as looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). It is not necessary to mention that one must avoid this type of glance entirely. Without this first step, not only perfection but even eternal salvation is placed in great danger.

2) **Dangerous glances.** When, without an evil desire but also without sufficient reason, one fixes his glance on a person or any object which could lead him to sin, he commits an extremely dangerous impiety. As a punishment for this impiety the soul will often be deprived of the necessary efficacious grace for resisting temptation, and the individual (David, Solomon, Samson, etc.), and daily experience fully confirms the biblical statement: "Through woman's beauty many perish, for lust for it burns like fire" (Sirach 9:8). After the glance comes the arousal of the imagination, the irresistible desire and the shameful fall. Without control over the eyes it is impossible to stay on the road of virtue or even in the state of grace. The soul that aspires seriously to sanctification will flee from every dangerous occasion of this sort. One will keep a custody over the eyes, and, without going to ridiculous extremes, one will always be vigilant and alert lest he be taken by surprise.

3) **Curious glances.** These glances do not necessarily fall upon anything that is evil or even dangerous, but they have no other purpose than the simple joy of looking. Such glances are not in themselves reprehensible, and they may even help us to raise our minds to God. But when the soul gives itself to these things with an excessive attachment, or too frequently, they can become an obstacle to the life of prayer and recollection. A person who is constantly recreating certainly does not have recollection in prayer. He is before God with his body, but his heart is far removed from God. And if, contrary to all the merit of the soul, God would communicate some devout sentiment to the soul, this cannot remain, because returning after his prayer to his free and uncontrolled glances, every holy affection vanishes. The spirit of the Lord is like certain liquors which evaporate if they are not tightly corked in the vessel that contains them. So also such a soul dissipates the spiritual fervor which God had imparted to it. In addition to living in an unhappy and distracted state, how is it possible that such a soul can give itself to the practice of mortification, charity, humility, penance and the other Christian virtues, when it has no thoughts or affections which could contribute to the religious life if the person lives in a cloister, or to the spiritual life if the person lives in the world?  

Mortification of sight is therefore necessary even in things which are lawful. Here, as in all else, it is necessary to proceed with serenity and equanimity, without going to extravagant or ridiculous extremes. Certain episodes in the lives of the saints are more to be admired than imitated. Without going to these extremes, which God does not demand of all, it is certain that the mortification and custody of the eyes is a very important point in the spiritual life, not only in the negative aspect of protecting us from great evils, but also in the positive aspect of cultivating and increasing recollection and prayer which are absolutely indispensable to reach sanctity.

Less noble than the sense of sight but more universal in its scope is the sense of hearing. Through this sense faith comes to us, as the Apostle says (Rom. 10:17): "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the word of God."
10:17. It is therefore of great importance to subject this sense to the control of reason enlightened by faith. Moreover, St. James says: "If anyone does not offend in word, he is a perfect man" (3:2). Let us now consider the progressive purification of the sense of hearing and the use of speech.

1) Evil conversations. Simply to remain in the state of grace, it is necessary for the soul carefully to avoid any kind of sinful conversation. When one speaks or listens voluntarily and with satisfaction to things which gravely offend purity, charity, justice or any other Christian virtue, he commits a sin, and in some instances—as in the case of calumny—a sin which obliges one to restitution. It is impossible that a soul should give itself over to those shameful pastimes and still reach perfection. It places itself in great danger, and even compromises its eternal salvation. Lying, harsh words, useless discussions, murmuring, calumny, the violation of secrets, obscene or excessively free conversations, vulgar language, or envious or spiteful language, etc., must be definitively rejected by any soul that aspires to true sanctity, because without this, sanctity cannot be attained.

2) Frivolous conversations. There are conversations which, without constituting a grave sin by reason of their object or intention, are not justified either by necessity or profit to oneself or another. Under this heading fall all those idle words of which our Lord said we shall one day have to give an account (Matt. 12:36). To speak without usefulness to oneself or one's neighbor is to pervert the word or speech from the object which God in the plan of his divine providence has assigned to it. Instead of making it an instrument for good, one makes it serve futile things. One speaks to say nothing, and this is in itself a reprehensible act.

This doctrine has a particular application to those who are addicted to visiting and making social calls. There are countless ill effects which follow upon these frequent and interminable visits, apart from the loss of time and lack of recollection. We must see in this one of the principal reasons for the mediocrity of so many devout persons who, confounding with piety exercises (sometimes too many), never seem to take a step forward on the road to sanctification. In many of these interminable conversations, charitable criticism or it degenerates into a childish and useless prattle. Souls that become bored when they are alone, that seek the company of others in order to give vent to their verbal incontinence, who refuse to repress this excess, who overwhelm their unfortunate victims with useless conversations, who are always the first to know new things and to spread news and to comment and criticize on everything can readily be dismissed from Christian perfection. They will never reach it, nor will they let others reach it. The spiritual director must be very severe with these souls. Since one is treating here, not of faults of weakness, but of voluntary frivolity, after a few falls—and only a few, five or six—the director should refuse to continue a direction which would be completely useless.

3) Useful conversations. Anything that is perfectly honest in itself and harmful to no one and of benefit to one's neighbor or oneself is licit, and often advisable. This principle has a variety of applications and can be used to solve many cases. In recreation especially one will have to keep it in mind. To entertain one's neighbor with a joke in good taste could be an excellent act of charity, if one does so with the right intention. On the other hand, we should never allow ourselves, even under the pretext of cheering one who has been offended, to criticize our neighbor, to make a joke at the expense of another, to incite an evil suspicion, to arouse envy, or to foment rancor. Among persons who are dedicated to study, it is an excellent means for avoiding useless conversations if one introduces a discussion on some disputed point which will arouse the interest and attention of all, but one should carefully avoid passionate arguments or expressions of disrespect for those who hold the opposite opinion.

4) Holy conversations. These conversations have for their immediate purpose the spiritual welfare of oneself and one's neighbor. There is nothing so comforting or encouraging to a soul as a holy conversation with persons who are animated with a sincere desire of sanctifying themselves. The intellect is enlightened, the heart is inflamed, and the will easily makes holy resolutions. It is impossible to calculate the good that can be done with a discreet word and a timely counsel to a soul that is bothered with temptation or depressed with discouragement. With sweetness and discretion, without making oneself offensive with too much insistence, but after the fashion of a disciple rather than a master, the soul that aspires to perfection will try to encourage these holy conversations which bring so much good to souls and unite the heart more closely to God.

It does not suffice to abstain from unfitting conversations nor to encourage holy conversations from time to time. It is also necessary to practice a positive mortification in hearing and speech. The principal methods of mortification are the following:

1) To abstain sometimes for the love of God from certain enjoyments in music or conversation. Certain innocent recreations can and should be permitted to souls that are as yet imperfect, while these same recreations

12"From joy in hearing useless things there may directly arise distraction of the imagination, gossipping, envy, rash judgments and vacillating thoughts; and from these arise many other pernicious evils" (The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bl. III, Chap. 25).
would perhaps be unfitting for souls that are more advanced in virtue. In all things, as St. Teresa warns, discretion is necessary.

2) By keeping a rigorous silence at certain periods in the day, for persons in the world, according to their own discretion, and for persons in religion, as their rule prescribes. Without the spirit of recollection and silence, the interior life and progress in virtue are impossible.

3) To renounce the desire for news and unnecessary curiosities, when one can do so without calling attention to the fact. If this cannot be done, to try to forget such things quickly and to remain in peace and solitude with God.

4) To keep in mind the following counsels of St. John of the Cross:

- Restrain thy tongue and thy thoughts and keep thy affection habitually fixed upon God, and he will grant thy spirit divine fervor.
- Feed not thy spirit on anything besides God. Cast away concern for all things and have peace and recollection in thy heart.
- Be unwilling to admit into thy soul things that have in themselves no spiritual substance, lest they make thee lose the desire for devotion and recollection.
- Endeavor that things be naught to thee and that thou be naught to things; forgetting all, dwell thou in thy recollection with the Spouse.
- One word the Father spoke, which word was his Son, and this word he speaks ever in eternal silence, and in silence must it be heard by the soul.
- He that seeks not the Cross of Christ seeks not the glory of Christ. The faculties and senses must not be employed wholly upon things, but only so far as is unavoidable. With this exception, all must be left free for God. If thou be detached from that which is without and dispensed of that which is within, and without attachment to the things of God, neither will prosperity detain thee nor adversity hinder thee.
- That which we must need in order to make progress is to be silent before this great God, with the desire and with the tongue, for the language that he best hears is that of silent love.

This doctrine is severe, but it is worth the effort to put it into practice in the hope of attaining sanctity. Because they do not have the courage to do this, many souls remain halfway along the road to holiness, bound by the bonds which hold them to the earth. Sanctity presupposes an energetic and resolute determination of dying completely to self and to the world, cost what it may. And since there are so few souls that possess this type of courage, there have been, and always will be, few saints.

The sense of taste can constitute an obstacle to perfection by reason of its immoderate inclination to eat and drink. Lack of mortification in this sense is called gluttony. According to St. Thomas, gluttony is the disorderly appetite for food and drink, one of the vices opposed to the cardinal virtue of temperance. God placed in nourishment a pleasure which has for its purpose the guarantee of the nutritive function for the conservation of the life of the individual. In itself, to experience that pleasure does not imply any imperfection, and not to experience it would be a physiological deformity. But since original sin, the concupiscible appetite has been withdrawn from the control of reason and tends to exceed the limits of reason. Then this sensation becomes sinful, because the nature of man is rational and that which goes contrary to reason is evil for human nature and is contrary to the will of God.

Moderation of the sense of taste offers a special difficulty, since we cannot prescind entirely from it. On the one hand, it is necessary to nourish ourselves in order to preserve life; on the other hand, it is necessary to keep oneself within the limits of reason, without permitting the natural delight to become the primary purpose of eating.

According to St. Gregory and St. Thomas, one can incur the vice of gluttony in the following ways: eating outside the proper time and without necessity; eating with too great an avidity; seeking exquisite fare; preparing food with excessive delicacy; eating too much in quantity.

According to St. Thomas, gluttony can be either a venial or a mortal sin. It is a mortal sin when one prefers the delight of eating and drinking to God and his precepts. In other words, when one would break a grave precept for the pleasure of eating or drinking, when one breaks a fast or abstinence; when one causes serious injury to one's health; when one loses the use of reason as in the case of drunkenness; when it presupposes a serious waste of material goods; or when one gives grave scandal through gluttony. It will be a venial sin if, without going to any of the above mentioned extremes, one goes beyond the limits of prudence and reason. Ordinarily excess in food or

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14From joy in sweet perfumes there arise loathing of the poor, which is contrary to the teaching of Christ, dislike of serving others, unkindness of heart in humble things, and spiritual insensibility, at least to a degree proportionate with its desire for this joy" (The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. III, Chap. 25).

15Cf. Summa, II-II, q. 148, a. 1.

16Ibid., a. 4.

17Ibid., a. 2.
drink does not go beyond the limits of a venial sin, but the lack of mortification in regard to the sense of taste constitutes a great obstacle to one's sanctification.

As a capital sin, gluttony gives rise to many other vices and sins because the intellect, dulled and clouded by excessive food or drink, loses the control which it should have in the direction of our actions. St. Thomas, quoting St. Gregory, assigns the following as the daughters of gluttony: stupidity or dullness of intellect; excessive joy (especially because of drink), from which follow imprudent acts and unbecoming acts; excessive loquacity, in which there is usually sin, as Scripture states (Prov. 10:19); excess in words and in gestures, which proceeds from the lack of reason or weakness of intellect; lust, which is the most frequent evil effect of the vice of gluttony. If we add to this that excess in eating and drinking destroys the organism, impoverishes the affections, degrades good sentiments, destroys the peace of the family, undermines society (especially with the plague of alcoholism), and incapacitates one for the practice of every kind of virtue, we shall have summarized the principal disastrous effects of this ugly vice which debases a man to the level of an animal.

The following counsels will be of great help if they are carried out with firmness and perseverance:

1) Not to eat or drink without first having rectified one's intention by directing it to the fulfillment of the will of God in the satisfaction of our bodily needs, and with a previous blessing of the meal. And never to omit thanksgiving after meals.

2) Carefully to avoid the defects which we have listed above.

3) To attempt gradually, over a period of time, to diminish the quantity of food until one reaches the amount which is necessary for the health of the organism. Many persons eat a great deal more than they really need.

4) To avoid singularity in the quality or quantity of food taken, especially if one lives in a community.

5) To mortify oneself positively in the use of food. This can be done in many ways without attracting attention: for example, by renouncing certain lawful satisfactions in food; by abstaining from some food that is particularly tasty or taking a smaller portion; by giving up wine or liquors when one can do so prudently, or by reducing their use to a minimum. Generosity in self-renunciation and the increasing love of God will inspire the soul with many ingenious methods of practicing a mortification which is progressively more profound, without compromising bodily health.

This sense is the most material and, in a way, the most dangerous of all, because of its extension throughout the whole body and by reason of the vehemence of some of its manifestations. It requires severe mortification in order to avoid the sad consequences which follow upon an unmortified sense of touch.

We shall not discuss the matters pertaining to lust, which is the most dangerous aspect of the sense of touch, since we have already spoken of the matter when treating of the battle against the flesh. Here we shall say only a few words concerning the manner of mortifying this sense directly.

There are two principal means of mortifying the sense of touch: 1) by depriving it of anything that may produce unlawful pleasure, and eventually by giving up even lawful pleasure, as one's circumstances permit or one's spiritual needs require; 2) by practicing positive mortification of the sense of touch by means of bodily penances. Mortification is necessary for all, and especially for beginners, until they succeed in dominating their passions by subjecting the flesh to the spirit. In addition to their reparatory aspect as regards past sins, bodily mortifications have two other lofty goals: the immolation of self in the imitation of Christ and a positive contribution to the Mystical Body by means of the apostolate of suffering. These two purposes pertain to the saints as much or more than to imperfect souls, for no one is excused from practicing bodily mortification in one form or another. St. Vincent de Paul says rightly: "He..."

292 Ibid., a. 6.

293 From joy in the touch of soft things arise many more evil and more pernicious ones, which more quickly cause sense to overflow into spirit and quench all spiritual strength and vigor. Hence arises the abominable vice of effeminacy or the incentives thereunto, according to the proportion of joy of this kind. Hence luxury increases, the mind becomes effeminate and timid, and the senses grow soft and delicate and are predisposed to sin and evil. Vain gladness and joy are infused into the heart; the tongue takes to itself license, and the eyes roam without restraint; and the remaining senses are blunted and deadened, according to the measure of this desire. The judgment is put to confusion, being nourished by spiritual folly and insipidness; moral cowardice and inconstancy increase; and, by the darkness of the soul and the weakness of the heart, fear is begotten even where there is no fear. And at times again, this joy begets a spirit of confusion and insensibility with respect to conscience and spirit, whereon the reason is greatly enfeebled, is affected in such a way that it can neither take nor give good counsel, remains incapable of moral and spiritual blessings, and becomes as useless as a broken vessel" (The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. III, Chap. 25).
The imagination is a very important faculty when one considers the intimate relationship between the soul and body. Every idea acquired by the natural operation of our faculties corresponds to a previous image which the imagination offered to the intellect. Without images, the intellect cannot know naturally. For that reason the use of sensible images is important for teaching abstract ideas and speculative principles, especially to the young and uneducated, who, without this sensible aid, would not be able to understand them. Our Lord continually made use of the imagination to place the great mysteries within the understanding of the simple and faithful people by means of his beautiful parables and allegories. The imagination also has a great influence over the sensitive appetite, which is moved with a great impetus toward its proper object when the imagination clothes it with special attractions.

Because of its great importance and influence, the imagination is one of the faculties which needs a most profound purification. When used in the service of the good, it can give incalculable assistance; but there is nothing which can cause greater difficulty on the way to sanctification than an imagination which has broken away from the control of reason enlightened by faith. Profoundly affected by original sin, it obeys only with difficulty the command of reason.

There are two principal obstacles which arise from an uncontrolled imagination: dissipation and temptation. Without profound recollection, an interior life and a life of prayer are impossible, and there is nothing which so impedes recollection as the inconstancy and dissipation of the imagination. As regards temptation, it is often attributed to the devil, when in reality it proceeds from one’s uncontrolled imagination, which paints in vivid colors the pleasure sin will provide for the concupiscible appetite, or emphasizes the difficulty which the insatiable appetite will have on the road to virtue, filling the soul with sadness and despair.

The principal means are the following:

1) Custody of the external senses. It is of great importance to keep a custody over the external senses, and especially the sense of sight, because through them enter the objects which the imagination retains, reproduces and re-assembles in a thousand ways, thus arousing the sensitive appetite, attracting the attention of the intellect, and encouraging the consent of the will. There is, therefore, no better way of avoiding all this than to deprive the imagination of such things by a custody of the external senses.

2) Careful selection of reading matter. It is necessary to avoid, not only reading matter that is evil or obviously dangerous, but that which is frivolous or vain, and fills the imagination with useless images. To this class of reading belong most of the modern novels, even those which would pass moral censorship, because the reading of such books (without sufficiently grave reason) does not befit persons who seriously intend to lead

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PURIFICATION OF THE INTERNAL SENSES

There is nothing special to be said concerning the purification of the common sense and the estimative power. The former depends entirely on the external senses, whose impressions it gathers together and unifies. Whence the mortification of these senses will suffice at the same time to preserve the common sense from anything that is dangerous or useless. As regards the estimative power, if the imagination is kept under custody and the intellectual judgment exercises its proper function, any fault or defect of the estimative power will be prevented. On the other hand, the imagination and the sensitive memory need purification.

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a life of recollection and prayer. A soul that is attached to the reading of
such novels can hardly hope to sanctify itself.

3) Avoidance of sloth. The imagination is never quiet. If we do not
keep it occupied with good and useful work, it will itself seek material
on which to spend itself. And since it has a natural propensity to do
anything that appeals to the lower appetite, it will readily place us in
danger of temptation. The imagination should always be occupied with
something that is good and useful, and when this is done, we shall have
made a great step forward to peace of soul.

4) To fill the imagination with good things. It does not suffice to keep
the imagination from harmful matter, or to avoid idleness, in order to keep
the imagination under control; it is likewise necessary to provide holy and
profitable material, so that the imagination will not only be withdrawn from
evil but will be directed positively to the good. This is the reason for "com-
position of place" before one begins the practice of prayer. It consists in
representing, as vividly as possible, the particular scene upon which one
is about to meditate, thus offering food to the imagination so that it will
not disturb the soul with its distractions. The reading of holy books in
which edifying scenes are described can contribute a great deal to this
positive formation of the imagination and can put it at the service of the
intellect and the will as an excellent auxiliary.

5) Attention to the duty of the moment. The axiom of the ancients,
"age quod agis," is filled with profound meaning. The habit of attending
to the duty of the moment has the double advantage of multiplying our
intellectual powers and of disciplining the imagination by preventing it
from being distracted to other objects.

6) Ignoring distraction. Frequently this is the only way of combating
certain vivid imaginations and the images produced, rather than trying to
attack them directly. This is the advice of St. Teresa of Avila. The will
should be occupied in loving God even in the midst of many distractions,
and the soul should be patient with the activity of the imagination until
God transforms it profoundly by means of the passive purification.
Meanwhile, it should take no account of it and should avoid what it must
avoid and do what it must do, in spite of any contrary suggestions made
by the uncontrolled imagination.

As regards Christian perfection, St. John of the Cross speaks at length
on the effect that the imaginary apprehensions cannot be a means proportionate to
the union with God because God is not contained in any imaginary species.
He likewise speaks of the great harm that is done to the soul when it does not
know how to rid itself of these imaginations or to remain detached from them
when they are given in a supernatural way. One should read and meditate
on this magnificent doctrine of St. John of the Cross.

We shall treat of the purification of the memory in general, explaining the
principles which can be applied both to the sensitive and the intellectual
memory. The latter, according to St. Thomas, is not a faculty distinct from
the intellect, but only a function of the intellect, having for its object the con-
servation and retention of intelligible species. There is a great difference be-
tween the sensitive memory, which has for its object only the sensible, the
particular and the concrete, and the intellectual memory, which deals with the
suprasensible, the abstract and the universal; but the process of purification is
exactly the same in each case. The means of purification affect both equally.

The memory is a very important faculty. It can give inestimable service to
the intellect and can be its most powerful ally. Without it, our spirit would
be like a sieve which is always empty, however much water is poured into it.
For certain types of knowledge, such as languages, history, the physical and
natural sciences, it is absolutely indispensable to possess an excellent memory.

Precisely because the memory stores up all kinds of knowledge, both good
and evil, it is necessary to subject it to an energetic process of purification.
Throughout life there is produced around us a series of acts which can be of
no use whatever for the sanctification of the soul. Sometimes they are sad events
regarding our own faults and sins; at other times they are certain spectacles or
desiring actions which we have witnessed; again, they may be useless infor-
mation or news which leaves our spirit deeply disturbed; or they may be the
unfortunate happenings of personal or family or social life: the disgraces, the
forgetfulness, the ingratitude, the injury, etc., with which our poor human
life is filled. None of these memories is profitable for the soul. They all tend
in one way or another to destroy the soul's peace and tranquility, which are so
necessary for a life of prayer and recollection. Let us, therefore, see what
should be the practical conduct of the soul regarding the active purification of
the memory.

The following are the principal means for the purification of the memory:

1) To eliminate sinful memories. This is the first step, and it is abso-
lutely indispensable for all who aspire to eternal salvation. The remembrance
of one's own sins or those of another, or the remembrance of spectacles
or magazines that are immoral, has a strong power for suggesting to


23Cf. The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. II, Chaps. 13, 16.
24Cf. Summa, I, q. 79, a. 7. The recognition of the species as past is not pro-
ter to the intellectual memory but only to the sensitive memory. Nevertheless, even
the intellectual memory has a consciousness of the past, not by reason of its object,
which always abstracts from the here and now, but by reason of its intellectual
act, as St. Thomas says: secundum quod intelligit se prae intellectu.

297
the soul these same things by way of a new temptation, and of causing
it to fall again into sin, especially if a vivid imagination is associated
with the recollection. The soul must reject immediately and energetically any
remembrance of this kind, and be convinced that the simple approbation
or voluntary enjoyment of those past sins is sufficient to make the in-
dividual guilty again of those sins, without committing them again ex-
ternally.

b) To combat useless memories. There are many other things which,
without being sinful in themselves, are nevertheless completely useless as
far as recollection goes, and for that reason are harmful to the soul. Such,
for example, are the sad happenings of our past life, family disgraces,
humiliations, misfortunes of various kinds, or successful events which
perhaps filled us with an excessive joy. The remembrance of the one or
the other disturbs the peace and tranquility of the soul and is of no profit
to anyone, because none of the sad or unfortunate events of life can be
remedied by our present suffering, nor can any of the joys return. As long
as the soul is occupied with these vain joys or sorrows, it will be incapaci-
tated for giving itself completely to prayer and recollection.

c) To forget past injuries. This pertains to virtue and is indispensable
for any soul that wishes to sanctify itself truly. In spite of the pardon which
has been given, sometimes even beyond the call of strict justice, the
remembrance of a past offense cannot help but disturb, at least moment-
tarily, the peace of conscience, and present the guilty party in an un-
favorable light. It is necessary to forget completely the disagreeable episode
and even to give special attention to the one who voluntarily caused the
injury.

We should try to forget completely and forever any offenses committed
against us, realizing that those we have committed against God are much
greater, and that he demands of us a complete pardon in order to give
us his pardon without measure. The soul that nourishes rancor, however
justifiable it may seem (and it never is in the eyes of God), can forget
about reaching sanctity. And if it is a question of enmity which is mani-
fested externally, the individual is also exposed to the grave danger of
losing eternal salvation.

d) To remember benefits received from God and our own ingratitude
to God. This pertains to the positive purgation of the memory, and offers
a wonderful means for directing the memory to God. Who can doubt that
the recollection of the immense benefits which we have received from
God, of the infinite number of times that he has pardoned our faults, of
the dangers from which he has preserved us, of the loving care which
his providence has exercised over us and of those we love—that this mem-
ory is an excellent means of arousing our gratitude toward him and the
desire of corresponding more faithfully with his graces? And if to this we
add the recollection of our own misery and our own nothingness, of our
disobedience and rebellion, of our constant ingratitude and resistance to
grace, our soul will be filled with humility and confusion, and will ex-
perience the need of redoubling its vigilance and its efforts to be better in
the future.

e) To remember the motives for Christian hope. This is one of the
most efficacious means for directing our memory to God and for purifying
it of contact with earthly things. St. John of the Cross makes the memory
the seat of Christian hope, and although this is not exact, there is no
doubt that one could find many points of contact between the two as
regards purification of the memory. The remembrance of an eternity of
happiness, which is the central object of Christian hope, is most apt for
making us disdain the vain recollection of the things of earth and to
raise our spirit to God. Here is the way in which this doctrine was ex-
plained by Father Garrigou-Lagrange:

Poneness to forget God causes our memory to be as if immersed in time,
whose relation to eternity, to the benefits and promises of God, it no longer
sees. This defect inclines our memory to see all things horizontally on the line
of time that flies, of which the present alone is real, between the past that
is gone and the future that is not yet. Forgetfulness of God prevents us from
seeing that the present moment is also on a vertical line, which attaches it
to the single instant of immobile eternity, and that there is a divine manner of
living the present moment in order that by merit it may enter into eternity.
Whereas forgetfulness of God leaves us in this horizontal view of things on the line of time which passes, the contemplation of God is like a vertical view of things which pass, and of their bond with God who does not
pass. To be immersed in time is to forget the value of time, that is to say,
its relation to eternity.

By what virtue must this great defect of forgetfulness of God be cured?
St. John of the Cross answers that the memory which forgets God must be
healed by the hope of eternal beatitude, as the intellect must be purified by
the progress of faith, and the will by the progress of charity.25

As regards perfection, the necessity of purifying the memory by ridding it
of all earthly forms which could disturb our union with God follows the funda-
mental reason which was given for the purification of the other faculties: no
creative form, whether sensible or intellectual, can serve as the proximate and
proportionate medium for divine union. St. John of the Cross is inflexible in
drawing conclusions from this principle in regard to the memory, in which he
demands the forgetfulness of all the apprehensions received, naturally or super-
naturally, in order to guide it solely by motives of Christian hope. One should
read with great care the beautiful pages which St. John has written on this
matter.26

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PURIFICATION OF THE PASSIONS

Having examined the active purification of the external and internal senses, it is necessary to turn to a consideration of the purification of the sensitive appetite, in which the passions are located. We shall begin by recalling the general teaching of psychology.

The sensitive appetite is that organic faculty through which we seek the good so far as it is material and is known through the senses. It is generally distinct from the rational appetite or the will, which seeks the good as appre- hended by the intellect.\(^{27}\) The sensitive appetite is ignorant of any good which is not purely sensual or pleasing to the senses. From this stems the battle against the rational appetite, which of itself seeks the rational good or the good of spirit. “For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other” (Gal. 5:17).

The sensitive appetite, also called sensuality, is a power which is divided into two potencies, the two species of the sensitive appetite, namely, the concupiscible appetite and the irascible appetite. The former has as its object the delightful good which is easy to obtain; the latter has as its object the arduous good which is difficult to obtain. These two inclinations cannot be reduced to one unique principle, but they are two potencies which are really distinct from each other.\(^{28}\)

The intellect and the will can influence the sensitive appetite; not, however, in the despotic manner in which they govern the hands or feet, which move without resistance to the command of the will, but only with a political government, as that of a chief over a subject who is able to resist the command of his superior. The different movements of the sensitive appetite to the good as known through the senses give rise to the passions. To regulate and purify the latter is equivalent to the regulation and purification of the sensitive appetite.

There are two principal ways in which the word passion is used. In its use for good or for evil. In themselves, they are neither good nor evil; it depends upon the orientation which is given to them.\(^{29}\) When placed at the service of the good, they can be of incalculable assistance, even to the point that one could say that it is morally impossible for a soul to arrive at great sanctity without possessing a great energy or passion which is directed to God. But when placed at the service of evil, the passions are converted into a destructive force which is truly terrifying.

In popular language and in the works of many spiritual writers, the word passion is often used as synonymous with evil passion, which one must combat and dominate. We shall use the word in its philosophical sense to designate powers which of themselves are indifferent, but which one must channel along the way of the good; at the same time we will point out the deviations which may occur and the means of avoiding them.

The passions are movements of the sensitive appetite caused by the apprehension of the sensible good or evil, accompanied by a certain change, more or less intense, in the organism. Modern psychologists are accustomed to reserve the word passions to designate the more vehement and intense movements of the sensitive appetite, reserving the word emotion for those movements which are more gentle and ordinary. In any case, the passions always presuppose some knowledge, at least sensitive, of the good which is sought or the evil which is feared.

The movement of passion, properly speaking, can be very intense. From this there follows an organic change or disturbance which flows from the passions as a natural consequence. For example, anger inflames the countenance with indignation and places the nerves in a state of tension; fear causes one to grow pale; love enlarges the heart, and fear restricts the heart, etc. The intensity of the bodily change is not always uniform; it will depend in each case on the physiological constitution of the individual, the intensity of the movement of passion, and the greater or less domination which the individual has over himself.

St. John of the Cross, following Boëthius, lists four fundamental passions: joy, hope, sorrow and fear.\(^{30}\) But the scholastic division is the classical one, and it lists eleven passions: six pertaining to the concupiscible appetite and five pertaining to the irascible appetite.

In the concupiscible appetite the good, which has a power of attraction, engenders three movements of passion. The simple awareness of good arouses love; if it is a question of a future good, it gives rise to desire; if it is a good already possessed and present, it produces joy. On the other hand, the apprehension of evil, which is of itself repulsive, produces hatred; if it is an impending evil, it causes a movement of flight or aversion; but if the evil has overtaken us, it causes sadness.

In the irascible appetite the absent good, if it is considered possible of attainment, engenders hope; but if it is impossible of attainment, it produces

\(^{27}\) Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 60, a. 2.

\(^{28}\) Cf. ibid., q. 81, a. 2.

\(^{29}\) Cf. ibid., II, q. 24.

\(^{30}\) Cf. De consolatione philosophiae, Bl. I (M.L., 63: 657); cf. also Summa, I, q. 25, a. 4; St. John of the Cross, The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bl. III, Chap. 16.
despair. In like manner, the difficult evil which is absent, if it can be avoided, produces courage; but if the evil is unavoidable, it arouses fear. Lastly, the presence of a difficult evil produces anger in the irascible appetite and sadness in the concupiscible appetite, while the presence of a difficult good does not arouse any movement in the irascible appetite, but causes joy in the concupiscible appetite. For that reason, the irascible appetite has only five passions, while there are six passions in the concupiscible appetite. For greater clarity the passions can be enumerated according to the following schema:

In the concupiscible appetite:
The good simply apprehended—LOVE
The evil opposed to the good—HATRED
The future good—DESIRE
The impending evil—AVERSION OR FLIGHT
The present good—JOY
The present evil—SADNESS

In the irascible appetite:
The difficult good absent but possible of attainment—HOPE
The difficult good absent but impossible of attainment—DESPAIR
The difficult evil absent but supensible—COURAGE
The difficult evil absent and insupensible—FEAR
The difficult evil actually present—ANGER

Bosseuil observes that all the passions can be reduced to the passion of love, which is the fundamental passion and the root of all the others:

We can say, if we observe what passes within ourselves, that our passions are all reducible to love, which enfold and arouses all the others. Hatred for some object does not come except because of the love which is had for something else. I hate sickness because I love health. I do not have any aversion to anyone unless it is because he is an obstacle to me for the possession of that which I love. Desire is nothing more than a love which extends itself to a good which is not yet possessed, and joy is a love which is satisfied in the possession of the good. Aversion and sadness are a love which turns one away from an evil which would deprive him of his good. Courage is a love very difficult; and fear is a love which, under the threat of losing that which is its object, is tormented by that danger. Hope is a love which has the confidence that it can possess the object loved; despair is a love which is desolate on seeing itself deprived of it forever, which causes a dejection from which one cannot rise. Anger is a love which is irritated on seeing that one wishes to deprive it of its good and reuses itself to defend that good. In a word, repress love, and there are no passions; arouse love, and all the other passions are born.21

The great importance of the passions can be deduced from their decisive influence in the physical, intellectual and moral life of man.

1) In the physical life. Without the previous stimulation of the appetite, we would take scarcely one step in our physical life, since the stimulation of the passions is what enables us to expend an extraordinary activity for good or for evil. Add to this the fact that certain passions have a powerful influence on bodily health, and could even be a cause of death, especially the passion of sadness, which, as St. Thomas says, is able to do more harm to the body than any of the other passions.22

2) In the intellectual life. It is impossible to overestimate the influence of the passions upon our ideals. The greater part of betrayals and apostasies have their most profound root in the disorder of one's passions. Father Bourget notes: "It is necessary to live as one thinks; otherwise, sooner or later, one ends by thinking as he lives."23 How else can one explain the lamentable defections of so many brilliant men in the field of religion?

3) In the moral life. The passions increase or diminish the goodness or malice, merit or demerit of our actions.24 They diminish human responsibility when a person seeks a good or evil more because of an impulsive passion than by the free choice of the will; they increase human responsibility when the will confirms the antecedent movement of passion and uses it in order to work with greater intensity.

It follows from the extraordinary importance of the passions that it is necessary to train them properly by withdrawing them from evil and placing them at the service of good. But is it possible to train the passions? Undoubtedly the answer must be in the affirmative. Since the passions are of themselves morally indifferent, their very nature demands direction and control. It is true that we do not have a despotic rule over our passions but only a political rule, but a prudent organization of all our psychological resources can result in a near-perfect control of our passions, even to the point that one has control over everything except what is called the first movements of passion, which do not affect morality.

Daily experience confirms these statements. All of us are aware of our responsibility for the movements of passion. When we let ourselves be carried away by a disordered impulse, we feel immediately the pangs of remorse. If, on the contrary, we have resisted this impulse, we experience a sense of satisfaction at a duty fulfilled. This is convincing proof of the fact that we are free agents as regards the impulse of the passions, and that their control

21Bossuet, Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même, Chap. 1.
22Cf. Summa, I-II, q. 37, a. 4.
23Le démonde mith, II, 253.
24Summa, I-II, q. 24, a. 3.
and government are in our hands. The history of conversions offers a new proof
of the possibility of training the passions. Men who have lived for years under
the domination of disorderly passions have been able to free themselves of
this great force and to begin a life which is fully in harmony with the moral
law. There is no doubt that there are grave difficulties and obstacles at the
beginning, but gradually the individual can gain perfect control of himself.

But now let us consider the basic principles concerning the training of the
passions.

1) Every idea tends to produce its corresponding act. This principle
is particularly true if the idea or sentiment is accompanied by strong emo-
tions and a vivid representation. From this principle one can deduce a
norm of conduct, the necessity of formulating ideas which are in accord-
ance with the actions which one hopes to realize, and carefully avoiding
those ideas which refer to actions which one wishes to avoid. In this way
one's acts are governed by one's ideas.

2) Every act arouses the sentiment of which it is a normal expression.
The rule of conduct which follows from this principle is that in order
to acquire the sentiment which is desired, or rather, to intensify the pas-
son which we wish to arouse, it is necessary to work as if one already was
experiencing it. In this way one's sentiments are controlled by means of
one's acts.

3) Passion augments and intensifies the psychological forces of the
individual until it raises them to their greatest intensity and uses them
to attain that which one seeks. It follows from this that it is necessary
to select a passion very carefully in order to obtain the most out of our
psychological energy. In this way ideas and acts are governed by sentiment.

These are the basic principles concerning the control and government of
the passions, but we shall now make more detailed applications as regards the
rules of conduct in relation to good and evil.

The passions aroused by one's environment by means of distractions, journeys and
a change of scenery; against those which proceed from the organism itself by
means of a regular regime, work, custody of the senses and of the imagination;
against those which have their origin in temperament or character by means
of reflection and will power. From the psychological point of view, there
can be no doubt that the best remedy against disorderly passions is the firm
and decided will to conquer them. But a purely theoretical will or wishful
thinking will not suffice; there must be an energetic and determined decision
which is translated into action by use of the means necessary to obtain victory,
and especially if it is a question of combating a passion that has been deeply
rooted through a long period of misuse.

The following are the fundamental lines of action to be followed in this
battle against the passions.

1) To struggle without ceasing against the causes of the passions.
Passions may be aroused by reason of temperament, external influences,
intellectual and sensible abilities, proximate and remote occasions, etc. As
regards the occasions which give rise to disorderly passions, it is a basic rule
that they must be avoided. A will which has been weakened by a violent
passion will readily succumb in a dangerous occasion. It must be imposed
as an indispensable rule that one will flee from anything that could be an
incentive to passion. Without this, a fall is almost certain to follow.

2) To prevent energetically any new manifestation of the passion.
Every new act of a passion redoubles its strength. This is the secret of the
failure of so many young people in their battle against impurity. When
they feel themselves strongly tempted, they yield to the passion in order
to remain in peace for a few days. This is a great mistake. Rather than
quieten their passions, they do nothing more than increase the demands
of passion and prolong indefinitely a struggle in which they can never
win the victory. It is necessary to resist, even to the shedding of blood
if necessary, as St. Paul says (Heb. 12:4). Only in this way can the force
of passion be weakened until finally it leaves us in peace.

3) To provide the passion with new objects. As regards certain pas-
sions, one need only change the object of the passion in order to convert
the whole activity into virtue. Sensual love can be transformed into super-
natural and divine love. Ambition can become an excellent virtue when it
is directed to the extension of the kingdom of God. The fear of dangers
can be most useful in the flight from occasions of sin. Thus one can
proceed to a positive orientation of the passions toward the good.

We shall now point out, one by one, the principal objects toward which
we should direct our passions.

1) As regards love, it should be directed in the natural order to one's
family, good friendships, knowledge, art, one's country, etc. In the super-

304

305
natural order it should be directed to God, to Christ, to Mary, to the
gods and saints, to the Church and to the souls of our neighbors.

2) Hatred must be directed toward sin, the enemies of the soul and
anything that could debase us or lead us to evil in the natural or super-
natural order.

3) Desire must be transformed into lawful ambition; in the natural
order, to be profitable for one’s family and one’s country, and in the
supernatural order, to obtain perfection in sanctity.

4) Flight or aversion should be used in the avoidance of the occasions
of sin and of anything that would compromise one’s salvation or sanctity.

5) Joy should be experienced as a result of the perfect fulfillment of
the will of God for us, of the triumph of good throughout the world, of
the possession of sanctifying grace which makes one a child of God and
a living member of Christ, etc.

6) Sadness will find its expression in the contemplation of the passion
of Christ, the sorrows of Mary, the sufferings and persecution of the
Church and her children, the triumph of evil in the world, etc.

7) Hope must feed upon the perspective of the eternal happiness which
awaits us in the life to come, in trusting confidence in the assistance of
God during our life, in the assurance of the protection of Mary, now
and at the hour of our death, etc.

8) Despair must be transformed into a prudent distrust of ourselves,
based on the knowledge of our sins and the weakness of our powers, but
counterbalanced by a confidence in the love and mercy of God and the
assistance of his divine grace.

9) Courage or daring must be converted into an intrepid and valiant
spirit for confronting and conquering all the obstacles and difficulties which
we meet in the fulfillment of our duties and in the work of our sanctifica-
tion, remembering that “the kingdom of heaven has been enduring violent
assault, and the violent have been seizing it by force” (Matt. 11:12).

10) Fear must focus itself on the possibility of sin, which is the only
ture evil which could befall us, and on the temporal or eternal loss of
God which is the consequence of sin, but not to such an extent that
one is led to discouragement, but as a stimulus to die rather than to im-
prove a strong defense against every kind of evil.

11) Anger should be transformed into a holy indignation which will
prove a strong defense against every kind of evil.

With the active purification of the external and internal senses and of the
sensitive appetite, one will have taken a great step toward Christian perfection.
But it is necessary that the purification reach into the very depths of one’s spirit
to rectify the deviations of intellect and will. Then the passive purification will
complete what a man cannot do by his own efforts with the assistance of
ordinary grace.

According to traditional psychology, there are two spiritual faculties of the soul,
the intellect and the will. Some authors, and especially the ancient mystical
authors, considered the intellectual memory to be a third faculty of the soul,
distinct from the other two, but in reality it is merely a function of the
intellect which preserves intellectual species. Only as an internal sense (the
sensitive memory) is it an autonomous faculty distinct from the other internal
senses and from the intellectual memory. The purification of the intellectual
memory follows a process which is analogous to the purification of the
sensitive memory, of which we have already spoken. We shall, therefore, speak

Among these authors is St. John of the Cross, who seems to follow John Bacon
in making the intellectual memory the subject of theological hope (cf. The Ascent
of Mount Carmel, Bk. III, Chap. 1). Nevertheless, Father Marcellus of the Child
Jesus, O.C.D., maintains that the thought of St. John of the Cross fully coincides
with Aristotelian-Thomistic psychology and that St. John of the Cross assigns the
theological virtues to these three powers of the soul in order to expound with
better order and greater clarity the detachment which must be effected in them. Cf.
El tomismo de San Juan de la Cruz (Burgos: 1930), Chap. 11, p. 128; cf. also
St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 79, a. 7.

St. Thomas, Summa, I, q. 78, a. 4; q. 79, a. 6.
of the active purification of the two faculties of the soul which are really distinct: the intellect and the will.

NATURE OF THE INTELLECT

The intellect is the faculty of the soul by which we apprehend things in an immaterial way. Its proper effect is the idea which it abstracts from external objects by means of the phantasm of the imagination, which is illumined by the abstractive power of the intellect itself, called in psychology the agent intellect.\(^68\) Intellectual knowledge is completely distinct and infinitely superior to the knowledge of the senses. Sensitive knowledge always refers to singular, concrete and determined objects, while the knowledge through ideas—the object of intellectual knowledge—is always universal, abstract and indeterminate. We possess sensitive knowledge in common with the animals, but intellectual knowledge is proper and exclusive to intellectual beings (God, the angels and man).

When the intellect compares two ideas and affirms or denies something about them, it pronounces a judgment. If it compares two judgments in order to conclude a third judgment, it performs an act of reasoning. Explicit reasoning, in the form which we have just given, is called a syllogism.

It is well to note that our intellect functions in such a way that we can never have two thoughts at the same time. If we are occupied in some thought, it will be impossible for us at the same time to be conscious of another distinct thought. This phenomenon is the basis of the attention which is nothing other than the application of the mind to a subject. The custody of the senses, silence and tranquility of spirit are a great help to the fostering of attention and the preservation of attention over a long period of time. For that reason these things have great importance in practice.

The intellect is very delicate and subtle in discovering almost without effort a multitude of aspects surrounding an idea. It is profound in analyzing and dividing into its ultimate elements some concrete notion. It is solid if it is able to reason things out by logical deduction based upon a certain principle. It has foresight if, from past events or present events, it can deduce by means of an acute observation what will happen in the future.

In spite of the simplicity of the intellect as a spiritual faculty, mystical theologians, in order to explain phenomena which otherwise would be difficult to understand, have established certain divisions or distinctions regarding the intellectual function of the soul.\(^68\) The principal divisions or distinctions are the following:

1) What the mystical authors refer to as the mind (mens) is the most spiritual and elevated part of the soul which the disturbances of the physical world can never reach. Illumined by God, it always reflects his divine splendors and is far removed from the earth. In the midst of the most painful trials and darkness, this superior part of the spirit remains tranquil, as if it were already in eternity. It is also called by some authors "the supreme heaven" or "the light of understanding."

2) What the authors call reason is further subdivided into the superior reason and the inferior reason. The superior reason always obtains its conclusions from the principles of pure understanding, that is, without any influence of the passions. It is called "the middle heaven" and it always tends upward to that which is noble and elevated. The inferior part of the soul, on the other hand, judges by means of the experiences of the senses and under the influence of the passions, and for that reason it tends downward to that which is useful or delightful for the subject. It is "the lowest heaven" and is often closer to earth than it is to heaven.

This consists in the removal of the obstacles or evil inclinations which are the result of original sin and our own personal sin, which are opposed to perfect submission of the intellect to God. The principal obstacles are the following:

Useless thoughts. Our spirit is frequently occupied with a multitude of useless thoughts which cause us to waste time and divert our attention to that which is base or perishable, with the result that we pay no heed to those things which are of great interest and value to the soul in its sanctification. We should not forget that the intellect cannot be occupied at the same time with two distinct thoughts; one of the two will always be considered to the prejudice of the other. The majority of the distractions which we lament during prayer and the other exercises of piety proceed from the fact that we have previously wasted time in useless thought. The spirit cannot pass directly from one situation to another which is completely distinct. It needs time to react and adapt itself to the new occupation. For that reason it is necessary to combat useless thoughts with great energy and to reject anything that may dissipate the intellect by distracting it or withdrawing it from the great task of one's sanctification. It is necessary to renounce, as much as possible, the reading of useless books or indulging in frivolous conversations which fill our soul with useless thoughts. The reading of magazines and newspapers should also be curtailed. All of this is inconvenient, but it is precisely because they do not wish to suffer these deprivations that many who aspire to Christian perfection remain only halfway on the road to sanctity.

Ignorance. It is one thing to feed upon useless thoughts and it is something very different to welcome or encourage ignorance, lest one lose his tranquility. This would be a grave error and perhaps more harmful than useless thoughts. Not every kind of ignorance is voluntary and not every kind of ignorance is a sin. All Christians are not obliged to acquire a professional knowledge of theology, but certainly all are obliged to obtain that knowledge which, accord-
ing to their ability and the obligation of their state in life, can contribute to their intellectual and moral perfection. A dislike or hatred of knowledge has always been a sign of an evil spirit and has been the origin of many heresies in the Church. Sacred Scripture reproves this attitude in no uncertain terms (Os. 4:6), and St. Paul frequently insists on the utility of knowledge for the service of God. 40

Nevertheless, not all knowledge is useful or convenient for one's sanctification. St. Paul speaks of the knowledge which puffs up, in distinction to charity which edifies (I Cor. 8:1). In the acquisition of knowledge one can sin in two ways: 1) as regards the one who studies, by not following the impulse of the virtue of studious, 41 but studying out of curiosity, vanity or the mere pleasure which one experiences in study; 2) as regards that which is studied, when it is harmful to the soul or utterly useless.

It is especially necessary to combat ignorance in matters of religion and the spiritual life. It is certain that with the right intention we can and ought to study human sciences, and especially those which pertain to one's profession and duties of state, but above all we should apply ourselves to the science of our eternal salvation. It would be an absurdity to dedicate all our efforts to human science and neglect that supreme science which concerns our eternal destiny. Such is the sad spectacle of many persons who are eminent in literary culture, in art or science, but lack the most fundamental knowledge of religion. Others dedicate themselves weakly to the acquisition of sacred science but with an attitude that is opposed to study. They are interested only in the speculative knowledge of truth, but are not concerned with letting that knowledge affect their lives. Such souls are dying of spiritual anemia without even realizing that they have before their eyes a splendid table at which they can be nourished with holy doctrine. And even this is not so bad as those who neglect completely the practice of prayer to dedicate their time to the external works of the apostolate. Such persons should recall the teaching of St. John of the Cross, who says that a great deal more profit would be done for the Church, and it would be much more pleasing to God, if such souls would take half of that time spent in activity and devote it to prayer. 42 The soul should therefore dedicate itself to the study of truth, put aside the spirit of curiosity, and seek in this knowledge only the greater glory of God, the dissipation of its own ignorance, and the means of advancing along the way to sanctity.

Curiosity Curiosity. In direct opposition to the virtue of studious is the vice of curiosity. 43 This is an immoderate desire to know that which does not pertain to us, or which could be harmful to us. Unfortunately, this sin is committed frequently, either in the acquisition of all types of useless knowledge or in the knowledge of those things which could only serve to give delight to the senses or arouse the senses. Under this heading belongs the unrestrained tendency to read every type of novel or book simply to pass the time or for recreation, as well as the insatiable desire for spectacles such as the theater or sports, which are sometimes truly dangerous or opposed to Christian morality. St. Thomas points out that the attendance at such things is vicious if it inclines a person to vice or lust or cruelty because of the things that are presented there. 44 It is impossible that persons who dedicate themselves to such things, especially if it happens with frequency, can keep their soul in the state of spiritual peace and tranquility which is necessary for attaining sanctity.

It is also an effect of the vice of curiosity to be constantly prying into the lives and sayings of others in order to find material for criticism and murmuring. St. John of the Cross severely condemns this vice, which is very common among devout persons. He advises souls that are accustomed to meddle in the lives of others that, if they do not correct this evil habit, they will never reach sanctity, but will fall back into a worse state:

In order to observe the first of these—resignation—he must live in the monastery as if no other person lived there, and hence he should never meddle, either in word or in thought, with things that happen in the community, nor with those of individuals, nor should he take any note of anything concerning them, whether good or evil, nor of their personal qualities. And even if the world come to an end, he would neither remark upon them nor meddle with them, in order to preserve his tranquility of soul, remembering Lot's wife, who, because she turned her head at the cry and noise of those who were perishing, was turned into a hard stone. This the religious must observe very scrupulously, and he will thus free himself of many sins and imperfections, will preserve his tranquility and peace of soul, and will make great progress in the sight of God and men. Let great attention be paid to this, for it is of such great importance that many religious, by not observing it, have not only never profited by the other works of virtue and religion which they have performed, but have continually fallen away and have gone from bad to worse. 45

However, it is not always forbidden to be concerned with the lives of others. Sometimes it is of obligation, especially for those who are charged by their office to correct their neighbor, as parents and lawful superiors. But this must always be done for a holy and lofty purpose, either to be edified by the good example of others and encouraged to improve one's own life, or for the spiritual good of one's neighbor by correcting his defects according to the order of charity and the duties of one's office, 46 but never merely to

40 Cf. II Cor. 6:6, 8:7, 11:6; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:19.
41 Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 166.
42 Cf. Spiritual Canticle, Chap. 29, a. 3.
43 Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 167.
44 Cf. ibid., a. 2, ad 2.
45 St. John of the Cross, Counsel to a Religious, n. 2.
46 Cf. St. Thomas, Summa, II-II, q. 53, a. 3.
In order to combat these defects it is necessary to get into the habit of proceeding calmly and with reflection, avoiding lightness and precipitation in our judgments, and inconstancy and volubility in our manner of thinking, which denote a lack of firmness in our grasp of the principles and norms of action. We should never act without reflecting carefully and without weighing in the balance of discretion the pros and cons of all things in the eyes of God.

Attachment to one's own judgment. This is one of the forms of pride from which scarcely anyone is completely exempt. In its most acute form, it reaches the point of subjecting to one's own judgment the dogmas of faith and the decisions of lawful superiors. Even if it does not reach this extreme, it foments and preserves the spirit of division, not in the noble sense of serene exposition and a reasonable defense of some determined school or tendency which seems to possess the truth, but on the basis of mortifying the adversary by treating with disdain and irony those opinions which are contrary to our own.

There are few souls who love and serve truth above all, and whose judgments of the opinions of others are not influenced by the satisfaction of self-love and by the triumph of their own ideas, without any more reason than the fact that they are one's own ideas, or the teaching of the school to which one belongs. Such people forget that in those questions which God has left open and subject to the discussion of men, there is no philosophical or theological school that could claim that it possesses the entire truth to the exclusion of all other schools. Almost always there is to be found in the contrary opinion some part of the truth which has not been regarded sufficiently because of the prejudices with which it was examined. Intellectual sincerity, the love of truth, humility and charity urge that we listen with attention and impartiality to our opponents and that we readily grant whatever truth is to be found in their affirmations.

In private conduct it is also necessary frequently to renounce one's own judgment and to accept that of others. St. Thomas says that since prudence regards particular and concrete things to be realized, which are almost infinite in number, it is not possible for one man alone to examine all the aspects which must be taken into account in each one of these things in order to know what he should do or not do. For that reason, as regards prudence, we need to be informed and taught by others, and especially by those who are older and whose experience has taught them many things which escape the precipitous and unreflective knowledge of the young.

Up to now we have examined the negative aspects of the purification of the intellect, or the defects which one must combat in order to destroy them completely. The positive aspect can be reduced to one point which is of

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47Cf. ibid., qq. 95, 96, 97.
49Cf. ibid., q. 53, a. 3.
50Cf. ibid., a. 4.
51Cf. ibid., a. 5.
The reason for this is that the imagination cannot fashion or imagine anything whatever beyond that which it has experienced through the external senses, namely, that which it has seen with the eyes, heard with the ears, etc. At most it can only compose likenesses of those things which it has seen or heard or felt, which are of no more consequence than those which have been received by the aforementioned senses, nor are they even of as much consequence. For although a man imagines palaces of pearls and mountains of gold, because he has seen gold and pearls, all this is, in truth, less than the essence of a little gold or of a single pearl, although in the imagination, it be greater in quantity and in beauty. And since, as has already been said, no created thing can bear any proportion to the being of God, it follows that nothing that is imagined in their likeness can serve as proximate means to union with him, but, as we say, quite the contrary. 56

5) And passing beyond the world of reality and the world of imagination, will pure ideas serve as a means of union of our intellect with God? Neither can these serve, because all of them are restricted within the limits of an intelligible species which is abstracted from the data of the senses, and God cannot be restricted by any limits whatever:

Just so, all that the imagination can imagine and the intellect can receive and understand, in this life is not, nor can it be, a proximate means of union with God. For if we speak of natural things, since the intellect can understand nothing but that which is contained within and comes under the category of forms and imaginings of things that are received through the bodily senses, which as we have said cannot serve as means, it can make no use of natural intelligence. 57

6) There still remains the supernatural world. In this way, or through it, one of these things can come to the intellect: either the clear vision of God, or a clear awareness of him which is particular and distinct, or an obscure awareness which is general and indistinct. The first is not proper to this life but to the life to come, for it constitutes the beatific vision. 58 The second (visions, revelations, locutions and spiritual sentiments) cannot serve as a means or medium because "the wisdom of God, with which the intellect must be united, has no mode or manner and is not contained within any particular or distinct kind of intelligence because it is completely pure and simple." 59 There remains only the supernatural awareness of God which is obscure, general and indistinct, which is basically that which is given to us by faith. For that reason, only faith can serve as the proximate and proportionate means for the union of our intellect with God in this life:

From what has been said it is to be inferred that, in order that the intellect be prepared for this divine union, it must be pure and void of all that pertains

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53The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. II, Chap. 8.
54Lcc. cit.
55Lcc. cit.
56Lcc. cit.
57Lcc. cit.
58Lcc. cit.
59Lcc. cit.
The value of faith

Therefore, the soul must travel in pure faith if it wishes to arrive at the perfect purification of the intellect and be intimately united with God. St. Thomas had already demonstrated that "the purification of the heart is an effect of faith." The reason given by the Angelic Doctor is that the impurity of a thing consists in the fact that it is mixed with things that are more base than itself. Now it is evident that the rational creature is more worthy and has a greater dignity than all temporal and bodily creatures. It is, therefore, made impure if it is subjected to these things through love and purified of this impurity by the contrary motive, that is, when it tends to that which is above itself, which is God. And in this tendency to God, the first movement comes through faith. By the same token, the first principle of the purification of the heart is faith, which is consummated and perfected by supernatural charity.

It does not matter that faith is necessarily of things that are not seen (De non visus) and that it is, therefore, essentially obscure and indistinct. It is precisely because of this fact that faith can give us the only knowledge that is possible concerning the intimate life of God, because in this life it is not possible to have a clear and distinct knowledge of those things, due to the infinite transcendence of God, who cannot be expressed in any created, intelligible species. The clear knowledge of God pertains strictly to the Beatific Vision. In heaven we shall see God as he is (1 John 3:2), without any species. Nevertheless, even in this world faith enables us to attain in some way the unutterable mystery of the infinite life of God, although it be a dark and obscure knowledge. For that reason, the knowledge of faith is of itself incomparably superior to all sensible and intellectual evidence which we could have of God in this life. In spite of this inevitable obscurity, faith illuminates the soul and fills it with the splendors of heaven.

The entire preoccupation of the soul must, therefore, consist in making the light of faith inform one's whole life with greater intensity and in a more perfect manner. It is necessary to contemplate all things through faith: one's life, the life of one's family and friends, the happy or unfortunate circumstances or events of life, etc. It is necessary to reach the point where one can, so to speak, lose the human vision of things and replace it with a certain divine instinct proceeding from the gifts of the Holy Ghost, with the clarity of faith, the only way in which one can see all things from the point of view of God. To contemplate all things in this manner is equivalent to contemplating them, in a certain way, as God himself contemplates them.

PURIFICATION OF THE WILL

The will, also called the rational appetite, is the faculty by which we seek the good as known by the intellect. It is distinguished from the sensitive appetite, which instinctively seeks the good as known by the senses, ignoring the proper reason of goodness as such. Even the animals possess a sensitive appetite, but the rational appetite is proper to intellectual beings.

The proper object of the will is the good proposed to it by the intellect, but in the appreciation or evaluation of the good error may creep in. The intellect can judge as a true good something which is only an apparent good, and the will, which is a blind faculty and always follows the apprehension of the intellect, will be impelled toward that object which is taken as if it were a true good. This is the explanation of sin: the will seeks as a good that which in reality is evil. Every sin is consummated in the will by one's free choice, but it is rooted in an error of the intellect, which has taken as a real good that which was only good apparently (e.g., the pleasure attached to the sin). For that reason the blessed are intrinsically impeccable, because their intellect, completely occupied with the infinite truth which they contemplate, cannot fall into the slightest error; and their will, completely satiated with the infinite good which they enjoy, cannot enjoy anything apart from that good; hence sin is intrinsically impossible for the blessed.

The proper act of the will is love, or the effective union of the will with a known good. All the movements or partial acts of the human acts which take place in the will, such as simple volition, efficacious tendencies, consent, etc. are acts of the will. The will's acts

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60Ibid., Chap. 9.
61Summa, III, q. 7, a. 2.
62Cf. ibid., q. 1, a. 4.
moral power, a power of persuasion; in other words, a political power, not a despotic power.\textsuperscript{52}

Whence the necessity of a double effort involved in the rectification of the will: one required to subject the will wholly to God by means of a total submission and conformity to his divine will, the other to fortify the authority of the will with regard to the inferior faculties until it can subject them completely to itself. In other words, one must attempt to regain, at the cost of great effort and with the help of grace, that initial rectitude which the will enjoyed when it came forth from the creative hand of God. This is not an easy task, but it is one of the most important for the attaining of perfection.

We shall treat of this double aspect of the purification of the will, but for the time being we wish merely to insist on the necessity of the purification, first on the part of the will, in order to die to all external and internal things which could impede its flight toward God, through the perfect rejection of all created things, and then through death to one's own egoism by means of the perfect abnegation of self.

This is one of the conditions which is most important if one wishes to attain sanctity. St. John of the Cross reduces his whole mystical doctrine to this detachment from creatures, as the negative element, and to union with God through love as the positive element.\textsuperscript{53} It is a fact that the soul is filled with God in the measure and to the degree that it empties itself of creatures.

The great mystic is inflexible in demanding total detachment of the soul which wishes to fly to God. Using the beautiful simile of the bird which is bound to earth with a thin cord which prevents the bird from flight,\textsuperscript{74} he does not permit the slightest voluntary attachment to any earthly thing. His faithful disciple, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, wrote that any kind of desire whatever was sufficient to impede perfect union with God.\textsuperscript{75}

The reason for the necessity of detachment from creatures for perfect union with God is given in a masterly fashion by St. John of the Cross. The following is a brief synthesis of his thought.\textsuperscript{76}

1) God is all, the necessary and absolute being, most pure act without the shadow of potency, who exists of himself and possesses the absolute plenitude of being. Compared with him, creatures are nothing; they are contingent beings which have more of potency than of act.

\textsuperscript{12} Cf. ibid., I-II, q. 17, a. 7.
\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Poems, n. 22.
\textsuperscript{14} Cf. The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. I, Chap. 1.
\textsuperscript{15} Cf. Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, The Last Retreat, Second Day.
\textsuperscript{16} Cf. The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. I, Chap. 8.
2) Two contraries cannot exist in the same subject because they mutually exclude each other. Therefore, light is incompatible with darkness and the All is incompatible with nothing.

3) If, then, creatures are nothing and darkness, and God is the All and light, it follows that the soul which wishes to be united with God must detach itself from creatures. Without this, union with God is impossible.

4) "And hence it is necessary that the way and ascent to God should consist in the ordinary care of mortifying the appetite; and the soul will more quickly arrive at a goal as it gives itself more energetically to this detachment. But until these appetites cease, the soul will not arrive at perfect union, although it may exercise many virtues, because it still does not perform those virtues with perfection, which consists in having the soul empty and naked and purified of every appetite."

5) For that reason, one must weep at the ignorance of certain souls who burden themselves with extraordinary penances and many other exercises, and think that this or that will suffice for them to arrive at union with divine wisdom; such is not the case if they do not diligently endeavor to negate their appetite. If such persons would exert half the effort in mortifying their appetites, they would advance more in one month through this practice than they would in many years by means of the other exercises. Just as it is necessary that one labor over the weeds, so also mortification of the appetites is necessary if there is to be any fruit or profit in the soul. Without this, St. John dares to say that one will make no more progress than one who would cast seed on untilled soil. For that reason, the principal concern of spiritual masters should be to mortify every appetite in their disciples and to make them remain in emptiness as regards that which they desire.

St. John of the Cross develops these thoughts throughout all his writings, which teach both the negative element of detachment and the positive element mentioned in The Ascent of Mount Carmel and in The Dark Night, and as a result they have abandoned a system of spirituality they judge to be excessively rigorous and difficult. But apart from the fact that it is impossible to arrive at the summit of the mount except by means of the mortification of one's appetites and disordered affections (because, as St. John of the Cross points out, two contraries cannot exist in the same subject), it is necessary to complete the thought of the mystical doctor with the splendors of The Spiritual Canticle and The Living Flame of Love, which illuminate with great clarity the dark nights described in the two preceding works.

Actually, the system of St. John of the Cross can be reduced to one important statement: God is all. His negations rest on affirmation, because they have as their object to detach the soul from the false appearances of creatures, which are nothing, in order to enable the soul, once purified and ennobled, to lose itself in the profundity of the All. He does not disdain creatures; he wishes only to withdraw the gaze from that which is imperfect and limited and enable the soul to see in creatures the traces and vestiges of the divine being. From the summit of that mountain the saint sings of the beauty of creation with lyrical accents that have never been surpassed by any other poet.

But in order to find them in God again, now purified and ennobled, it is necessary to leave the contemplation of creatures with carnal eyes and to detach oneself energetically from the bonds which hold the soul to the chains of earth. No one can arrive at the All except by the narrow path of the absolute negation of the nothing:

In order to arrive at having pleasure in everything, desire to have pleasure in nothing.
In order to arrive at possessing everything, desire to possess nothing.
In order to arrive at being everything, desire to be nothing.
In order to arrive at knowing everything, desire to know nothing.
In order to arrive at that in which you have no pleasure, you must go by a way in which you have no pleasure.
In order to arrive at that which you do not know, you must go by a way which you do not know.
In order to arrive at that which you do not possess, you must go by a way that you do not possess.
In order to arrive at that which you are not, you must go through that which you are not.
When your mind dwells on anything, you are no longer casting yourself upon the All.
In order to pass from the all to the All, you must deny yourself wholly in all. And when you come to possess it wholly, you must possess it without desiring anything.
And if you will have anything in having all, you do not have your treasure purely in God.

St. John of the Cross does not intend to annihilate the natural tendencies of human nature by removing them from their object and leaving them suspended in nothing, but he wishes to orientate them to God, to make God the sole object of the tendency, thus reducing all of their forces to unity. It is true that this can never be attained perfectly until the soul has been

Loc. cit.
Cf. ibid., Chap. 8.
Cf. ibid., Chap. 12.

Ibid., Bk. I, Chap. 13.
introduced by God himself into the obscurities of the passive nights, but much can be done by one’s own efforts and the help of grace. God does not usually complete the purification of the soul by means of the passive nights until the soul itself has done all that it can by using the ordinary means within its grasp. For that reason St. John of the Cross repeats with insistence that one must mortify the appetites which divide the forces of the soul so that an extent that it is spent entirely on the things of earth. When the soul shall have attained the emptiness from every creature, it will be filled with God.

PERFECT SELF-ABNEXATION

True detachment from all created things is very important and absolutely indispensable for arriving at Christian perfection. But it would be of little avail to detach oneself from the bonds of external creatures if one’s spirit had not likewise been detached from one’s own ego, which constitutes the greatest of all the obstacles to one’s free flight to God.

St. Thomas states that egoism or disordered self-love is the origin and root of all sin. He says this because every sin proceeds from the disordered appetite for some temporal good, but this would not be possible if we did not love ourselves in a disorderly fashion, for it is for ourselves that we seek the good in question. Whence it is manifest that disordered self-love is the cause of every sin. From it proceed the three concupiscences of which St. John speaks (1 John 2:16): the flesh, the eyes and pride of life, which are a compendium of all disorders.

Disordered self-love has constructed the city of the world against the city of God, as St. Augustine points out: “Two loves have erected two cities: self-love, carried to the extreme of disdain of God, has built the city of the world; the love of God, carried to the point of disdain for one’s self, has constructed the city of God. The one glories in itself; the other glories in the Lord.”

St. Augustine has pointed out in the last words of this quotation the most pernicious tendency of self-love. Precisely because it is the root of all sins, the manifestations of self-love are varied and almost infinite; but there is no result so harmful for one’s own sanctification as that notion of glorifying oneself, for it constitutes one’s ego as a center of gravity around which all other things must revolve. Some souls seek themselves in everything, even in holy things: in prayer, which they prolong when they find sweetness and consolation in it, but which they abandon when they experience desolation or aridity; in the reception of the sacraments, which they seek only for sensible consolation; in spiritual direction, which they consider a note of distinction and in which, therefore, they always seek the director who is most popular, or who will let them live in peace with their egocentric values and selfish aims; in the very desire for sanctification, which they do not subordinate to the greater glory of God and the good of souls, but which they direct to themselves as the best ornament of their souls here on earth and as the source of increased happiness and glory in heaven. We would never finish if we were to attempt to list the infinite manifestations of self-love and egoism.

The soul that aspires to perfect union with God must strive energetically against no other enemies as against its own self-love, which subtly penetrates even holy things. It must examine the true motive for its actions, continually rectify its intentions, and not place as its goal or the goal of all its activities and efforts anything other than the glory of God and the perfect fulfillment of his divine will. It must keep constantly in mind the decisive words of Christ himself, who makes perfect self-abnegation the indispensable condition for following him: “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

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83He expressly says this, and it is one of his strongest arguments to demonstrate that Christian perfection cannot be attained outside the mystical life, in which all those passive purifications occur (cf. The Dark Night, Bk. 1, Chap. 7).
84Note that the essence of detachment lies in the affection of the will rather than the physical lack of created things. Simple material poverty is not a virtue, but only the love of poverty, which can be found even in those who materially possess many things. The same thing must be said of detachment in general. Material detachment is undoubtedly a great help, but the most important and necessary is the formal detachment of affection, which consists in a detachment of the will, regardless of whether or not one possesses created things (cf. The Ascent of Mount Carmel).
85Cf. Summa, III, q. 77, a. 4.
86Cf. ibid., a. 5.
87St. Augustine, The City of God, Bk. XIV, Chap. 28.
6: PASSIVE PURIFICATIONS

Up to this point we have been examining the active purifications which the soul can effect by its own efforts with the help of grace in order to purify itself of its defects. Now we shall consider the part which God reserves for himself in the purification of the soul: the passive purifications, which are divided into the night of the senses and the night of the spirit.

THEIR NECESSITY

This is one of the most important points in the theology of Christian perfection; its explanation will determine whether or not an individual has an accurate view of the theology of the supernatural life.

The thesis

In order to proceed with clarity and precision, we shall state and prove our thesis on the necessity of the passive purification in view of Christian perfection: The full purification of the soul cannot be attained without passive purifications.

St. John of the Cross

The thought of St. John of the Cross is most clear, and his words are so explicit and decisive that they do not leave the slightest doubt as to their meaning. In the first chapter of the first book of The Dark Night, St. John of the Cross treats of the imperfections of beginners. After having described these imperfections in the chapters which follow, he terminates with the following words:

Let it suffice here to have described these imperfections, among the many to be found in the lives of those who are in this state of beginners, so that it may be seen how much they need God to set them in the state of proficient. This he does by leading them into the dark night of which we now speak, wherein he weans them from the breasts of these sweetnesses and pleasures, gives them pure aridity and interior darkness, takes from them all these unessential and pure, and by a very different means causes them to gain the virtues. For however assiduously the beginner in mortification exercises himself in all these actions and passions, he cannot never completely succeed—far from it—until God shall effect it in him passively by means of the purgation of said night.1

The thought of St. John of the Cross as here stated leaves no doubt as to his teaching. Beginners cannot purify themselves entirely, however much they exert themselves in this activity. Even if they do all that is humanly possible, it is necessary that God effect the purification in them passively.2

But who are these beginners who need the passive purification in order to attain the complete purification of their souls? St. John of the Cross states this explicitly at the beginning of his work, The Dark Night:

Souls begin to enter into this dark night when God takes them from the state of beginners, which is the state of those who meditate on the spiritual way, and begins to place them in the state of the advanced, which is that of the contemplative, so that by passing this way they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is the state of divine union of the soul with God.3

For St. John of the Cross, those who practice meditation, which is the mental prayer proper to ascetics, are beginners in the spiritual life. In order to ascend to the category of the advanced or proficient, it is necessary that they pass through the first passive purification (the night of the senses) and begin contemplative prayer. And to reach the height of perfection, which is the divine union of the soul with God, it is necessary that they should have suffered the terrible passive purification which constitutes the night of the spirit.4 To speak of perfection and sanctity without the soul's having endured any of the passive purifications is to depart radically from the doctrine of St. John of the Cross.

It cannot be said, as they have said who are defenders of the double way, that the necessity of passive purifications as taught by St. John of the Cross pertains only to those souls who are to attain perfection by the mystical way.

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1St. John of the Cross repeats this same doctrine in many other places. The following citation is perhaps even more expressive than those which we have already quoted: "But neither from these imperfections nor from those others can the soul be perfectly purified until God brings it into the passive purgation of that dark night, of which we shall soon speak. But the soul should labor, so far as it can, on its own account, so that it may purge and perfect itself, and thus merit being led by God into that divine care wherein it is healed of all things that it was itself unable to cure. For however greatly the soul labors by itself, it cannot actively purify itself so as to be prepared for the divine union of the perfection of love unless God takes its hand and purges it in that dark fire of love" (The Dark Night, Bk. I, Chap. 3).

2The Dark Night, Bk. I, Chap. 1.

3In speaking of the difference between the night of the senses and the night of the spirit, St. John says: "The night of sense is common and comes to many, and these are the beginners; the night of the spirit is the portion of very few, and these are the ones who are already practiced and proficient. . . . The first purgation or night is bitter and terrible to sense; the second bears no comparison with it, for it is horrible and terrifying for the spirit" (The Dark Night, Bk. I, Chap. 8). Later he explains in detail the necessity of the night of the spirit to reach the divine union (cf. Bk. II, Chaps. 1-3).
and not to those who are to reach perfection by the ascetical way. This subterfuge is of no avail, since St. John of the Cross teaches that, however much the soul may exert itself, it cannot correct its imperfections unless God does this for the soul in a passive manner. The thought of St. John of the Cross is clear and his words are explicit. Therefore, one or the other conclusion must be accepted: either we must say that there is a perfection which is filled with imperfections (which is manifestly a contradiction), or there is no other perfection than that which results in the passive purification and is manifestly a mystical perfection.

In addition to the indisputable authority of St. John of the Cross, theological reason fully confirms his teaching. As a result of original sin, human nature is strongly inclined to evil. Egoism, which is imbedded in the very depths of our being, disturbs the clarity of our intellect and impedes the objective view of things, especially when self-love makes us see things through the perspective of its own evaluations.

Let us read what a contemporary theologian has written in this regard:

"There are countless vices and defects which beset our depraved nature. The majority of them escape the vision of most beginners and those who consider the advanced and the perfect. But if one considers the matter well, we scarcely perform a single work of those which seem good to us when it is not filled with imperfection and sin by reason of our self-love and our attachment to earthly things. The result is that even souls that are already purified and apparently free from such defects are surprised when our Lord, with extraordinary light, reveals to them the multitude of their defects, which are comparable to the thousands of specks which the direct ray of the sun discloses in a glass of water, to use an expression of St. Teresa. By the same token, all the effort and labor of the soul in the active purification of its vices is insufficient for perfecting the soul, because the soul neither recognizes all of the defects which are to be corrected nor does it reach down to the very depth and root of those defects.

Therefore, it is necessary that there come from outside the soul an action that is more energetic and efficacious for removing from the depth of the soul all the dust and stain that are hidden there, and this is what we call the passive purification. This does not represent nor does it signify a state of spiritual inertia or inactive suffering; it signifies merely that the purifying action is received in the soul without the soul itself causing it, although the providence, wishing at any cost to have the soul for himself, lovingly sends and ordains the active and efficacious means by which this is weaned away from creatures and self-love so that it can give itself entirely to his divine majesty. The soul had exerted itself in active purification, so usually the more painful and purgative these are the means. Thus is fulfilled the letter what St. Augustine and the Angelic Doctor teach in regard to sin, namely, that what was lacking by reason of sin must be supplied by suffering or pain.5

5Naval, C.F.M., Curso de ascética y mística, n. 138. Cf. also St. Thomas, Summa.

The passive purifications are, therefore, necessary from the very nature of things. Not all souls will suffer them with the same rigor, because there are many degrees of impurity which have been contracted and there are many grades of perfection to which various souls are destined. But in every case, as Father Garrigou-Lagrange states, in order to conquer egoism, sensuality, natural impetuousity, self-love, the immoderate desire for sensible consolations, intellectual pride and whatever opposes the spirit of faith, and to arrive at a perfect love of God with all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's strength and all one's mind, and to remain firm, patient and persevering in charity, come what may, it is absolutely indispensable that there be a complete and total renewal of the soul through profound and painful passive purifications which cause the soul to progress in the mystical life, which is open to all souls as the normal development and expansion of sanctifying grace.6

This doctrine has the advantage of opening wide horizons to souls and of saving them from many dangers and illusions into which they could easily fall if they were obliged to remain, contrary to the attraction of grace, in that which has been called the ordinary way of sanctity. Some authors do not look with sympathy on the mystical way because they believe it to be filled with dangers and pitfalls, but in reality the contrary is true.7 In the mystical state the souls are governed in a special manner by the Holy Spirit himself, operating through his precious gifts and divine motion. Illuminated by the light of contemplation with the splendors of heaven, they discover much better their nothingness and their misery, at the same time that they see the snare of their enemies and their own sensuality. They are much more cautious, prudent and docile to their spiritual masters precisely because of the passive purifications to which they have been subjected before they entered or made progress in the mystical state.


7With good reason does St. Teresa claim when speaking of the life of prayer: "Anybody who would tell you that this is a danger, consider him himself to be a danger, and flee from him; and do not forget that by chance it is necessary for you to receive this counsel. It would be a danger not to have humility and the other virtues; but to consider the way of prayer a dangerous way is something that God would never say. The devil seems to have invented these fears in order to cause some souls to fall who had been practicing prayer. And see the blindness of this world which does not consider the many thousands who have fallen into heresy and other evils without having prayer, but having many distractions and in the multitude of these, if the devil, to better his business, has caused some souls to fall who practiced prayer, he has put such fear into others as regards the things of virtue. The souls that use this pretext for freeing themselves and protecting themselves are literally avoiding the good in order to free themselves from evil. I have never seen such an evil invention, and it seems certainly to come from the devil" (The Way of Perfection, Chap 21, nn. 7-8).
There is, therefore, no doubt that the passive purifications, which according to the unanimous teaching of all the schools of spirituality are of a mystical order, are necessary and indispensable in one form or another for the full purification of the soul, and for arriving at complete Christian perfection. Let us now see in particular the two principal manifestations of these passive purifications, which St. John of the Cross calls the night of the senses and the night of the spirit.

THE NIGHT OF THE SENSES

ITS NATURE The night of the senses consists in a prolonged series of aridity, dryness and sensible obscurity produced in an imperfect subject by initial, infused contemplation. Psychologically, it is characterized by that series of profound and persistent aridity which submerge the soul in a very painful state and severely test its perseverance in the desire for sanctification. It is so difficult to support this crisis of the senses that the great majority of souls draw back in fear and abandon the life of prayer.  

Even Father Scaramelli recognizes this necessity. These are his own words: "Man cannot, however much he tries, succeed by means of his own efforts in reforming the disorders of his nature, corrupted by the sin of Adam, and frequently even more corrupted by himself through the sins and evil habits which he has contracted. Consequently, he cannot, with the ordinary powers of grace, properly dispose himself for the gift of infused contemplation. It is necessary that God place his omnipotent hand to the work, and by means of the purifications which the mystics call passive bring to completion the reform of man's natural disorder (Directorium mysticarum, Tr. 5, Chap. 1, n. 10).

We use the term "infused contemplation" for lack of a more accurate term. The prayer, for it may happen that the habitual activity of the gifts of a given soul passive purgations always involve an illumination of the intellect, caused by the Holy Ghost operating through his gifts.

The cause of this night is the initial infused contemplation which is received by an imperfect subject who is not fully prepared for it. These two elements are absolutely necessary. There could be an active or ascetical purification without infused contemplation, but not a passive or mystical purification. And without the imperfect disposition of the soul, the manifestations of this night of the senses would not cause torment, obscenity or aridity, but delight, light and ineffable sweetness. This requires a fuller explanation.

No one has explained with such precision and clarity as has St. John of the Cross the nature, necessity, causes and effects of the passive purifications. The first book of his The Dark Night is a complete treatise in which one can study the fundamental rules which regulate the night of the senses. We shall recall some of the fundamental points which indicate the direction of his teaching.

Above all, it is necessary to note that St. John of the Cross includes under the word "senses," not only the external and internal senses, but also the sensitive appetite and the discursive intellect, so far as it uses the imagination to construct its discursus.

St. John begins by describing the sweetness which beginners usually experience in the service of God, and he explains it by the beautiful metaphor of the mother who nurses her child:

It must be known, then, that the soul, after it has been definitely converted to the service of God, is, as a rule, spiritually nurtured and cared for by God, even as is the tender child by its loving mother, who warms it with the heat of her bosom and nurtures it with sweet milk and soft and pleasant food, and carries it and caresses it in her arms; but as the child grows bigger, the mother gradually ceases caressing it, and, hiding her tender love, puts bitter aloes upon her sweet breast, sets down the child from her arms and makes it walk upon its feet, so that it may lose the habits of a child and take itself to more important and substantial occupations.

Beginners often make bad use of this sweet communication which they receive from God at the beginning of their spiritual life. They become strongly attached to the sensible consolations, and, without realizing it, the delight and sweetness which they find in the exercises and practices of devotion are the principal motive and cause for which they practice them. On feeling themselves so favored by God, their weak virtue makes them think that they are already saints, or not far from it. As a result, there springs up in them great imperfection as regards the seven capital sins, which St. John of the Cross describes with a very acute analysis, which one should read and meditate in the words of the saint himself.
A purification of such weakness and misery is necessary. And since these souls would not themselves ever begin such a purification, because they are to a great extent ignorant of their own imperfection and could never effect a complete purification by their own efforts, even if they did recognize their faults, God intervenes with the first light of infused contemplation which falling upon a soul so strongly attached to the sensible and dealing with a spiritual communication which is impressed immediately upon the intellect, necessarily produces obscurity of the senses, emptiness, negation and a kind of depression. The soul is then in the presence of the night of the senses. Let us turn again to the words of St. John of the Cross:

Since then, the conduct of these beginners upon the way of God is ignoble and has much to do with their love of self and their own inclinations, God desires to lead them farther. He seeks to bring them out of that ignoble kind of love to a higher degree of love for him, to free them from the ignoble exercises of sense and meditation (with which, as we have said, they seek God so unworthily and in so many ways that are unbefitting) and to lead them to a kind of spiritual exercise wherein they can commune with him more abundantly and are freed more completely from imperfections. For they have now had practice for some time in the way of virtue and have persevered in it therein found, they have lost their love of the things of the world and have gained some degree of spiritual strength in God. This has enabled them to now be able to suffer a light burden and a little aridity without turning back to these exercises with the greatest delight and pleasure, and when they believe that this light of theirs into darkness and shuts against them the door and the source for as long as they desired. And thus he leaves them so completely in meditation, for they cannot advance a step in meditation, as they were so left with such dryness that not only do they experience no pleasure and consolation in spiritual things and good exercises in which they were wont to in the things mentioned. For, as I have said, God now sees that they have grown a little and are becoming strong enough to lay aside their swaddling clothes and be taken from the gentle breast; so he sets them down from his arms and teaches them to walk on their own feet, which they feel to be very strange, for everything seems to be going wrong with them.

Infused contemplation

St. John of the Cross expressly states that the cause of this emptiness and insipidity of the senses is infused contemplation, when he explains the signs by which the soul can know whether or not it has entered into the night of the senses:

The third sign whereby this purgation of sense may be recognized is that the soul can no longer meditate or reflect in the imaginative sphere of sense as it used to do, however much it may attempt to do so. For God now begins to communicate himself to it, no longer through sense, as he did before, by means of reflections which joined and clouded its knowledge, but by pure spirit, into which consecutive reflections cannot enter. But he communicates himself to it by an act of simple contemplation, to which neither the exterior nor the interior senses of the soul can attain. From this time forward, therefore, imagination and fancy can find no support in any meditation and can gain no foothold by means of it.

How can one discern the presence of the night of the senses and distinguish it from the dryness or aridity which may be caused by other reasons, such as dissipation of the soul, bodily indisposition, influence of the devil, etc.? The first author to speak of these things was the great German mystic, Tauler. St. John of the Cross makes them even more precise.

The first sign is that the soul finds delight or consolation neither in the things of God nor in any created thing. If the soul were to find consolation in the latter, it is evident that its distaste for the things of God would be due to a dissipation of the soul. The lukewarm find no consolation or delight in the things of God, but in the things of the world. But since this universal dryness or distaste could come from some indisposition of the body which causes one to lose one's taste for everything, it is necessary to add the second sign.

The second sign is that ordinarily the memory is fixed on God with great care, but the soul thinks that, rather than serving God, it is falling back, because of its lack of taste for the things of God. One can see that the distaste does not proceed from lukewarmness, because it is the nature of lukewarmness not to have any interior solicitude for the things of God. And if it were not for some bodily infirmity, everything becomes distasteful and there is not even any desire to serve God, but the desire remains in the dryness of the passive purification. The devil on his part does not arouse any desire to serve God. For that reason this second sign is one of the clearest and most unmistakable.

14Ibid., Chap. 9. The first sign of the night of the senses is that the soul finds no pleasure or consolation in the things of God, although it also fails to find any satisfaction in created things. The second sign is that the memory is centered upon God with great solicitude, but the soul thinks it is falling back because it finds no delight in the things of God. Although St. John of the Cross says that during the night of the senses the soul can find no support in any meditation, he says later (Bk. I, Chap. 9) that this sign of the senses is not usually continuous, so that sometimes the soul can meditate and at other times it cannot.

15Cf. Tauler, Institutiones divinae, Chap. 35.
16Cf. The Dark Night, Bk. I, Chap. 9; The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. II, Chap. 13.
3) The third sign is the inability to meditate or use reasoning by means of the imagination as one formerly did. The reason for this impotency is due to the initial infused contemplation, as St. John of the Cross states in the text which we have already cited.

When these three signs are all verified in a clear manner, the soul and the spiritual director can conclude that they are in the presence of the night of the senses and can act accordingly. But for greater certitude, we shall investigate the matter further in order to verify with certainty whether the dryness and the aridity which the soul experiences in this state are due to the night of the senses or to one of the other causes mentioned above.

If it is an effect of lukewarmness which has overtaken the soul, it can be known very easily, because this distaste for the things of God will be accompanied by a strong inclination for recreation and worldly diversion in which one finds his pleasure and well-being, together with a great disruption of soul which sometimes takes little account of the danger of mortal sin, while the soul gives itself to venial sin without any resistance. The remedy for this is to repent sincerely for the evil done and to return again with new fervor to the road of the spiritual life.

If it is a question of mental infirmity or nervous imbalance, it is not difficult to distinguish it from the dryness and aridity of the night of the senses. The following text is significant:

To distinguish neurosis from the passive purification, we should note that the most frequent symptoms in neurosis are the following: almost continual fatigue, even when they have not worked, accompanied by a feeling of prostration, of discouragement; habitual headaches... insomnia, to the extent that the neurotic wakes up more tired than when he went to sleep; difficulty in exercising the intellectual faculties and in maintaining attention; impressionability (intense emotions for very slight causes), which leads the sufferer to believe that he has illnesses, that he does not really have; excessive self-analysis even to minute details, and continual preoccupation not to become ill.

Neurotics are, however, not imaginary invalids; the powerlessness they experience is real, and it would be very imprudent to urge them to disregard their fatigue and work to the limit of their strength. What they lack is not will but power.

The causes of neurosis may be organic, like infections, endocrine or liver troubles, pre-paralysis; but often the causes are psychical: intellectual burden for the nervous system. Even in these last cases, where the cause of the illness is mental, the illness itself affects the organism. For this reason we should also note that psychoneuroses may be associated with a developed intellectual life and a lofty moral life. . . . But we see also that the passive state of nervous fatigue by the second sign (the soul ordinarily keeps the memory of God with solicitude and painful anxiety for fear it may be falling back), and by the third sign (the quasi-impossibility to meditate, but the ability to keep a simple and loving gaze on God, the beginning of infused contemplation). The ardent desire for God and for perfection, which is manifested by these signs, distinguishes notably this passive purification from neurosis, which may sometimes co-exist with it. If it is a question of diabolical temptation or disturbance, which God permits sometimes as a means of purifying a soul, it will be known from the fact that the aridity is accompanied by strong, sinful suggestions of an unusual tenacity, together with an instinctive horror of the soul toward such suggestions. The action of the evil one has for its object to disturb the peace and tranquility of the soul and to withdraw it from the practice of prayer. The soul will conquer the devil by resisting, in spite of all its sensible repugnance, on its exercises of piety, and by putting to use the other methods for conquering the devil which we have already indicated when we treated of diabolical obsession and temption.

It should be remembered that sometimes it is possible that one or another of these causes may coincide with the true night of the senses, and especially the second or third cause. In this case, a careful and penetrating analysis is required in order to discern what pertains to one or another cause and to combat it with the proper remedies. Sometimes also there will be joined to the night of the senses accessory or concomitant trials of various kinds. On the part of the devil there are terrible temptations against faith, hope and charity; strong suggestions against purity accompanied by abominable phantasms in the imagination; a spirit of blasphemy which is so violent and strong that at some times one is almost forced to pronounce the words it is as a grave torment to the soul, as St. John of the Cross states; obscurities which fill the soul with a thousand scruples and perplexities, and other similar afflictions. On the part of men there are often persecutions and ridicule, sometimes from the good, which is one of the greatest tribulations which one is forced to suffer, as St. Peter of Alcantara told St. Teresa of Avila, or one's own superior or friends or spiritual director may torment the soul by judging its state to be one of lukewarmness or by not being able to discover the proper remedies to alleviate its condition. Lastly, there may be infirmities, misfortunes, the loss of one's good name or friends or possessions, etc. It would seem at times that heaven and earth have conspired against the poor soul which feels so discouraged, and that God is permitting all of these things in order to detach it completely from the things of earth and to remind it that it can do nothing without him and how much it needs his divine mercy and assistance.

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20The Dark Night, Bk. I, Chap. 14.

21Ibid., Chap. 30.