

SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY



ALPHA INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE

Thalassery, Kerala, India - 670 101

Ph: 0490 2344727, 2343707

Web: www.alphathalassery.org, Email: alphits@gmail.com



SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY



Title: Spiritual Theology
Adapted from Jordan Aumanns book on Spiritual Theology

Published by: The Director, Alpha Institute, Archdiocese of Tellicherry,
Sandesa Bhavan, Tellicherry, 670 101, Kannur, Kerala
Ph: 0490 - 2344727, 2343707

Published on: 15th August 2017

Editorial Board: Rev. Dr. Joseph Pamplany
Rev. Fr. Joseph Kakkaramattathil
Rev. Dr. Jacob Vennayappillil

Office Assistance: Mr. Renjith KC
Bro. Jerin Marasseril
Mrs. Jeshitha Vijesh
Mrs. Renju Aneesh

Design & Layout: Mr. Midhun Thomas

Printing: Vimala Offset Press, Thalassery

Copy Right: © All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher

Contents

1. Nature and Scope of Spiritual Theology	05
2. Spirituality: Goals of Glory of God and Human Sanctification ...	19
3. The Supernatural Organism	31
4. Conversion from Sin	48
5. Progressive Purification	49
6. Means of Spiritual Growth	69
7. The Theological Virtues	91
8. Grades of Prayer	121
9. Aids to Spiritual Growth	141

Nature and Scope of Spiritual Theology

Although treatises on the spiritual life can be found in the writings of the earliest theologians and Fathers of the Church, spiritual theology did not emerge as a distinct and well-defined branch of sacred doctrine until the eighteenth century. Traditionally, sacred doctrine possessed a remarkable unity that was at once the test of doctrinal orthodoxy and a sign of authentic theology—the science that studies God and all things in relation to God. However, by the time of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the attacks of heresy and the changing political, cultural, and religious conditions made it necessary for theologians to investigate the truths of faith more deeply. The result was that sacred doctrine gradually became more diversified, and was ultimately divided into areas of specialization or distinct branches of the one theology.

Terminology

What is now called spiritual theology has been designated by various names throughout the history of theology. Some have called it simply spirituality; others

have named it spiritual life; devout life; supernatural life; interior life; mystical evolution; and theology of Christian perfection. The terms first used and still commonly used to designate the systematic theology of the spiritual life are ascetical theology and mystical theology, although these words do not have the same meaning for all theologians.

The word ascetical comes from the Greek *askeein*, meaning to practice or exercise in order to acquire a skill, especially an athletic skill. Later the word came to mean the study of philosophy or the practice of virtue, and it was used in this sense by Greek philosophers. St. Paul uses the word only once, in Acts 24:16, but he frequently draws the comparison between the practices of the Christian life and athletic exercises (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:28; *gymnazein* in 1 Tim. 4:7-8, Heb. 5:14, and 12:11 designates spiritual striving). Among the early Christians the name ascetics was given to those who observed continence under the vow of chastity, from which it was ultimately applied to the practices of the monastic life. It seems that a Polish Franciscan named Dobrosielski introduced the word ascetical into the Latin usage of western theology in 1655, and between 1752 and 1754 the Italian Jesuit Scaramelli used the term in contradistinction to the older word mystical.

The term mystical, also from the Greek (*mystikos*), originally referred to secret or hidden rites known only to the initiated. The noun *mysterion* is used in the Book of Daniel and also in the Deuterocanonical books; in the New Testament it is used by St. Paul to signify a secret of God pertaining to man's salvation, the hidden or symbolic sense of a narration, or anything whose activity or power is hidden. The adjective mystical is not found in the New Testament or in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers; it was introduced only in the third century, and with the passage of time it assumed three meanings: liturgically, it referred to religious cult; exegetically, it signified an allegorical or a typical interpretation of Scripture as distinct from the literal sense; theologically, it meant a more profound knowledge of the truths of faith - knowledge not shared by all.

In the fourth century the expression mystical theology is found in the writings of Marcellus Ancyranus; in the fifth century, in the writings of Marcus Eremita; and the expression was introduced into western theology at the beginning of the sixth century by the Pseudo Dionysius, author of 'De mystica theologia.' By this time the word mystical

designated not only the superior and deeper knowledge formerly known as gnosis but also an experiential, intuitive knowledge of the divine. Gradually the word was identified with contemplation, and treatises on the subject tended to become more abstract and scientific.

John Gerson (1363-1429), chancellor of the University of Paris, made a further distinction in his treatise, *On Mystical Theology, Speculative and Practical*, and speculative mystical theology was extended to include the whole theology of the spiritual life, from first conversion to the full experience of the mystical life. Early in the 1750s Scaramelli introduced the distinction between ascetical and mystical theology, and the latter was again restricted to the study of contemplation and the extraordinary mystical graces. In modern times two Dominicans, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and John Arintero, defended and restored the traditional teaching: there is but one path to Christian perfection, though it admits of ascetical and mystical stages, and the mystical life is not the result of extraordinary graces but the normal development and perfection of the grace received by every Christian at baptism. Vatican Council II made this same doctrine its own when it stated:

The Lord Jesus, divine teacher and model of all perfection, preached holiness of life (of which he is the author and maker) to each and every one of his disciples without distinction: "In a word, you must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). For he sent the Holy Spirit to all to move them interiorly to love God with their whole heart, with their whole soul, with their whole understanding, and with their whole strength (cf. Mark 12:30), and to love one another as Christ loved them (cf. John 13:34; 15:12) It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one - that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God's Spirit and, obeying the Father's voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and in truth, follow Christ poor, humble and cross-bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory.¹

In view of the historical development of the terminology, it is not surprising that modern theologians do not agree on the meaning of the words ascetical and mystical. All the more reason, then, for students of ascetico - mystical theology to familiarize themselves with the

variations in vocabulary before attempting to evaluate an author's teaching. Modern authors will usually fall into one of the following categories in their use of the words ascetical and mystical:

1. The terms are convertible, and either one can be used to designate the entire field of spiritual theology.
2. Ascetical theology studies the spiritual life from its beginning to the threshold of infused contemplation; mystical theology treats the stages of infused contemplation, passive purgation, and the transforming union.
3. Ascetical theology investigates the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways so far as ordinary grace is the operative principle in each; mystical theology is restricted to infused contemplation as an effect of extraordinary grace and to the epiphenomena that sometimes accompany infused contemplation.
4. Ascetical theology treats of the purgative and illuminative ways; mystical theology studies the unitive way.
5. The distinction between the ascetical and the mystical aspects of the spiritual life is determined by the predominance of the acquired and infused virtues (ascetical theology) or the predominance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (mystical theology). Other theologians, fundamentally in agreement with this teaching, distinguish between the activity and passivity of the soul so far as it operates under grace and the virtues (ascetical) or under the movement of the Holy Spirit through his gifts (mystical).
6. In Protestant theology the word asceticism usually refers to the practices of mortification and self-denial; mysticism signifies any experiential knowledge of suprasensible things, including occultism, spiritualism, religious ecstasy, and extraordinary psychic phenomena. Many contemporary Protestant theologians reject the terms ascetical and mystical and prefer to speak of piety, pietism, or Christian lifestyle.

Because of the discrepancies in the use of the terms ascetical and mystical, there is no universally accepted name for the theology of Christian perfection. We prefer the succinct title, spiritual theology. It has the advantage of including both the ascetical and the mystical

elements of the Christian life without implying an exaggerated dichotomy between the two. Moreover, it emphasizes the fundamental unity of the spiritual life, which culminates in the same perfection for all; it signifies that this perfection is a spiritual or supernatural perfection; and it classifies the theology of Christian holiness as a branch or specialization of theology.

The distinction between the ascetical and the mystical is not without foundation on the existential level, for at any given moment in the spiritual life the ascetical or the mystical aspect will predominate, and therefore it is perfectly legitimate to isolate one from the other for the purposes of investigation. However, the total view, of the spiritual life should always embrace both aspects, since mysticism cannot be understood - much less experienced - without a concomitant asceticism, and any authentic Christian asceticism contains within itself the seed of the mystical experience.

Definition of Spiritual Theology

In view of the foregoing distinctions, spiritual theology can be described in general terms as the application of moral theology to the spiritual lives of individual Christians with a view to leading them to the perfection of the Christian life. More precisely, spiritual theology is that part of theology that, proceeding from the truths of divine revelation and the religious experience of individual persons, defines the nature of the supernatural life, formulates directives for its growth and development, and explains the process by which souls advance from the beginning of the spiritual life to its full perfection. A brief comment on each phrase of the definition will suffice to explain the subject matter and purpose of this branch of theology and to show its relationship to other parts of theology.

In saying that spiritual theology is a part of theology, we admit some degree of distinction between spiritual theology and the other branches of sacred doctrine, not as a specifically distinct science, but as a field of specialization. Theology itself is one because it has a unique object, namely, the revealed mystery of God as known by human reason through the divine revelation accepted in faith. But theology is also sacred wisdom and in that respect it comprises a complexity of elements that allow for a plurality of disciplines within the one sacred science, subordinating them to the purpose of the one theology and at the same time respecting their autonomy. Thus, as a

part of the one theology, spiritual theology has its own identity as a specialty both by reason of its method (practical or applied theology as distinct from purely speculative theology) and by reason of its subject matter - Christian perfection and the means to attain it. In like manner we admit the emergence of other areas of specialization in dogmatic theology and moral theology; for example, Christology, Mariology, sacramental theology, pastoral theology, and Christian anthropology, to name a few.

To say, secondly, that spiritual theology proceeds from the principles of divine revelation is to say that it is a science of the truths of faith, an unfolding of the faith. If this were not so, it would not be theology at all. Unlike natural theology, which provides a knowledge of God through the study of creation, sacred theology is a knowledge of God received initially through the gift of supernatural faith. Through faith, we possess God in his mystery; through sacred theology, we penetrate the truths of faith by means of the human reasoning process. Hence, God is both the object of theology and, through faith, the principle of theology. Faith is therefore the very foundation of the knowledge acquired through theological study.

As sacred wisdom, theology is the supreme science; it utilizes the conclusions of other sciences but only after judging them in the light of faith. This does not mean that theology may intervene intrinsically and destroy the autonomy of the other sciences, but it does mean that so far as the profane sciences touch the area of revealed truths, it is the role of theology to determine their conformity or repugnance to the truths of faith. And since the theologian of the spiritual life must deal directly with many of the data of the natural sciences, especially psychology, it is particularly important to stress the magisterial function of theology in the study of the nature and phenomena of religious experience.

Nevertheless, spiritual theology must make use of experimental data and for that reason the definition calls for an investigation of the religious experience of individual persons. Spiritual theology, as we have seen, is not a purely speculative science but also a practical and applied theology; it must therefore investigate the experimental data let it attempt to formulate the laws of the spiritual life by an a priori method. However, the experience to which the definition refers is not restricted to the external phenomena of religious experience, as

can readily be investigated by the psychologist. Rather, it is a supernatural experience, an awareness of the workings of grace and the Holy Spirit within the soul. This is the primary concern of the theologian of the spiritual life; the external manifestations and extraordinary phenomena are of secondary importance.

We further state in the definition that spiritual theology defines the nature of the supernatural life. Here the theologian must rely almost exclusively on the truths of revelation, the teaching of the Church, and the conclusions of systematic theology. In seeking to identify the essential elements of the spiritual life, he transcends the variety of religious experiences of individual persons and the particular characteristics that distinguish one school of spirituality from another. The investigation focuses rather on such questions as the nature of Christian perfection, the life of grace, and the operation of the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual theology also formulates the laws or directives that govern the growth and development of the spiritual life. Still closely related to revealed truths and theological conclusions rather than experiential data, the approach is scientific and somewhat speculative rather than experimental and descriptive. The reason is that laws for spiritual growth must rise above particular differences in order to be applicable to Christians of every class and condition. Only when the universal laws have been stated and explained should the theologian proceed to discuss and evaluate the particular forms of spirituality such as lay spirituality, sacerdotal spirituality, spirituality of the religious life, or liturgical spirituality. Therefore this section of spiritual theology treats of such matters as sin and temptation, active and passive purification, the sacraments, good works, and the grades of prayer.

Lastly, spiritual theology describes the process by which people normally advance from the beginning of the spiritual life to full perfection. While it is true that God acts in various ways and the Spirit breathes where he will, so that each person follows a path proper to himself, it is nevertheless possible for the theologian to chart the various stages through which the individual usually passes. For this part of spiritual theology the descriptive and experiential data are absolutely indispensable, since it is here that the general theological principles are tested, so to speak, by the facts of experience. It is also here that the prudence of theologians is tested as they formulate

directives for those who are striving to make progress toward the perfection of the Christian life. "Between the knowledge of the principles of action and action itself," says Yves Congar, "there is room for a practical knowledge which is directly regulat6ry. This knowledge is one no longer of a science, but of a virtue at once intellectual and moral: the virtue of prudence."²

Theological Method

Theology as wisdom is at once eminently speculative and eminently practical because the God who is the object of the study of theology is the God who intervenes in human history and calls us to perfection and salvation. Spiritual theology reflects precisely on the mystery of our participation in divine life. It is concerned not only with the construction of a science or theory of the supernatural life, but also with the existential condition of that life in the individual Christian. Consequently spiritual theology must express itself in both ontological and psychological terms.

Because spiritual theology is part of the one theology, it is closely related to dogmatic and moral theology, from which it derives its principles. And because it is an applied theology, it necessarily contains much that is practical and experiential. Consequently, the method of theologizing must take both of these factors into account; it must, in fact, combine the deductive method and the inductive method and strive to keep a proper balance between the two.

"The descriptive or inductive method abstracts from theological principles in order to investigate and describe the physical and psychological phenomena of religious experience. v Studies of this type make a valuable contribution to the theology of the spiritual life, but to use the empirical method exclusively would cause serious problems.

First, the descriptive method tends to convert spiritual theology into experimental psychology or religious psychology, as Garrigou Lagrange observes: "Whoever neglects to have recourse to the light of theological principles will have to be content with the principles furnished by psychology, as do so many psychologists who treat of mystical phenomena in the different religions."³

Second, although a psychological study may be scientific, the psychologist frequently fails to seek the causes of the phenomena investigated but is satisfied with a collection of descriptions and statistics.

Third, this method tends to give too much importance to extraordinary phenomena, with the result that it fails to distinguish between the normal, concomitant phenomena of mystical experience and the extraordinary, charismatic phenomena. Consequently, it at least implies that the mystical state is extraordinary, that Christians are not even remotely called to it, and hence that there are two distinct perfections in the Christian life, one ascetical and the other mystical.

Fourth, any general rules proceeding exclusively from the empirical data of the descriptive method are unscientific and untrustworthy, since they ignore the nature of the supernatural life of grace and the theological laws of its progress.

Fifth, the purely descriptive method is unable to distinguish between the supernatural, the natural, and the preternatural. It may therefore be tempted to categorize as pathological or diabolical any phenomenon that cannot be explained by the rules and theories of normal psychology.

The exclusive use of the deductive method also presents problems. First it tends to overlook the fact that spiritual theology is a practical, applied theology and must therefore be correlated with the data of experience. Second, there is a temptation to explain phenomena or formulate laws by an a priori method that is not substantiated by the facts. Third, spiritual direction based on the deductive method may be totally inadequate for the needs of the individual or may impede the soul from following where the Spirit leads.

It is necessary, therefore, to make use of both methods in order to correlate the theological principles with the empirical data of the spiritual life with a view to charting the steps to Christian perfection. In this way theologians will be able to discern the unity and variety of the spiritual life; they will distinguish the essential from the accidental and the ordinary from the extraordinary; they will then postulate what is absolutely essential for the attainment of Christian perfection and what is contingent upon individual personalities or states of life.

Sources of Spiritual Theology

The question of method leads logically to a discussion of the sources of the theology of the spiritual life. Some of these sources are common to theology in general; others are proper to spiritual theology. The primary source of spiritual theology, and of theology in general, is Sacred Scripture and Tradition. Thus, Vatican Council II has stated: "Sacred theology relies on the written Word of God, taken together with sacred Tradition, as on a permanent foundation..."

1. Therefore, the study of the sacred page should be the very soul of sacred theology.⁴ The Scriptures unquestionably present God as transcendent and immanent, as the beginning and the ultimate end of a person's life, but the primary witness of Scripture is that God has intervened in human history to fulfill in humankind the designs of his providence. Therefore, we study the divine mysteries revealed by God to know not only what they are in themselves but also what they are for us. Revealing to us our high destiny, the Scriptures answer our innate desire to rise from a fallen condition in order to experience the divine. The Bible is therefore the rule and standard of all authentic spirituality. The fundamental message that comes to us in the gradual revelation of the Old Testament is that God loves us and asks our response through faith and obedience. Then, in the New Testament, God's covenant with Abraham culminates in Christ, who is the "last revelation" and the source and model of our life in God.

Vatican Council II has stated that Scripture, which is "the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit," and Tradition, which "transmits in its entirety the Word of God that has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit," are closely bound together and "make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God."⁵ However, Tradition is not the purely mechanical transmission of static truth; it is a seed that must develop; it is a living tradition that has continuity in history. Thus, Vatican II has asserted:

2. The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts. It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities that they

experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth. Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing toward the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her.⁶

Tradition is therefore a source of spiritual theology at the same level as Scripture because it includes Scripture in the sense that the oral transmission of revealed truths preceded the written record. Moreover, St. John states at the end of his Gospel: "But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25).

We also speak of Tradition as the transmission of the deposit of faith from one generation to another under the magisterial guidance of the Church, which proclaims, explains, and applies the revealed truths throughout the centuries. Unlike purely human tradition, which is subject to error, the living tradition of the Church is infallible as regards the essential content of the deposit of faith, as has been affirmed by Vatican Council II:

3. The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication, and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith.

It is clear, therefore, that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture, and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.⁷ It is evident, therefore, that the Magisterium of the Church is likewise a primary theological source for the study of the spiritual life and Christian perfection.

4. The relation of the liturgy to spiritual theology stems from the

fact that “it is through the liturgy, especially, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.”⁸ It is a vital manifestation of what life in Christ should be, for in the liturgy we have not only an expression of belief but also an experience of life in God. Consequently, the Fathers of Vatican Council II stated that the liturgy is “the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.”⁹ As a source of spiritual theology, the liturgy is closely related to Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church. Vatican Council II stressed the importance of Scripture in the liturgy:

Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from it that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung. It is from the Scriptures that the prayers, collects, and hymns draw their inspiration and their force, and that actions and signs derive their meaning Although the sacred liturgy is principally the worship of the divine majesty, it likewise contains much instruction for the faithful. For in the liturgy God speaks to his people, and Christ is still proclaiming his Gospel.¹⁰

The link between Tradition and the liturgy is manifested in such statements as: *Lex orandi est lex credendi* - The law of prayer is the law of belief. The liturgy is thus an expression of the vital continuity and perennial unity of the Church's proclamation of the revealed truths to all nations throughout the centuries. Finally, as regards the Magisterium, Pope Pius XI referred to the liturgy as “the principal organ of the ordinary Magisterium of the Church.”

Schools of Spirituality

Because the Holy Spirit moves in a variety of ways to lead individuals to perfection, with the result that saint differs from saint in glory, there are styles of Christian spirituality sufficiently diverse to be classified as schools of spirituality. Some theologians reject the concept of schools of spirituality, preferring to emphasize the essential elements that safeguard the unity of the Christian life, but the multiple forms of spirituality in the Christian tradition follow logically from the definition of the spiritual life as participation in the mystery of Christ.

First, the cause of the diversity, as St. Thomas Aquinas states, is that God “dispenses his gifts of grace variously so that the beauty and perfection of the Church may result from these various degrees.”¹¹

St. Paul teaches the same doctrine: “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all the members have the same function, so too we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us” (Rom. 12:4-6).

Second, St. Paul repeatedly admonishes the Christian to strive to become transformed into Christ as completely as possible. But the mystery of Christ is so complex and perfect that it can never be duplicated by an individual Christian or by a school of spirituality. It is a treasure that we share but never exhaust. The greatest of the saints exemplified in their lives one or another aspect of Christ, but never “the whole Christ.” The total Christ is best manifested, as St. Paul teaches, in the Church as the holy people of God and the Mystical Body of Christ.

Third, schools of spirituality emerge as a response to the needs of the Church at a given time. The history of spirituality demonstrates that from the earliest days of the Church to the present, the Christian lifestyles and practices that later became stabilized as schools of spirituality were always introduced to help live the mystery of Christ more intimately and thus grow in holiness. Moreover, if we see the Church, not as an institution or static structure, but as a vital organism constantly evolving toward “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13), the various schools of spirituality can be appreciated as contributing to the progressive building-up of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Finally, schools of spirituality are justified by reason of the fact that grace does not destroy but works through and perfects nature. The supernatural life of grace respects the human personality and condition, and therefore the differences in Christian life styles are rooted in the individuality of the human person and the particular characteristics of groups and nations. Thus, the temperament of individuals, the moral predispositions to virtue or vice, the type of character cultivated - all these factors exert a great influence on one's response to grace and the use one makes of it. These factors will also determine to a great extent one's aptitude or need for particular ascetical practices, devotions, and styles of prayer. They will likewise affect the choice of one's vocation or state in life, and that, in turn, introduces another set of factors that define one's spirituality in view of vocational commitments and duties of state.

When, therefore, saintly Christians follow Christ in a way that appeals to other persons, or when they formulate a spiritual doctrine that can lead souls to greater perfection, they frequently attract followers who adopt the same pattern of Christian living. In time the lifestyle or the doctrine is expressed in a corporate manner by the followers, and this social manifestation emerges as a distinct school of spirituality, e.g., Benedictine spirituality, Franciscan spirituality, Teresian spirituality, or Salesian spirituality. Yet schools of spirituality are not restricted exclusively to individual persons as founders or leaders; they may also be classified according to national temperaments and cultures (French spirituality as distinct from Spanish spirituality), a particular period in history (post-Reformation spirituality and Vatican II spirituality), or the doctrinal basis and content (Eucharistic spirituality and Marian spirituality).

The schools of spirituality are thus an indication of the diversity of the ways of the Spirit, a proof of the Church's respect for personal freedom in following the impulses of the Spirit, and a corporate witness to the variety of ways in which the mystery of Christ is imaged in the Mystical Body of the Church. Therefore one's attitude toward schools of spirituality should be one of openness and tolerance, respecting the diversity of needs and charisms and approving whatever the Church approves.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, nn. 40-41. All quotations from the documents of Vatican II are taken from the English version edited by Austin Flannery, O.P., under the title *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (Northport, N.Y., Costello Publishing Co., 1975).
2. Congar, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-65.
3. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
4. Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, n. 24.
5. *Ibid.*, n.9-10.
6. *Ibid.*, n. 8.
7. *Ibid.*, n. 10.
8. Vatican Council II, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n. 2.
9. *Ibid.*, n. 14.
10. *Ibid.*, nn. 24, 33.
11. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (Taurini: Marietti, 1948), I-II, g. 112, a. 4.

Chapter 2

Spirituality: Goals of Glory of God and Human Sanctification

Because spiritual theology treats of the perfection of the Christian life and the means to attain it, and is therefore at once both eminently speculative and eminently practical, the first question proposed for investigation concerns the goal or end of the Christian life. Such is the procedure in any art or applied science, according to the axiom that the end or goal is the first thing in intention and the last thing in execution or achievement.

The spiritual life has three distinct goals or, if one prefers, it has one ultimate goal and two relative or proximate goals. The ultimate goal of the spiritual life, as of all things in creation, is the glory of God; the proximate goals are our sanctification and salvation.

The Glory of God

Theologians generally attribute to God a twofold glory: the intrinsic glory of the inner life of the Trinity and the extrinsic glory that redounds to God through his external works. By intrinsic glory we mean the splendor

of the infinite' beauty, goodness, and truth of the Trinity. God the Father, knowing himself perfectly, eternally reproduces a perfect likeness of himself by the intellectual generation of the Word, who is the only-begotten Son of the Father. As a result of their mutual contemplation, there is eternally exchanged between these two Persons a current of divine love, which is the Holy Spirit. The knowledge and love that God has for himself in the ineffable mystery of his infinite beauty constitute his intrinsic glory, to which nothing is lacking and to which nothing can be added. God is infinitely perfect and has no need of anything outside himself. Therefore the reason for creation must somehow be found in God's goodness and love. God is love, says St. John (4:16), and love by its very nature is communicable. God is infinite goodness and, as the philosophers say, goodness tends to diffuse itself. But it is a philosophical principle that every agent acts for an end, especially an intellectual agent and therefore God, the first and supreme intellect, must likewise act for an end. However, it is impossible that in creating the universe God could have done so for some end distinct from himself, since that would mean acting for a good outside himself, a good he did not yet possess. Moreover, if God had acted for an end other than himself, he would have subordinated himself to that end and that is incompatible with his infinity and supremacy.

"I am the Lord, this is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols" (Isa. 42:8). It follows, therefore, that God created all things for himself; all created things exist in and for God.

At first glance this may seem to suggest a consummate egoism in God, as if he had created all things for his own selfish pleasure and utility. But it should be noted, as St. Thomas observes, that God does not work - for an end as we do, desiring and striving for a good we do not yet possess. God is infinite goodness, and therefore he cannot desire any good or end distinct from himself; but out of love of the infinite goodness that he is, God wills to communicate the good that he already possesses. Not only that, but all things that exist outside of God are to a lesser or greater degree a reflection of the goodness and glory that are intrinsic to the Trinity. Hence, St. Thomas states: "The entire universe with all its parts 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."¹

The extrinsic glory of God should be understood first of all as a sharing in the beauty, truth, and goodness that constitute God's intrinsic glory. Thus the statement of St. Paul: "Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity, have become visible, recognized through the things he has made" (Rom. 1:20). In other words, whatever there is of goodness, truth, and beauty in God's creation is there as a reflection of the infinite goodness, truth, and beauty of God; and in the case of creatures endowed with intellect and will, they are called to share in the glory of the inner life of the Trinity. By a process that the Fathers of the Church did not hesitate to describe as "deification" and "divinization," God's own glory shines forth resplendently in the souls of the just.

If we had remained in the purely natural state and had not been raised to supernatural life, knowledge, and love, we could never possess formally and physically anything divine; not even divine faculties, powers, and energies. Our knowledge and love could never attain to God as he is in himself, and we could not embrace him with these two acts, which are the arms by which it is given to us now to unite ourselves with him But by a prodigy of love that we can never sufficiently admire, much less worthily acknowledge, he condescended to supernaturalize us from the beginning by elevating us to nothing less than his own status, to make us share in his life, his infinite power, his own operations, and his eternal happiness.²

So the entire created universe exists in order to manifest the goodness, truth, and beauty of God; that is extrinsic glory seen from the viewpoint of the Creator. From the creature's side, however, the glory of God is seen as a striving for greater perfection whereby God is praised and glorified. In fact, in spiritual writing the phrase "glory of God" usually signifies the adoration and praise that are stimulated by the recognition of God's perfections as reflected in the beauties of the universe or the good deeds of individual persons. God is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 22:13), the beginning and the end; and therefore God's extrinsic glory is at once something received from God and something returned to God. And while every creature of whatever kind manifests some perfection of God, the rational creature manifests much more: the capacity to share in the very nature and life of God himself and the ability to give back to God, through praise and loving service, all that has been received.

Everything in creation, and especially the human person, is ordained to the same ultimate end: the glory of God. Hence, St. Paul reminds the Christians of Corinth: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). As Christian souls make progress along the road to perfection, they come to an ever clearer realization that their personal sanctification and even their perfect happiness in heaven are not the ultimate goal of the spiritual life; rather, one's sanctification and salvation are the most excellent and efficacious means of giving glory to the Trinity. Thus, when drawing his map of the journey to the mount of perfection, St. John of the Cross printed these words on the summit: "Here on this mount, dwell only the honor and glory of God."

Salvation - The Life of Glory

"But trailing clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our home." The words of the poet Wordsworth serve as a succinct description of the intimate relationship, between the ultimate end of the Christian life - the glory of God - and the proximate or secondary ends: salvation and sanctification. Since the secondary ends are more immediate, Christians are usually much more aware of them, especially the salvation of one's soul. As a result, the secondary ends normally have a greater influence on one's daily life and actions than does the concept of the glory of God. In fact, the glory of God does not seem to be a dominating motive in the lives of Christians until they have advanced rather far on the road to perfection. This, however, is readily understood when we realize how difficult it is to achieve total abandonment to God's will, which comes only at the cost of a profound and painful purgation of self-love.

As we use the term here, salvation is synonymous with the expressions "man's ultimate happiness," "eternal life," and "life in glory." We have stated that as a proximate goal of the spiritual life, salvation is intimately related to the ultimate goal: the glory of God. It could not be otherwise because man's ultimate and perfect happiness in heaven will be the result of the full flowering of the life of grace received through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that life, both in time and in eternity, is at once a sharing in the life of the Trinity (God's intrinsic glory) and the source of man's justification and supernatural perfection (God's extrinsic glory).

Beatitude or perfect happiness, says St. Thomas, constitutes Man's

ultimate perfection.³ It cannot be realized in this life, which is a time of pilgrimage and vigil, because St. John writes: "What we shall later be has not yet come to light. We know that when it comes to light we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is Our love is brought to perfection in this, that we should have confidence on the day of judgment" (1 John 3:2; 4:17). Man's ultimate happiness and definitive perfection will be attained only in the life after death, in glory, where the blessed enjoy forever the beauty of the triune God.

St. Paul experienced such a profound yearning for heaven that he wrote to the Philippians: "I long to be freed from this life and to be with Christ, for that is the far better thing; yet it is more urgent that I remain alive for your sakes" (Phil. 1:23). Many of the saints and mystics throughout the centuries have echoed the same sentiment as we see in the statements made by St. Teresa of Avila: "I want to see God, and to see him we must die," and St. Augustine: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that man's final beatitude in glory depends on two conditions: the total perfection of the individual and a knowledge of the good possessed in glory.⁴ The first condition is verified as soon as the just soul reaches heaven, for nothing imperfect or stained can enter into glory. Moreover, it has been divinized to the full extent of its capacity because the supernatural life received through Christ comes to its full development in glory. "Those he called he justified, and with those he justified he shared his glory" (Rom. 8:30). Therefore all the souls of the blessed are perfect, and every soul in glory is a saint, whether canonized or not, since each soul in heaven enjoys the most intimate union with God that is possible to it.

Does this mean that only those souls can enter glory that have reached a high degree of grace and spiritual perfection? To answer this question it is necessary to make a distinction between salvation as being saved, and salvation as the state of glory or the actual enjoyment of perfect happiness in heaven. Salvation is achieved by all those who die in the state of grace, even in a minimal degree,⁵ but this does not mean that all the souls of the just enter immediately into the beatitude of glory. It is explicitly defined by the Church that those who die in the state of grace and are in no need of further purification will enter glory immediately after death, but those who still need to be purified will enter heaven only when their purification is completed.⁶

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange explains the matter as follows: The dogma of purgatory, then, throws a new light on the present question. Purgatory is a punishment that supposes a sin that could have been avoided and an insufficient satisfaction that could have been complete if we had better accepted the trials of the present life. It is certain that no one will be detained in purgatory except for sins that could have been avoided or for negligence in making reparation for them. Therefore normally we should, like the saints, undergo our purgatory in this life while meriting, while growing in love, instead of after death without meriting.

Therefore sanctifying grace, which is of itself ordained to eternal life, is also ordained to such perfection that the soul may receive the light of glory immediately after death without passing through purgatory. This disposition to enter heaven immediately after death supposes a complete purification, analogous at least to that of souls that are about to leave purgatory and have a very ardent desire for God. According to St. John of the Cross, this complete purification is normally found on earth only in those who have courageously endured the passive purifications of the senses and the spirit, which prepare the soul for intimate union with God (The Dark Night, Book II, Chap. 20).

The second condition postulated by St. Thomas for man's perfect happiness in glory is a knowledge of the good possessed. Now St. John states that in the life to come we shall see God as he is (1 John 3:2), and St. Paul says: "Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. My knowledge is imperfect now; then I shall know even as I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Because of this teaching, theologians use the phrase "beatific vision" to describe the intimate and joyful union of the souls of the blessed with God in glory. "The activity of eternal life ; " says Arintero, "consists in knowing and loving God the Father and Jesus Christ whom he sent; that is, in contemplating clearly the most august and most profound secrets of the divinity and the ineffable mysteries of our redemption and deification. Such is the everlasting activity of the blessed who enjoy the infinite treasures of the paternal heritage, contemplate the bottomless abyss of uncreated Beauty, and love the absolute Goodness."⁷

Two official ecclesiastical statements concerning the beatific vision

are of special importance in the theology of man's life in glory. The first is a declaration by Pope Benedict XII: "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."⁸ The second statement is found in a decree issued by the Council of Florence: "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."⁹

The necessity of postulating a "face-to-face vision, with no creature as a medium of vision" follows from the assertion by St. Thomas: "To say that God is seen through some likeness is to say that God is not seen at all."¹⁰ And since the human intellect cannot know anything without an intellectual species or idea, it must be said that the divine essence itself is the intelligible species.

However, for the human intellect in glory to receive the divine essence as an intelligible species, its capacity must be vastly extended. Otherwise, according to the axiom that whatever is received is received according to the capacity or mode of the recipient, the knowledge or vision of God in glory would not be substantially different from that of the soul as a wayfarer. As a result, the divine essence would be brought down to the capacity of the human intellect. St. Thomas, therefore, argues to the necessity of an elevation of the human intellect by some kind of supernatural gift.

Nothing can receive a higher form unless it be disposed there by raising and enlarging its capacity, because every act is limited to its proper power. Now the divine essence is a higher form than any created intellect. Therefore, in order that the divine essence become the intelligible species for a created intellect, which is required in order that the divine substance be seen, the created intellect must be raised for that purpose by some supernatural disposition.¹¹

When any created intellect sees the essence of God, the essence of God itself becomes the intelligible form of the intellect. Hence it is necessary ... that the power of understanding should be aided by divine grace. Now this increase of the intellectual powers is called the illumination of the intellect And this is the light spoken of in Revelation 21:23: "It (the society of the blessed who see God) was lit by the radiant glory of God."¹²

The illumination of the intellect described by St. Thomas is known in theology as the light of glory (*lumen gloriae*), and while the Church has never defined its precise nature, the Council of Vienne (1311-12) did condemn the opinion that denies the necessity of a special illumination of the intellect in glory.¹³ Some theologians, however, have attempted to probe more deeply into the nature and function of the light of glory. Thus, St. Thomas states that the beatific vision replaces the faith of the wayfarer and is a perfection of the gift of understanding.¹⁴ The function of this gift on earth is to apprehend spiritual things, but in heaven it attains to the divine essence through facial vision. He explains his teaching as follows:

The vision of God is twofold. One is perfect, whereby God's essence is seen; the other is imperfect, whereby, though we see not what God is, yet we see what he is not Each of these visions of God belongs to the gift of understanding: the first to the gift of understanding in its state of perfection, as possessed in heaven; the second to the gift of understanding in its incipient state, as possessed by wayfarers.¹⁵

Other theologians have discussed the beatific vision in terms of the divine essence as the intelligible species of the intellect of the blessed, perhaps taking their cue from the same passage from Revelation just cited: "The city had no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb" (Rev. 21:23). So St. Augustine writes: "Thou art that light in which we must see the light; that is, we must see thee in thyself with the splendor of thy countenance."¹⁶

The Fathers of the Church never spoke of the beatific vision in terms of any created light; rather, the intelligible species in which the blessed see the divine essence is the Word, and the interior power by which they see the divine essence is the power of the Holy Spirit. Arintero follows this line of thought:

What, objectively, is this divine idea, this faithful expression of the divine essence, but the very Word of God? What is the Word but the most perfect and adequate image, the eternal idea, the living word, the very face of God and his substantial manifestation? He is the eternal splendor of the Father and the figure of his substance; light of light, light of glory on whom the angels love to gaze, the sole luminary in the city of God where none other is needed.

Hence the Word, to whose image souls are configured and who is immediately united to their intellects, is the eternal light that objectively enlightens them, the true *lumen gloriae* in whom they see the face of God. He is the absolute and adequate idea in whom they see the divine essence faithfully and without any intermediary. But that we may see the divine essence and receive such an idea, it is necessary, we repeat, that our intellects be strengthened subjectively and their capacity enlarged This cannot be effected through any created power that would be of the same condition or incapacity as the soul itself. It can be done only through divine power; that is, through the loving Spirit who strengthens us from within and fortifies our weakness.¹⁷

What has been said about man's eternal beatitude in glory as a proximate end of the spiritual life should suffice to give a basic understanding of that beatitude as the perfect fulfillment of the life of the spirit. But it was not God's will simply to bestow on us the gift of grace and then bring it to its full flowering without our cooperation. Rather, he has commanded all men to love and serve him in this life in order to attain the ultimate happiness of heaven.

For God did not make men simply for heaven, but for coming to heaven through generous and good acts that his grace enables us to perform here and now. God's gift was not to be only the blessed life of heaven, but the further gift of letting men gain blessedness as a merited reward We live now a pilgrim life, among sacraments and symbols. But one who believes and hopes and loves possesses already the living seeds of that life which is beyond signs. It is our joy to have received the life God gives now, and freely to serve him now, making his kingdom present even now on earth among men.¹⁸

Sanctification and Salvation

After the glory of God and the beatific vision in heaven, the spiritual life has for its end or goal the sanctification of one's own soul. This means that all Christians should strive for the perfection of their spiritual life, in accordance with the teaching of Scripture: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48); "To all ..., who are called to be saints" (Rom. 1:7); "It is God's will that you grow in holiness" (1 Thess. 4:3).

The perfection of the spiritual life likewise follows from the very

nature of life itself, since every living thing naturally seeks and tends to its perfection. Thus, St. Paul admonished the Ephesians to strive to “form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature” (Eph. 4:13). More recently, Vatican Council II reminded contemporary Christians of their lofty vocation to holiness in the following words:

The Lord Jesus, divine teacher and model of all perfection, preached holiness of life (of which he is the author and maker) to each and every one of his disciples without distinction, “You must be made perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). For he sent the Holy Spirit to all to move them interiorly to love God with their whole heart, their whole soul, with their whole understanding, and with their whole strength (cf. Mark 12:30), and to love one another as Christ loved them (cf. John 13:34; 15:12). The followers of Christ, called by God not in virtue of their works but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified. They must therefore hold on to and perfect in their lives that sanctification which they have received from God

It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love, and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society. In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that, following in his footsteps and conformed to his image, doing the will of God in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. Thus the holiness of the people of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints.¹⁹

When we speak of perfection or sanctification as a goal of the spiritual life, we must distinguish a twofold state or level of that life: life in glory and life on earth, life before death and life after death. The measure of the perfection or holiness of the spiritual life is the degree of participation by the individual Christian in the sanctity and perfection of God. But sanctifying grace is a sharing in the nature and life of God (cf. 1 Pet. 1:23) and by its very nature tends to increase to perfection. Therefore, the degree of union with God and of perfection in the spiritual life will depend on the extent to which the

soul is permeated with grace.

Perfect union, however, will be realized only in glory, only in life after death, according to the dictum of St. Thomas that man's ultimate beatitude or life in glory in his supreme perfection.²⁰ Consequently, in the strictest sense of the word, the Christian will attain his full and complete perfection only in glory, where, through the beatific vision, he possesses for all eternity the beauty, goodness, and truth of the triune God. Faith then yields to vision, hope to possession, and charity is forever satisfied but never satiated.

To speak of perfection here on earth, in man as a wayfarer, is to use the term in a relative sense, because grace and charity have no terminus or limit so long as we are capable of cooperating with grace and thus meriting an increase. St. Augustine states: “O God, you give us the grace to love you, and when we love you, you give us the grace to love you more.” Only death puts a definitive limit to our growth in grace and charity, and therefore our growth in perfection.

Nevertheless, we may truly use the word perfection to describe the state of the just souls on earth, since even the minimal degree of sanctifying grace constitutes a basic perfection. St. Thomas calls grace “the beginning of glory,” and St. Irenaeus designates it as “the seed of the Father.” Therefore when we speak of perfection or sanctification as a proximate goal of the spiritual life, we are referring not to any specific degree of perfection at a given moment, but to the ideal placed before all Christians by Christ himself: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). This is the goal of our spiritual life as wayfarers: the perfection of the supernatural life received through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is likewise the field of our study in spiritual theology.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, g. 44, a. 4; g. 65, a. 2.
2. Arintero, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 61.
3. See *Summa theologiae*, I-II, g. 3, a. 2 and ad 4. *S.Ibid.*, I, g. 26, a. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, I-II, g. 109, a. 5; g. 111, a. 5; g. 114, aa. 2-3.
5. See H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Freiburg:

Spiritual Theology

Herder, 1963), 857; 925; 990; 1000; 1067; 1305. Hereafter this reference will be given as Denz.-Schón., together with the number of the pertinent passage.

6. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *the Three Ages of the Interior Life*, trans. Timothea Doyle (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1948), p. 649.
7. Arintero, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 121.
8. Denz.-Schón. 1000-02.
9. *Ibid.*, 1304-06.
10. *Summa theologiae*, I, g. 12, a. 2.
11. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chap. 53.
12. *Summa theologiae*, I, g. 12, a. 5.
13. Denz.-Schón. 895.
14. St. Thomas Aquinas, III Sent, dist. 23, g. 1, a. 3, ad 6.
15. *Summa theologiae*, II-II, g. 8, a. 7.
16. St. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, Chap. 36.
17. Arintero, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 126-27.
18. R. Lawler, *etal*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.
19. Vatican Council II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, n. 40.
20. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, g. 3, a. 2 and ad 4.

Chapter 3

The Supernatural Organism

Each of us is a complex being composed of body and soul, of matter and spirit, intimately united to form one person. It has been said that each of us is a microcosm, a synthesis of all creation. We have existence, as do inanimate things; we are nourished, reproduce, and grow, as do plants; we have sensate knowledge, passions, and the power of locomotion, as do animals; and like the angels, we can know the spiritual truth and be drawn to spiritual good. All these vital powers - vegetative, sensitive, and rational - constitute the natural life of man. They are not superimposed one on the other; they penetrate one another and mutually complement one another, to lead to the natural perfection of the whole person.

There is nothing in our nature that postulates, either proximately or remotely, the supernatural order. The elevation to this order is a totally gratuitous favor of God that 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 us and has an organism that is similar to the natural vital organism. As in the natural order we can distinguish four basic elements in human life - the living subject, the formal principle of life, the faculties or powers, and the operations of those faculties - so we can find similar elements in our 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 Spirit; and the operations are the acts of those virtues and gifts. The human soul is a spiritual substance that 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 various functions. But the soul is not a completely independent substance, nor can the soul alone be properly called a person. A person is not the body alone nor the soul alone, but the composite that 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. Consequently, the soul gives us our 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; it needs faculties or powers for operation; and the specifically human faculties that emanate from the essence of the soul are the intellect and the will.

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 the gifts, which are the dynamic elements in the supernatural organism, reside in the human faculties or powers and elevate them to the supernatural order.

Sanctifying Grace

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 vital organism. As a participation in the very nature of God, grace elevates us to the status of children of God and heirs of heaven. "We are children of God," exclaims St. Paul. "But if we are children, we are heirs as well; heirs of God, heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16-17). And in his famous sermon before the Areopagus, he insists that we are the race of God: "We are God's offspring" (Acts 17:29).

Sanctifying grace can be defined as a supernatural quality, inhering in the soul, which gives us a physical and formal participation, although analogous and accidental, in the very nature and life of God. Grace is clearly supernatural, as the formal principle that elevates us and constitutes us in the supernatural life. It far excels all natural things and makes us enter into the sphere of the divine. 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 who hold for extrinsic justification, but it is a truth of faith defined by the Council of Trent. The theological explanation is contained in the following principle: "The love of God infuses and creates goodness in things." In us, love is born of the good object, but God creates goodness in an object by the mere fact of loving it. And since love finds or makes things similar to itself, God's love for us elevates us 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." Briefly, God loves with a supernatural love, and since God's love is the cause of goodness, it follows that he produces in the person he loves the supernatural goodness that is grace.

Participation is the assimilation by an inferior thing of some perfection existing in a superior thing. 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 bestowed on us the great and precious things he promised, so that through these you... might become sharers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). The liturgy also proclaims this fact 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."

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 every agent produces something

similar to itself in some respect. 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, whereas creatures are being by participation.

Hence, there are three classes of creatures that are like him in some respect: Irrational creatures participate in the divine perfection so far as they have being, but this likeness is so remote that it is called a trace or vestige. Rational creatures, so far as they are gifted with a spiritual soul and faculties, represent the perfections of God in a more explicit manner; for that reason they are called the natural image of God. The souls of the just are united with God by sanctifying grace and for that reason they are called the supernatural image of God and, indeed, his adopted children.

But does sanctifying grace require a physical and formal participation in the very nature of God? Undoubtedly yes. A part from the fact that this is a truth that is verified in revelation, there are theological arguments to support it. First, the operations proper to a superior nature cannot become connatural to lower nature unless the latter participates in some way in the former, because as a thing is, so it acts, and the effects cannot be greater than the cause. But some supernatural operations do become connatural to man through grace. Therefore, it is evident that man, through grace, participates physically and formally in the very nature of God.

Secondly, from grace springs an inclination to God as he is in himself. But an inclination to God as he is in himself must be rooted in a nature that is divine, at least by participation. Moreover, this participation must be physical and formal, since the inclination proceeds physically and formally from that participation.

Thirdly, the infused virtues are the faculties of supernatural operations in us; but, since operation follows being, a supernatural operation that proceeds from the soul presupposes in the soul the presence of a supernatural entity, and this can be nothing other than a physical and formal participation in the nature of God himself. It is true that through the power of an actual grace a sinner can realize a supernatural act without the need of sanctifying grace, but we are speaking of an act that proceeds from the soul connaturally, and not of an impulse to second act without passing through the proximate habitual dispositions.

It now remains for us to examine in what sense the physical and formal participation in 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 eternal generation. We do not become divinized through grace by generation or by a pantheistic union of our substance with the divine substance. Rather it is 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 mirror that 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.”

The reason why participation in the divine nature through grace is an accidental one is 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 substantial in God becomes accidental in the soul that participates in the divine goodness.

Moreover, the Council of Trent expressly teaches that habitual grace inheres in the soul of man. 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 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.

We have stated that through grace we share in the nature and life of God. There are several reasons for saying this:

1. Grace is the connatural principle of the operations that reach God 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. The antecedent of this argument is undeniable; all supernatural love and knowledge have God as their object. They focus directly on God as he is in himself, whether it be through the veil of faith or in the clear

light of the beatific vision. The conclusion necessarily follows from the fact that grace is the root principle of the theological virtues.

2. Supernatural participation in the divine nature could not otherwise be distinguished from a merely natural participation, which is also a formal participation, because man is an image of God. Therefore the sharing in the divine nature precisely as divine constitutes the distinction between the natural and the supernatural.

3. In order to transcend the natural order, the supernatural form that is grace must be either God himself or something that touches God under the formal aspect of his deity. But grace is not God himself, as is evident, and hence it must necessarily be something that touches God precisely under the formality of his deity. In other words, it is a participation of the divine nature precisely as divine.

St. Thomas says that “grace is nothing other than a certain participated likeness of the divine nature. If we take the intimate nature of God as an exemplar, sanctifying grace is a perfect imitation that is effected in us by divine infusion. It produces in the soul a likeness to God that infinitely transcends that which is had in the purely natural order. By reason of this, we become God’s children by adoption and form a part of the family of God. Such is the sublime grandeur to which we are elevated by grace.

1.1 Effects of Grace

The first effect of sanctifying grace is that it gives us that participation in the divine nature, of which we have already spoken. This is the root and foundation of all the other effects that flow from sanctifying grace.

Among the other effects, the three mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle, to the Romans hold a place of preeminence: “You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, ‘Abba!’ (that is, ‘Father’). The Spirit himself gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, we are heirs as well: heirs of God, heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:15-17).

1.2 Indwelling of the Trinity

The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the souls of the just is clearly revealed in the New Testament as shown in the following: If

a man loves me, he will keep ‘my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him (John 14:23).

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (1 John 4:16).

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own (1 Cor 6:19).

Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (2 Tim. 1:14).

Scripture uses various formulas to express the truth that God dwells in the soul in grace. The indwelling is attributed to the Holy Spirit, not because there is any special presence of the Holy Spirit that is not common to Father and the Son, but because this is a work of the love of God, and the Holy Spirit is essential love in the bosom of the Trinity.

Theologians have written much and disputed much about the nature of the indwelling of the Trinity in the souls of the just. Perhaps none of the theories provides an adequate explanation; certainly no one of them has been commonly accepted. But what is important for our purposes is not so much the formality and mode of the indwelling as the fact, its purpose, and its consequences. And here we find common agreement among theologians and spiritual writers.

To acclimate ourselves to this mystery, it is well to recall that through sanctifying grace we are “begotten of God” (1 John 3:9). We live a new life, the participated divine life through which we become children of God. The 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 child, 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 child begins to be and to live independently of the father who provided the seed. Rather, it presupposes a continued act of God so long as the soul remains in his friendship and grace.

Through grace, the soul is constantly receiving from God its supernatural life, as the embryo in the womb is constantly receiving vital sustenance from the mother. For this reason did Christ come into the world, that we might live by him, as St. John says (1 John 4:9), and Christ himself says that he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (ibid.). Now we can see why St. Paul says: "And the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me" (Gal. 2:20).

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 Spirit. No theologian would ever have dared to say this, were it not for the sublime words of Christ spoken at the Last Supper:

I do not pray for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word, that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they may be (one) in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one - I living in them, you living in me - that their unity may be complete. So shall the world know that you sent me, and that you loved them as you loved me (John 17:20-23).

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 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; we are also in God and God is in us.

Thus, through grace 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 children of God, but it is an action common to the Three. They are in the just soul, all three Persons, engendering that soul supernaturally, 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 Spirit, thus realizing in the soul the sublime mystery of the triune unity and the one Trinity, which is the inner life of God himself.

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. And 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 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 purpose of the indwelling of the Trinity in our souls. God himself, one in essence and three in Persons, becomes the object of an intimate experience, and when this experimental joy reaches the culmination of the transforming union, the souls that have reached this summit are unable to express themselves in human language. They prefer to taste in silence that which in no way could be explained to others. As St. John of the Cross points out:

There are no words to expound 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.

In these sublime heights, where the soul experiences the divine indwelling that it believed and knew 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 Spirit will come to dwell with the soul, which loves him and keeps his commandments.

2. Actual Grace

The process of sanctification is primarily the work of God, since it pertains to the order of grace, but it also requires human cooperation with the help of grace. Habitual or sanctifying grace, as we have seen, is the basic bond of union between God and the soul and, as such, it is meant to be permanent. Actual grace, on the other hand, is a transient stimulation or movement by which the soul is prompted to do or receive something relating to justification, sanctification, or salvation. Sanctifying grace is central to the Christian life, since it is the very principle of that life, and therefore we have treated it at length. Actual grace is more closely related to man's cooperation with God, and since it touches the freedom and choice of man's will, and the causality and intervention of God in human acts, it has given rise to many disputed questions concerning man's need of actual grace to attain justification or to perform salutary acts when justified. It is not necessary for us to enter the field of controversy, but simply to demonstrate the necessity of actual grace in the Christian life and to note the principal types.

If we accept the basic division of grace into the grace that sanctifies the recipient (*gratia gratum faciens*) and the grace that sanctifies others (*gratia gratis data*), and then divide the former into habitual grace and actual grace, we would have to say that actual grace comprises all the powers, movements, dispositions, and inspirations by which we are empowered to do or receive something on the supernatural level. On God's part, grace is one; the divisions are made on the basis of man, and therefore theologians have further divided actual grace into external or objective graces, which comprise any means at all by which God's loving presence can be encountered (e.g., the liturgy, sacraments, sermons, good example), and internally operative graces that touch the human will effectively. It should be evident, however, that actual grace must be interiorized, that is, it must internally influence our will and arouse our cooperation; otherwise it remains ineffective.

The necessity for actual grace in the Christian life lies in the fact that even the just person needs special help from God to avoid all sin and to persevere in grace. Following the teaching of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas maintains that a person in the state of sanctifying grace still needs the further assistance of grace, first, "because no

created thing can proceed to any action whatsoever except in virtue of the divine motion," and secondly, because of the actual state of human nature, subject to ignorance and weakness of the flesh and further hampered by the wounds of original sin. Moreover, even when endowed with sanctifying grace and the infused virtues, the just person needs the stimulus of actual grace to actuate those supernatural powers. Every act of an infused virtue requires a previous movement of grace to set that virtue or gift in motion. This follows from the metaphysical principle that a thing in potency cannot be reduced to act except by something already in act and since we are dealing with the supernatural order and actions, an actuating grace is needed to initiate a supernatural act.

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.

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 will stimulate repentance for one's sins, the fear of punishment, and confidence in the divine mercy.

Actual grace also serves to activate the infused virtues, and if the individual is in the state of sanctifying grace (for faith and hope can exist without grace), the actuation perfects the infused virtues and is meritorious of increase and growth in the supernatural life.

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

It is evident, therefore, that actual grace is a priceless treasure. It gives efficacy to sanctifying grace and the infused virtues. It is the impulse of God that 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 Infused Virtues

The existence and necessity of the infused, supernatural virtues follow from the nature of sanctifying grace. Although grace is

classified as an accident and not a substance, its role in the supernatural life of man is similar to that of the human soul. Therefore, sanctifying grace is not immediately operative but static, although it is the remote principle of all the activities of the person in grace. And since habitual grace is the principle of the supernatural life, it needs faculties or powers as the immediate principles of operation.

If this were not the case, we would be elevated to the supernatural order only as regards our soul but not as regards our 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. 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.

4. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In general usage, a gift signifies anything that one person gives to another out of liberality and with benevolence. We say "out of liberality" to signify that on the part of the giver a gift excludes any notion of debt or obligation. And we say "with benevolence" to signify the love that prompts the gift. 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 that 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: The Holy Spirit is, therefore, the first gift of God, not only because he is the substantial love in the intimate life of the Trinity, but also because he dwells in us through sanctifying grace. 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 a completely gratuitous effect of his liberal and infinite love.

5. Fruits of the Spirit and Beatitudes

In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul provides a listing of the fruits of the flesh and the fruits of the spirit. The latter fruits are nine in number: love joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, meekness, and continence. Theologians from the time of St. Augustine have maintained that St. Paul's enumeration of the gifts is by no means a complete list, but only a sampling, as it were, of the fruits of the Spirit. This is indicated by the fact that St. Paul lists fifteen fruits of the flesh and makes it clear that the list is not complete.

The first thing to be noted about the fruits of the Spirit is that they are virtuous acts or works performed by those who are "guided by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:18). These works are in opposition to those that proceed from the flesh, as St. Paul states: "My point is that you should live in accord with the Spirit and you will not yield to the cravings of the flesh. The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; the two are directly opposed" (Gal. 5:16-17). Consequently, the works of the spirit give testimony that one is being guided by and is obedient to the Holy Spirit.

The second observation is that St. Paul demands of Christians that they be detached from the things of the flesh and of this world. He says, after enumerating the fruits of the spirit: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit let us follow the, spirit's lead" (Gal. 5:24-25).

Truly, though the fruits of the Spirit are highly perfected virtuous acts, they are called fruits precisely because of the spiritual delight that they produce. "If these works are so perfect, abundant and permanent," says John Arintero, "that one is found to be in the state of producing them with facility and perfection, then they are so joyful

and delightful that they constitute, as it were, a prelude to eternal happiness. Although they may be performed at the cost of annoyance and tribulation, yet they produce in us an ineffable joy to which nothing in this life can be compared. They are truly comparable to the joys of heaven.”

Still more perfect than the fruits are the beatitudes. Like the fruits, they are acts that flow from the virtues and the gifts, but they are so perfect that they are more closely related to the operations of the gifts than of the infused virtues. In a strict sense there is only one Gift and one Fruit - the Holy Spirit; and there is only one beatitude - the beatific vision in glory. But the beatitudes enunciated by Christ are a foretaste of the delights of heaven.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3-10).

Each beatitude contains two parts; the first part refers to a meritorious act, and the second part refers to a reward. The reward applies primarily to the life to come, and yet there is likewise the promise of happiness even in this life. St. Thomas discusses the beatitudes by linking them with the three types of life in which we hope to find happiness: the life of pleasure, the active life, and the contemplative life. But the life of pleasure is false happiness; therefore the first three beatitudes refer to the detachment required from worldly pleasures and satisfactions if one is to receive the reward that is promised. The active life, on the other hand, is a disposition for the happiness to come, since it consists in the practice of virtue; therefore the fourth and fifth beatitudes refer to the active life, and the sixth and seventh beatitudes refer to the effects of the active life that are proximate dispositions for the contemplative life. The eighth beatitude, according to St. Thomas, is a manifestation and confirmation of all those that precede it.

The beatitudes provide a summary of the magnificent ideals proposed for Christian living. They also provide a contrast between the life of those attached to the things of this world and the life of those who follow Christ. This is clearly manifested in Luke 6:17-26, where we are told that Jesus came down from the mountain to a stretch of level ground and, fixing his gaze on his disciples amid the crowd, he said:

- Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
- Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.
- Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.

Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.

- Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger.
- Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.
- Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

Chapter 4

Conversion from Sin

It is a truism in psychology that no two persons are absolutely identical. The same thing is true in the spiritual life: no two souls will follow the same path to perfection, identical in every respect. On the spiritual level the differences are rooted in the predominant moral predispositions of individuals as well as the particular graces that God gives to each one. But grace does not destroy or replace nature; it works through and perfects nature. Consequently the body-soul composite of the individual person can be a help or hindrance to the operations of the virtues infused with sanctifying grace. It is therefore necessary, especially for spiritual directors, to understand the ways in which the psychosomatic structure can affect the work of sanctification.

This need is all the more evident when we realize that in this practical, applied part of spiritual theology we are not dealing with human nature in a vague and transcendental sense we are discussing the spiritual life of individual persons who are striving to die to sin and

live the fullness of charity. We must therefore consider the human person in terms of temperament and character, which are the basic elements that constitute personhood.

The Psychosomatic Structure

According to G. W. Allport, personality can be defined as “the dynamic organization, within the individual, of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought.”

Most psychologists and social scientists maintain that the human personality is influenced primarily by two factors: heredity and environment. Heredity is the fundamental source of temperament, and environment is the basic causal factor in character. It should be noted, however, that environment is used in the widest possible sense; it includes the domestic environment of the family and school, culture, economic and social status, and religious influences.

But to avoid a blind determinism of personality we must add a third factor that is most important of all - the free will by which we make choices. The way in which we use our capabilities, respond to our inner drives, and relate to our environment depends ultimately on our own free choice or volition.

The Struggle Against Sin

Once we have seen the good qualities and the defects of the various temperaments and have understood that the formation of character is primarily a personal responsibility, we are in a position to investigate the problem related to conversion from sin and growth in virtue. At the outset we cannot emphasize too strongly the powerful influence of those predispositions to good and to evil that are rooted in the very temperament of the individual, but at the same time we must stress with equal emphasis the ability of everyone, aided by God's grace, to attain the perfection and fulfillment of Christian maturity. Unfortunately, as a result of original sin we are wounded in our very nature, and the predisposition to moral evil seems to incline us to sin, as Scripture says, from our youth. Hence the tension and the struggle that ensue between the love of God that leads to perfection and sanctification, and the love of self that turns us back upon ourselves in an egoistic love that is incompatible with the generous love that is charity.

Temptations

According to St. Thomas, the proper office of the devil is to tempt. Nevertheless, he immediately adds that not all temptations that we suffer proceed from the devil. Some of them are the result of our own concupiscence, as St. James says: "The tug and lure of his own passion tempt every man" (James 1:14). It is true, however, that many temptations do proceed from the devil. St. Peter compares the devil to a roaring lion who goes about, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

St. James teaches that God never tempts anyone by inciting him to evil (James 1:13). When Scripture speaks of temptations from God, it uses the word to designate a simple test of a person. God permits us to be tempted by our spiritual enemies to give us an occasion for greater merit. As St. Paul says: "You can trust God not to let you be tried beyond your strength, and with any trial he will give you a way out of it and the strength to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

There are countless advantages to a temptation that 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 reminds 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: "Happy the man who holds out to the end through trial! Once he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life the Lord has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12). But to obtain all these advantages, it is necessary to know how to obtain victory with the help of God. To this end, it will be of great help to consider the threefold source of temptations: the devil, the world, and the flesh.

Progressive Purification

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 also necessary to achieve an intense and a profound purification of all the faculties and powers of soul and body. The reason is obvious. When a soul begins the journey to holiness, it is already in possession of sanctifying grace, without which it could not even begin. The soul has been endowed, together with grace, with the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. 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, in spite of these graces, the soul is laden with imperfections and defects. Grace does not of itself exclude anything more than mortal sin; it leaves us with all the natural and acquired imperfections we had at the moment of our justification. The soul remains subject to every kind of temptation, evil inclinations and acquired evil habits; the practice of virtue is therefore difficult and arduous. The infused virtues, received with

sanctifying grace, give the soul the power to perform the corresponding acts, but they do not automatically rid the soul of its acquired evil habits or of its natural indispositions to the practice of virtue. These are destroyed only by the practice of the acquired virtues. Then, when the supernatural habit no longer finds any resistance or obstacle to its exercise by reason of a contrary habit, the virtuous act will be produced with facility and delight.

The reason for the resistance and rebellion of our nature against virtue must be sought ultimately in original sin. That first sin caused a weakening of the natural inclination to good that human nature had in the state of original justice. From this follows the necessity of a profound purification of the faculties in which evil habits and vicious inclinations are rooted. In the process of purification God reserves to himself the better part (passive purifications); but, with the help of grace, we must do all in our power to rid ourselves of all the impediments to the divine action (active purifications).

Purification of the External Senses

The purpose of the active purification of the external senses is to restrain their excesses and to subject them to the rule of reason illumined by faith. A disciplined human body is an excellent instrument for sanctification, but in the present state of fallen nature it 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 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 treat my body hard and make it obey me, for, having been an announcer myself, I should not want to be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27). In another place he says: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). St. John of the Cross repeats St. Paul's teaching and gives a reason that 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 whereof 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 savor 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 Isaias says: "Eye hath not seen him, nor hath ear heard him, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" (Isa. 64:4).

It would be ; at the least, but vanity 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.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand this doctrine correctly in order not to draw erroneous conclusions. It is not necessary to deprive the senses of their proper objects but only to avoid placing one's joy and final repose in the sensate pleasure 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," but if one can see the vestige or trace of God in them, they not only cease to be an obstacle to sanctification, but can be converted into means and instruments for growth in the spiritual life. The evil or the disorder lies in resting in creatures as if they were our ultimate end, prescind from their relation to God; but when we enjoy their beauty, or the pleasure that they give, and are thereby led to God, they become excellent aids for our sanctification. St. John of the Cross 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, this is very good. In such a case not only need the said motions not be shunned when they cause this devotion and prayer, but the soul may profit by them and indeed should so 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.

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 soft touches, if his thought and the affection of his will are at once 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 then 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.

Mortification or custody of the senses is necessary even in things that are lawful. But here, as in all else, it is necessary to observe prudence and equilibrium, without going to extravagant or ridiculous extremes. Some of the mortifications practiced by the saints are more to be admired than imitated. The two principal means of mortifying the senses are (1) to deprive them of anything that may produce unlawful pleasure, and eventually to curtail even lawful pleasure, as one's circumstances permit or one's spiritual needs require; (2) to practice positive mortification by means of bodily self-denial.

Mortification is necessary for all, especially for beginners until they succeed in dominating their passions. In addition to serving as reparation for past sins, bodily mortifications have two other beneficial uses: immolation of self in imitation of Christ and a positive contribution to the Mystical Body by means of the apostolate of suffering. These two functions of suffering pertain to the saints as much as 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: "He who has little regard for bodily mortification, under the pretext that interior mortifications are much more perfect, demonstrates very clearly that he is not mortified either interiorly or exteriorly."

However, one should proceed prudently and slowly, increasing the exercises of penance as the powers of the soul increase and as the interior invitations of grace urge one on more and more. Especially at the beginning, one should avoid any kind of severe bodily penance. It must never be harmful to one's health or make one incapable of fulfilling the duties of state, which are more important than the voluntary practice of mortification. And the soul should take care not

to make an end or goal of that which is only a means, believing that sanctity consists in punishing the body.

If the Holy Spirit wishes to lead a soul by way of extraordinary penances, he will inspire the soul to that effect and will give the strength necessary to carry it out. Meanwhile, the majority of souls should practice ordinary bodily mortification by accepting the little crosses of daily life with a spirit of faith and perseverance. This last point is very important. It is better to accept and carry faithfully the little crosses of daily life than to give oneself to occasional periods of great penance, alternated with other periods of relaxation.

Purification of the Internal Senses

Of the four internal senses - imagination, memory, common sense, and the estimative power - the common sense (*sensus communis*) is controlled and purified by the custody and purification of the external senses. The estimative power is purified and controlled when the imagination is purified and the intellectual judgment exercises its proper function. Therefore, we shall speak only of the purification of the imagination and the memory.

The Imagination: Every idea acquired by the natural operation of our faculties corresponds to an image impressed upon the imagination. Without images, the intellect cannot know naturally. Our Lord frequently made use of the imagination to place the great mysteries within the grasp of the people by means of his beautiful parables and allegories. The imagination also has a great influence over the sensitive appetite, which is moved with great force toward its proper object when the imagination clothes it with special attractiveness.

Because of its great importance and influence, the imagination needs a profound purification. When used in the service of the good, it can give incalculable assistance; but there is nothing that can cause greater difficulty on the way to sanctification than an imagination that has broken away from the control of reason enlightened by faith.

There are two principal obstacles caused by an uncontrolled imagination: dissipation and temptation. Without recollection, an interior life and a life of prayer are impossible, and there is nothing that so impedes recollection as the inconstancy and dissipation of the imagination. Freed of any restraint, it paints in vivid colors the pleasure sin provides for the concupiscible appetite, or exaggerates the difficulty

the irascible appetite will encounter on the road to virtue, thus leading to discouragement. But the difficulties can be avoided if we use the proper means.

Custody of the External Senses. It is necessary to control the external senses, and especially the sense of sight, because they provide the images the imagination retains, reproduces, and reassembles, thus, arousing the passions and encouraging the consent of the will. There is no better way to avoid temptations from this source than to deprive the imagination of such images by custody of the external senses.

Prudent Selection of Reading Matter. It is not only a question of reading matter that is evil or obviously dangerous, but also that which fills the imagination with useless images. There are occasions, of course, when it is beneficial to engage in light reading for relaxation. It is, in fact, a good practice to relieve tension or to rest one's mental powers in this way. But it is likewise necessary to provide holy and profitable material so that the imagination will be directed positively to the good. This is where spiritual reading can contribute a great deal to the proper use of the imagination.

Attention to the Duty of the Moment. The hábit of attending to the duty of the moment has the double advantage of concentrating our intellectual powers and of disciplining the imagination by preventing it from being distracted to other objects. It also helps a person avoid idleness, which is one of the primary sources of dissipation.

Indifference to Distractions. There is no sure way of avoiding all distractions, but one can always ignore them. Indeed, this is a much more effective measure than to combat them directly. One should take no account of them but should do what one must do, in spite of the uncontrolled imagination. It is possible to keep one's mind and heart fixed on God even in the midst of involuntary distractions.

The Memory: We make a distinction between the sense 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 the same. The memory can give inestimable service to the intellect and can be its most powerful ally. Without it, our spirit would be like a sieve that is always empty, however much water is poured into it. For certain types of knowledge, such as languages, history, the physical and natural sciences, an excellent memory is

indispensable.

Precisely because the memory stores up all kinds of knowledge, both good and evil, it is necessary to subject it to purification. Throughout life we experience many things that are of no use whatever for the sanctification of the soul. Many of them destroy the soul's peace and tranquillity, which are so necessary for a life of prayer and recollection. We can offer some suggestions for the active purgation of this faculty.

Forget Past Sins. This is the first step, and it is absolutely indispensable for all who aspire to eternal salvation. The remembrance of one's own sins or of those of another has a strong power for suggesting to the soul the same things by way of a new temptation, and of disposing it to sin again, especially if a vivid imagination is associated with the recollection. The soul must reject immediately and energetically any remembrance of this kind.

Cease Thinking of Past Injuries. This pertains to virtue and is indispensable for any soul that wishes to sanctify itself. In spite of a pardon that has been given, the remembrance of a past offense will disturb the peace of conscience and present the guilty party in an unfavorable light. One should forget the disagreeable episode and realize that our offenses against God are much greater, and that he demands that we pardon others in order to receive his pardon. The soul that nourishes rancor, however justifiable it may seem (and it never is in the eyes of God), can forget about reaching sanctity.

Remember Benefits From God. This pertains to the positive purgation of the memory and is an effective means for directing the memory to God. The recollection of the immense benefits we have received from God, of the times he has pardoned our faults, of the dangers from which he has preserved us, of the loving care he has exercised over us, 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 disobedience and rebellion, of our ingratitude and resistance to grace, our soul will be filled with humility and confusion and will experience the need of redoubling its vigilance and its efforts to be better in the future.

Consider 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 shows how growth in this virtue effectively purges 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 things of earth and raise our spirits to God.

Purification of the Passions

The sensitive appetite is the organic faculty through which we seek the good so far as it is known through the senses. It is generically distinct from the rational appetite or the will, which seeks the good as apprehended by the intellect. Hence, St. Paul says: "The Flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; the two are directly opposed" (Gal. 5:17).

The sensitive appetite, also called sensuality, is divided into two species: the concupiscible or pleasure appetite and the irascible or utility appetite. The former has as its object the delightful good that is easy to obtain; the latter has as its object the arduous good that is difficult to obtain. These two movements of the sensitive appetite give rise to the passions.

The passions are movements or energies we can use for good or for evil, but in themselves, they are neither good nor evil. When placed at the service of the good, the passions 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 directed to God. But when placed at the service of evil, the passions are converted into a destructive force that is truly terrifying.

As movements of the sensitive appetite caused by the apprehension of the sensible good or evil, the passions are accompanied by a certain change, more or less intense, in the organism. Some psychologists use the word passion to designate the more vehement and intense movements of the sensitive appetite, reserving the word emotion for those movements that are gentler and more ordinary. In any case, the passions always presuppose some knowledge of the good that is sought or the evil that is feared, and the judgment made is always in terms of self. The passions are by nature expressions of love of self.

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 pleasure. 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 a version; 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 despair. In like manner, the difficult evil that 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.

The great importance of the passions can be deduced from their decisive influence in our physical, intellectual, and moral life. Without the previous stimulation of the emotions, we would take scarcely one step in our physical life, since the stimulation of the emotions is what enables us to expend an extraordinary amount of effort for good or for evil. Add to this the fact that the passions can have a powerful influence on bodily health, especially the emotions of sadness, anger, and fear. In the moral life the passions can increase or diminish the goodness or malice, the merit or demerit of our actions. They diminish human responsibility when a person seeks a good or evil more because of the impulse of 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.

A prudent organization of all our psychological resources can result in a near-perfect control of our passions, excepting, of course, the first spontaneous movements of passion, but these do not affect morality. People who have lived for years under the domination or disorderly passions have been able to free themselves from this slavery and begin to live a life that is in harmony with the moral law. There is no doubt that there are great difficulties at the beginning, but gradually the individual can achieve self-mastery. The following principles can be helpful in achieving control and proper use of the passions.

1. Every idea tends to produce its corresponding act. This is especially true if the idea or sentiment is accompanied by strong emotions and a vivid representation. Consequently, it is necessary to formulate ideas that are in accordance with Christian morality and carefully to avoid the concepts and ideas that relate to actions that should be rejected. In this way one's action will always be in accordance with one's ideas and values.

2. Every act arouses the sentiment of which it is a normal expression. The rule of conduct following from this principle is that in order to acquire the desired sentiment or to intensify the emotion already experienced, one should act as if already experiencing it. In this way one's sentiments and emotions are controlled by one's actions.

3. Passion augments and intensifies the psychological forces of the individual and uses them for attaining the goal that one seeks. Consequently, it is necessary to choose the emotion carefully in order to gain the most from its psychological potential. In this way one's ideas and actions are effectively promoted by the correct use of emotional energy.

Such are the basic principles concerning the control and use of a passions, but we must now make some detailed applications regarding the rule of conduct in relation to Christian living. First of all, one must be firmly convinced of the need to combat disorderly passions, for these disturb our spirit impede prayer and reflection, prejudice our judgment, stimulate the imagination, weaken the power of the will, and disturb one's conscience. The remedies, of course, will vary with the particular emotion that must be controlled. Against the passions aroused by one's environment, a good remedy is wholesome recreation, distraction, or a journey; against those that proceed from the organism itself, work, custody of the senses and the imagination, and a regular schedule are helpful; against those originating from one's temperament, the best remedy is reflection and will power.

From a psychological point of view the most important requisite for controlling the passions is the firm and resolute will to do so, but wishful thinking will not suffice; there must be a determined resolution translated into effective action, especially if it is a question of a deeply rooted disorder on the emotional level. Hence, it is necessary to avoid those situations that arouse the emotions in relation to sinful objects; to prevent any new manifestation of the emotion; and to realize that

although giving in to the passion may quiet the urge temporarily, it also gives the passion greater strength for making future demands.

Lastly, one should make use of the technique of sublimation or transference, whereby one is able to direct the energy of the passion to morally good and beneficial objects. St. Augustine touched on this when he stated that one should choose wisely the objects of love and then love with all one's heart. The same thing applies to all the passions; they are powers for good and should be utilized as such, but they can promote one's spiritual perfection and human fulfillment only if directed to the proper objects.

Spiritual directors should carefully examine the passion or passions that predominate in the souls under their care. Having done this, they can propose as material for self-examination the control and proper use of the passion as we have just indicated. They should concentrate principally on the control of the dominant passion, but without neglecting the others, for frequently more than one passion will be involved.

The persons receiving direction should faithfully and honestly report to the director regarding progress or failure in this struggle, and they should not be content until they have successfully directed their emotional energies to God and to morally good objects. This is no easy task and for many persons it is the work of a lifetime. On the other hand, it is precisely because they have given up the battle against their own passions that many persons abandon the struggle for sanctity. Lastly, we would stress that we are not here advocating the extinction or repression of the emotions, but their control and proper use, for without great passion for God and the good, sanctity is impossible.

Purification of the Intellect

The active purification of the external and internal senses and of the sensitive appetite constitutes a great step toward Christian perfection. But it is necessary that the purification reach the very depths of one's spirit there to rectify the deviations of intellect and will. After that the passive purifications will complete what a person cannot accomplish by his or her own efforts under ordinary grace.

According to traditional psychology, there are two spiritual faculties of the soul: the intellect and the will. Some mystical authors, including St John of the Cross, considered the intellectual memory as a faculty distinct from the intellect and will, but modern psychology classifies it

as a function of the intellect. We shall therefore speak of the active purgation of the two spiritual faculties that are really distinct: the intellect and the will.

The intellect is the spiritual faculty by which we apprehend things in an immaterial way. Its proper effect is the idea or essence it abstracts from external reality by means of the abstractive power of the intellect acting upon the phantasm in the imagination. Intellectual knowledge is completely distinct and far superior to sense knowledge. Knowledge acquired through the senses always refers to singular objects in the existential order, but knowledge through ideas or concepts is always universal, abstract and undetermined as to individuality. We possess sensitive knowledge in common with animals; we possess intellectual knowledge in common with purely spiritual beings.

When the intellect compares two ideas and affirms or denies the connection between them, it pronounces a judgment which is the second act or function of the intellect. When it compares two judgments or statements and draws a conclusion, it performs the act of reasoning. The function proper to the intellect is judgment and it is there that we speak of truth or error, but prior to that it is necessary that one exercise proper attention and concentration so that the concepts received by the intellect will be in conformity with objective truth.

Although the intellect as a spiritual faculty is eminently simple, mystical authors have made distinctions or divisions of that faculty in order to explain certain phenomena of mystical experience otherwise difficult to understand. Thus, some of them have referred to the mens, or high point of the intellect to designate that part of the soul that always reflects the image of God and can experience the divine even in the midst of trials and darkness. They also speak of the superior reason and the inferior reason. The former reaches its conclusions from the principles of pure understanding, unaffected by the passions or lower powers of the soul, whereas the latter tends toward that which is useful or delightful and is therefore much more closely related to the movements of passion or what is called the “animal man.”

What this means in practice is that the intellectual functions of simple apprehension, judgment and reasoning can be greatly influenced by the appetitive powers of will and emotions. The latter tend to

draw the intellect downward to the things of the senses or inward to selfish pursuits. For this reason the mystical writers have consistently extolled the speculative and contemplative aspects of the intellectual activity.

The active purification of the intellect normally requires first of all the removal of obstacles to the virtuous use of this faculty. This means that the individual must at the outset reject all vain, useless, and sinful thoughts. The imagination, as we have seen, is practically uncontrollable directly, and therefore it will frequently present to the intellect phantasms that must be rejected or ignored. Secondly, it is necessary to overcome ignorance by studying the truths of faith and seeking to probe their deeper meaning and their application to Christian living. At the same time, one should avoid the vice of intellectual curiosity that engages in the study of sacred truths as a purely scholastic pursuit instead of seeing them as truths by which one lives. Lastly, it is necessary to avoid excessive attachment to one's own ideas and opinions, especially in matters of faith. The two attitudes that are especially important here are obedience to the Magisterium of the Church and the cultivation of a mentality that is open and receptive to new developments and applications of revealed truths or theological conclusions.

We can offer the following positive principle as a guide in the purification of the intellect: the soul must let itself be led by the light of faith, which is the proximate and proportionate means for the union of the intellect with God in this life. No one has expounded this principle so well as St. John of the Cross. He repeats it constantly in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

Among all creatures, the highest or the lowest, there is no one that comes near to God or bears any resemblance to his being. For although it is true, as theologians say, that all creatures have a certain relation to God and bear a divine impress (some more and others less, according to the greater or lesser excellence of their nature), yet there is no essential resemblance or connection between them and God; on the contrary, the distance between their being and his divine being is infinite. Hence it is impossible for the intellect to attain to God by means of creatures, whether these be celestial or earthly, because there is no proportion or resemblance between them....

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

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

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 to sense, and detached and freed from all that can be clearly apprehended by the intellect profoundly hushed and put to silence, and leaning upon faith, which alone is the proximate and proportionate means whereby the soul is united with God Therefore, the greater the faith of the soul, the more dosely is it united with God.

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. The reason is that since the rational creature has far greater dignity and excellence than all temporal and earthly creatures, it is made impure by attaching itself to these things through love, but purified by tending to those things above itself, and especially to God. But the first movement toward God is through faith, and therefore the first principle of purification is faith, vivified by charity. It does not matter that faith is essentially about things that are not seen clearly and is therefore necessarily obscure. In fact, it is precisely because of this that faith can provide the only knowledge possible concerning the intimate life of God, who cannot be adequately represented by any created intelligible species. The clear vision and knowledge of God are reserved for us in the beatific vision in glory, but even in this life faith enables us to attain in some measure to the unfathomable mystery of God, though the knowledge be dark and obscure. By reason of its object, the knowledge of faith is superior to all sensible and intellectual evidence that we could háve of God in this life.

It is necessary that the soul inform all its life and actions with the light of faith, and cling ever more firmly to the truths pro posed for faith on the authority of God. Gradually one can reach the point of judging all things through the light of faith and, indeed, to see all things as God sees 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. 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 that 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 that is taken as if it were a true good.

The proper act of the will is love, or the effective union of the will with a known good. All the movements or partial aspects of the human acts that take place in the will, such as simple volition, efficacious tendencies, consent, active use of the faculties, and fruition, proceed from love, directly or indirectly.

Love can be divided in many ways. The principal division for our purposes is the following: by reason of the object, love can be sensual or spiritual; by reason of the modality, love can be natural or supernatural; by reason of the formal object or motive, love can be a love of concupiscence or of benevolence. It is called a love of concupiscence when one desires the good so far as it is good for oneself (egotistic motive); it is a love of benevolence if one loves another precisely so far as the other is good and lovable; it is a love of friendship if the love is directed to a person and is a mutual benevolent love. Thus the sensual person loves with a love of concupiscence the object that gives pleasure; the blessed in heaven habitually love God with a love of benevolence, taking complacence in his infinite perfection and rejoicing that God is infinitely happy in himself; and the blessed in heaven and the people sanctified by grace here on earth love God with the love of friendship under the impulse of the virtue of charity.

Acts of the will may be elicited or imperated. They are called elicited if they proceed directly from the will (e.g., to consent, to choose, to love). They are called imperated (commanded) acts when they are performed by some other faculty under the command of the

will (e.g., to study, to paint, to mortify oneself voluntarily).

As we have already seen, human nature and all its faculties were profoundly affected by original sin. Once the orientation to God had been weakened, the dominion of reason over the sensible faculties was also weakened, and the will itself was readily inclined to selfishness. Hence the necessity of a double effort involved in the rectification of the will: one required to subject the will to God by means of a total submission and conformity to his divine will; the other to increase the power 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 that the will enjoyed when it came forth from the creative hand of God.

It should be evident that we cannot achieve total submission of our will to God unless we first detach ourselves from excessive love of created things and from the self-centered love that runs counter to the demands of charity.

St. John of the Cross reduces his whole spiritual doctrine to this detachment from creatures, as the negative element and to union with God through love as the positive element. 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 reasons for the necessity of detachment from creatures for perfect union with God, as stated by St. John of the Cross, can be summarized in the following synthesis.

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 that have more of potency than of act.

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 that wishes to be united with God must detach itself from creatures. Without this, union with God is impossible.

4. Hence it is necessary that the way and ascent to God should consist in mortifying the desires. Until these desires 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 requires that the soul be purged of every inordinate desire.

5. Some persons 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. If they would exert half the effort in mortifying their desires, 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 earth if it is to bear fruit, and without labor it will bear nothing but weeds, so also mortification of the appetites is necessary if there is to be any fruit or profit in the soul.

St. John of the Cross develops these thoughts throughout all his writings, which teach both the negative element of detachment and the positive element of the love of God. 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 the detachment of the soul from the false appearances of creatures, in order to enable the soul, purified and ennobled, to lose itself in the profundity of the All. He does not disdain creatures; he wishes only to help the soul see in creatures the traces and vestiges of the divine being.

But 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 a vacuum. He wishes to orientate them to God, to make God the only object of the soul. It is true that this can never be attained perfectly until the soul has been introduced into the passive purgations, but God does not usually complete the purification of the soul until the soul 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 desires that divide the forces of the soul. When the soul has become detached from creatures, it will be filled with God.

Detachment from created things is absolutely indispensable for arriving at Christian perfection, but it would be of little avail to detach oneself from external things if one is not likewise 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. St. Augustine says: "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."

Precisely because it is the root of all sins, the manifestations of self-love are varied and almost infinite. So far as it affects spiritual things, self-love becomes the center around which everything else must rotate. Some persons 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 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 egoistic 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 manifestations of excessive self-love.

The soul that aspires to perfect union with God must strive energetically 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: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps" (Luke 9:23).

Passive Purgations

Up to this point we have been examining the active purifications the soul can effect by its own efforts with the help of grace in order to purge itself of its defects. Now we shall consider the part that 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.

The teaching of St. John of the Cross on the necessity of the passive purifications is very clear. In Book I of *The Dark Night*, he treats of the imperfections of beginners. After describing these imperfections in the chapters that follow, he terminates with these words:

However assiduously the beginner in mortification exercises himself in all these actions and passions, he can never completely succeed - far from it - until God shall effect it in him passively by means of the purgation of said night.

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 who are defenders of the double way have said, that the passive purifications pertain only to those souls who are to attain perfection by the mystical way and not to those who are to reach perfection by the ascetical way. 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. Therefore, one or the other conclusion must be accepted: either we must say that there is a perfection that 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.

Theological reason fully confirms the teaching of St. John of the Cross. 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 our objective view of things, especially when self-love makes us see things through the perspective of its own evaluations.

The passive purifications are, therefore, necessary from the very nature of things. Naturally, not all souls will suffer them with the same rigor, because there are many degrees of impurity that have been contracted, and there are many grades of perfection to which various souls are destined. But in every case, in order to conquer egoism, sensuality, self-love, the immoderate desire for sensible consolations, intellectual pride, and whatever opposes the spirit of faith, it is absolutely indispensable that there be a complete and total renewal of the soul through the passive purifications.

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 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. In the mystical state souls are governed in a special manner by the Holy Spirit himself, operating through his precious gifts and divine motion. Illumined by the light of contemplation, they discover much better their nothingness and their misery, at the same time that they see the snares 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.

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.

Means of Spiritual Growth

The spiritual life, which consists fundamentally in sanctifying grace made operative by the virtue of charity and the other virtues imperated by charity, is a positive, dynamic reality; But the life of grace and charity is received into a human nature wounded by original sin and strongly inclined to self-centered love and the works of the flesh. Therefore, St. Thomas states that “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.

But purgation and mortification are not ends in themselves; they are simply the means of removing the obstacles to the growth of grace and charity. They comprise what St. Paul describes as putting off the old man of Adam and sin, and putting on the new man, Jesus Christ, who is the perfect man. But to put on Christ and to grow in his likeness require the use of positive means by which grace and charity can reach their full expansion and intensity. These positive means

can be divided into the three principal ones that are necessary for all Christians - the sacraments, meritorious good works, and the prayer of petition - and certain secondary aids to growth in holiness.

It should be noted at the outset that there is a marked difference in the efficacy of the three principal means by which grace and charity are increased. The sacraments are the most efficacious, for they produce their effects *ex opere operato*, that is, they infallibly produce grace in those who receive the sacraments with the proper dispositions. The other two means - meritorious good works and the prayer of petition - produce their effects *ex opere operantis*, that is, their efficacy depends on the dispositions of the human agent, working under the impetus of grace and relying on God's benevolent love.

If we were to arrange these three means in the order of their efficacy, we would list first the sacraments, then meritorious good works, and finally the prayer of petition. Without in any way disdaining good works and the prayer of petition, we recall the words of the Fathers of Vatican Council II: "It is, therefore, of the greatest importance that the faithful should easily understand the sacramental signs, and should eagerly frequent those sacraments which were instituted to nourish the Christian life."

The Sacraments

Traditionally the sacraments have been described as sensible signs instituted by Christ to bestow grace on those who receive them. As the Word made flesh, and therefore a visible sign of the Father's love for us, and as the Mediator and the Source of the life of grace, Jesus Christ is the first and greatest sacrament. Christian spirituality is a sharing in the mystery of Christ, indeed, in the life that is Christ; the sacraments are instruments of the divine power of Christ, effecting grace in the recipient through the merits of his passion and death.

The sacraments are signs or symbols that actually effect what they signify, and what they signify constitutes the reality of the life of grace. The sign alone, such as the pouring of water, anointing with oil, or sharing in bread and wine, could mean many things, but when these signs are true sacraments, they have a meaning, a relationship to a reality that was specified by Christ himself.

The sign or action passes, but the reality of the effect, the grace received through the merits of Christ, remains. The sacraments, like

the deeds of Christ, retain their sanctifying power for all time. Thus, the Council of Trent solemnly affirmed that the sacraments of the New Law confer, *grace ex opere operato*, that is, by their own intrinsic power, so long as the recipient places no obstacle to the reception of grace.

In view of the foregoing, we can also describe the sacraments as actions of Christ in and through the Church for the bestowal of grace on those who accept him in faith. We emphasize the phrase "in and through the Church" because Vatican Council II did not hesitate to say that "the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men." It is in the Church, the mystical body of Christ that "the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification."

This statement has several important pastoral implications: (1) In her sacramental actions the Church does and wills what Christ does and wills, because the Church as holy is united with Christ and because he gave the Church authority over the administration of the sacraments. (2) All apostolate and ministry, even the lofty mission of preaching the Gospel, should lead people to the sacraments, which are, within the framework of the liturgy, "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper." (3) The Church as sacrament, and as commissioned by Christ to bring all peoples to him through the sacraments, serves as a basis for determining the essence and goal of priestly ministry.

On the part of the recipient, an understanding of the sacraments as points of contact with Christ can do much to dispel the notion that the sacramental signs and gestures are some kind of magic formula that works automatically. It may likewise help Christians to avoid a routine and monotonous reception of the sacraments, especially regrettable in the reception of the Eucharist and the sacrament of penance.

In theological terms we would say that the sacramental effect

ex opere operato must be conjoined to the effect *ex opere operantis*. St Thomas Aquinas teaches that the degree of grace received in the worthy reception of a sacrament will depend ultimately on the intensity and perfection of one's disposition, and since the moment for receiving grace is the moment of sacramental contact with Christ through the Church, one should strive to approach the sacraments with the greatest possible faith, devotion, and love.

Since the sacraments are specific ways of participating in the mystery of Christ, the grace given through the sacraments should correspond to specific needs in the Christian life, and this should be signified by the matter and form of the sacrament. St. Thomas demonstrates that the grace flowing from each sacrament is a special grace proper to the sacrament in question, and that each sacrament corresponds to a particular need of the Christian as an individual or as a member of the Christian community.

The life of the spirit has a certain similarity to the life of the body, just as other corporeal things have a certain likeness to spiritual things. Now man is perfected in his bodily life in two ways: first, with respect to his own person; secondly, with respect to the whole social community in which he lives. With regard to his private self, man is perfected both directly, by acquiring some vital perfection, and indirectly, by removing sicknesses and the like, which are hindrances to his bodily life. There are three ways by which the life of the body is directly perfected:

First, by generation, by which a man begins to exist and to live. Corresponding to this in the life of the spirit is baptism, which, according to the Epistle to Titus (3:5), is a spiritual regeneration.

Secondly, by growth, by which one is brought to full size and strength. Corresponding to this in the life of the spirit is confirmation, the sacrament in which the Holy Spirit is given to strengthen men. Because of this the disciples already baptized were told: "Wait here in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Thirdly, by nourishment, which conserves a man's life and strength. The Eucharist corresponds to this in the life of the spirit. Thus Christ said: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you" (John 6:54).

If man's life, both bodily and spiritual, were inaccessible to harm, this would suffice. But since man at times suffers infirmity, both bodily infirmity and the spiritual infirmity which is sin, he needs a cure for his malady, and this is twofold: One is the healing which restores health. And corresponding to this in the life of the spirit is penance, as Psalm 40:5 points out: "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee."

The other cure is the restoration of former vigor by suitable exercise and diet. In the spiritual life the anointing corresponds to this, for it removes the remains of sin and prepares a man for his final glory. Hence in the Epistle of St. James (5:15) it is said: "If he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." With respect to the whole community, man is perfected in two ways: First, by receiving the power to govern the community and to exercise public office. In the life of the spirit the sacrament of holy orders corresponds to this. As the Epistle to the Hebrews (7:27) points out, priests offer sacrifice not for themselves alone but for the people. Secondly, by natural propagation. Both in the corporeal and in the spiritual order this is accomplished by matrimony, which is not only a sacrament but also a function of nature.

Since our concern is primarily with the sacraments as positive means of personal growth in holiness, it is under this aspect that we shall now discuss each sacrament in particular.

Baptism

Baptism, the first sacrament instituted by Christ, constitutes a new birth into the life of grace, as Jesus declared in his statement to Nicodemus: "I solemnly assure you, no one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit. Flesh begets flesh, Spirit begets spirit" (John 3:5-6). Baptism is par excellence the sacrament of faith, as is evident from the fact that Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations and to "baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

According to St. Paul, baptism is a dying in Christ and a resurrection in Christ to a new life (Rom. 6:3-11), signifying first of all the intimate union of the baptized with Christ's paschal mystery and secondly that, as a result of baptism, the Christian must be "dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). Finally, baptism signifies the incorporation of the Christian into Christ and his admission into the community of the people of God as a member of the Mystical

Body of Christ (cf. Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Several points are worth noting in regard to the significance of baptism for one's growth in holiness. First baptism is a commitment to a way of life and, as is evident in the baptism of adult converts, it means a conversion from the past to one's future as a member of Christ and of the people of God. Secondly, given our proneness to self-love and creature attachments, baptismal promises should be renewed, as is done in the liturgy for the Easter Vigil Mass. Baptism can be received only once, and it imprints a lasting spiritual character on the soul, but to remain faithful to the Christian way of life in the face of temptations requires a constant renewal of commitment.

Lastly, baptism bestows on the recipient the life of sanctifying grace, the infused theological and moral virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus, from the beginning the baptized Christian has all the supernatural powers that are needed to grow to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of charity. Rightly, then, did the Fathers of Vatican Council II state: The followers of Christ called by God not in virtue of their works but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified. They must therefore hold on to and perfect in their lives that sanctification which they have received from God.

Confirmation

Traditionally, the sacraments of baptism and confirmation have been considered the sacraments of initiation, although confirmation is also the development and further ratification of the effects of baptism. As in domestic life, so also in the Church and in the spiritual life, there is an extended period of infancy and childhood, during which the baptized Christian is protected, provided for, and educated in the faith; but on reaching sufficient maturity, the Christian must step forth as a responsible person in the Christian community and give witness to his or her faith by a virtuous life. It is at this phase of development that the young adult receives the Holy Spirit, is marked with the seal or character of the sacrament, and is "more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith both by word and by deed as a true witness of Christ"

It is an article of faith that confirmation is a sacrament of the New Law, that it confers an indelible character on the soul, but it is

not strictly necessary for salvation. The sacrament of confirmation stems from the promise of Christ to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16) who will bear witness to Christ and will enable those who receive the Spirit to bear witness also (John 15:26). In Acts 8:15 ff., there is clear testimony that St Peter and St John imposed hands on some Samaritans who had been baptized previously, but in the primitive Church the sacrament of confirmation was considered a part of the rite of baptism, a practice still prevalent in the Eastern Church.

The soul receives at baptism the entire supernatural organism of the spiritual life, including the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but at confirmation the mission of the Holy Spirit is like a personal Pentecost wherein the soul receives the grace of fortitude to witness to the faith, to stand firm in the faith, and to defend the faith. Thus, Christ told the apostles just before his ascension to heaven: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Consequently, the sacrament of confirmation is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit, in the sense that it involves a special mission of the Holy Spirit to the soul in grace, bestowing the particular grace or power proper to the sacrament as well as the permanent character.

In recent years great emphasis has been placed on the sacrament of confirmation as the sacrament of Catholic Action and the basis of the priesthood of the laity. Pope Pius XII was a great promoter of Catholic Action, for he was convinced that the Church needs witnesses even more than apologists. In a letter to the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon (1933) he stated:

In reality, it is the sacraments of baptism and confirmation themselves which impose, among other obligations, that of the apostolate; that is to say, the obligation of giving spiritual help to one's neighbor. It is true that by confirmation one becomes a soldier of Christ, and everybody recognizes that a soldier must bear fatigue and battle for others rather than himself. But, in a way that is much more hidden from the eyes of the uninstructed, baptism too imposes the duty of the apostolate, since by it we become members of the Church, that is to say, of the Mystical Body.... One member should aid the other; none can remain inactive; each should contribute in his own turn.

The apostolate, therefore, whether considered as the spiritual and corporal works of mercy or as evangelization, is the obligation of every baptized Christian, according to one's state of life, capabilities, and opportunities for apostolic action. This is evident once we grasp the notion that apostolate comprises any work or deed by which we bring God to souls and souls to God. Since all moral activity is specified by its end or goal, authentically apostolic works must always be orientated, directly or indirectly, to the spiritual order, that is, the extension of God's kingdom, the salvation of souls, and the attainment of the perfection of the Christian life. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council have made some clear and challenging statements on apostolic activity:

The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all men partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ. Every activity of the Mystical Body with this in view goes by the name of "apostolate"; the Church exercises it through all its members, though in various ways. In fact, the Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation "to the apostolate as well.

The work of Christ's redemption concerns essentially the salvation of men; it takes in also, however, the renewal of the whole temporal order. The mission of the Church, consequently, is not only to bring men the message and grace of Christ but also to permeate and improve the whole range of the temporal The apostolate of the Church therefore, and of each of its members, aims primarily at announcing to the world by word and action the message of Christ and communicating to it the grace of Christ. The principal means of bringing this about is the ministry of the word and of the sacraments. Committed in a special way to the clergy, it leaves room however for a highly important part for the laity, the part namely of "helping the cause of truth" (3 John 8). It is in this sphere most of all that the lay apostolate and the pastoral ministry complete each other. Laymen have countless opportunities for exercising the apostolate of evangelization and sanctification. The very witness of a Christian life and the good works done in a supernatural spirit are effective in drawing men to the faith and to God.... The witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers to draw them to the

faith, or to the faithful to instruct them, strengthen them, incite them to a more fervent life

That men, working in harmony, should renew the temporal order and make it increasingly more perfect: such is God's design for the world....

Pastors have the duty to set forth clearly the principles concerning the purpose of creation and the use to be made of the world, and to provide moral and spiritual helps for the renewal of the temporal order in Christ. Laymen ought to take on themselves as their distinctive task this renewal of the temporal order. Guided by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, prompted by Christian love, they should act in this domain in a direct way and in their own specific manner.

The priesthood of the laity is also rooted in baptism and reaffirmed in confirmation, and the Fathers of Vatican II insisted that since all Christians are members of the Mystical Body of Christ, "all the faithful are made a holy and kingly priesthood." Nevertheless, the lay priesthood and the ministerial priesthood "differ essentially and not only in degree," though they complement each other and "each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ.

Although there are various opinions concerning the nature of the priesthood of the laity, it would seem that the cultic or sacrificial aspect of the lay priesthood consists in the offering of themselves and their actions - spiritual sacrifices - to God through Jesus Christ. This is indicated in the statement of St. Paul: "And now, brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1). But the "ministry" of the lay priesthood, wherein it cooperates closely with the ministerial priesthood, is in the area of apostolic action and doctrinal evangelization. This would seem to be the teaching of the Fathers of Vatican Council II, who connect the priesthood of the laity with the apostolate: The laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ; they have, therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole people of God. In the concrete, their apostolate is exercised when they work at the evangelization and sanctification of men; it is exercised too when they endeavor to have the Gospel spirit permeate and improve the temporal order, going about it in a way that bears

clear witness to Christ and helps forward the salvation of men. The characteristic of the lay state being a life led in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, laymen are called by God to make of their apostolate, through the vigor of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world.

The Eucharist

The Eucharist may be considered under two aspects: as sacrament and as sacrifice. The Eucharist as sacrifice is the Mass, and the Mass is substantially the same sacrifice as that of Calvary: the same victim, the same oblation, the same priest. Such is the teaching of the Council of Trent: In the divine sacrifice that is offered in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the Cross is present and is offered in an unbloody manner For it is one and the same victim: he who now makes the offering through the ministry of priests and he who then offered himself on the Cross; the only difference is in the manner of offering. The benefits of this oblation are received in abundance through this unbloody oblation.

The event that reveals the true meaning of the Last Supper and the Eucharist that was instituted there is the Sacrifice of the Cross, which changed the Passover from a memorial meal to a true sacrifice. Thus, St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

In 1967 the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued an instruction concerning the Eucharist (ii 8) and it contains numerous statements that are of help in understanding the nature and purpose of the Eucharist. It begins by stating that "the mystery of the Eucharist is the true center for the sacred liturgy and indeed of the whole Christian life." Then, touching upon the doctrinal principles that have been further developed in recent years, the instruction emphasizes the following conclusions: (1) the Mass is a sacrifice in which the sacrifice

of the Cross, is perpetuated; it is a memorial of the death and Resurrection of the Lord; it is a sacred banquet in which the people of God share the benefits of the Paschal Sacrifice; (2) in the Mass, therefore, sacrifice and sacred meal are linked together by the closest bond, so much so that the Mass may be described as a "sacrificial meal"; the Lord entrusted this sacrifice to the Church so that the faithful might share in it spiritually (through faith and charity) and sacramentally, through the reception of Communion; (3) the eucharistic sacrifice is the source and the summit of the Church's worship and of the Christian life; (4) the faithful participate more fully in this sacrament of thanksgiving, propitiation, petition, and praise not only when they offer the victim and themselves to the Father, but when they receive this victim in Communion; (5) the mystery of the Eucharist consists in its fullness not only in the celebration of Mass but in devotion to the sacred species reserved on the altar. From these basic statements the instruction then proceeds to lay down specific regulations concerning the Eucharist, but since they pertain to the pastoral and liturgical aspects, of Mass and Eucharist, it is not necessary for us to discuss them. Rather, we shall make some observations on the four purposes and effects of the Mass.

Since the Mass is substantially the same sacrifice as that of Christ on the Cross, it has the same purposes and produces the same effects. The first is adoration, and this effect is always produced *ex opere operato* because of the infinite dignity of the principal priest, who is Christ, and because of the infinite worth of the victim of sacrifice, who is also Christ. There is no greater way of giving honor and glory to God than by offering to him his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased. This fact alone should call forth the greatest possible reverence and devotion of the priest who celebrates the Mass and the faithful who participate in it.

After adoration, there is no obligation more pressing than that of reparation for sin. In this sense the value of the Mass is unsurpassed in making atonement for our own sins and the sins of others, since in this eucharistic sacrifice we offer to the heavenly Father the redemptive action of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. But the reparatory effects of the Mass are applied to us only in accordance with our dispositions. Hence, we can receive from the Mass, unless we place an obstacle to it, the actual grace to repent of our sins; indeed there is no more efficacious means for

obtaining the conversion of sinners. Secondly, the Mass will remit, if there is no obstacle, at least part of the temporal punishment due to sin. From this stems the great value of the Mass as a suffrage for the souls in purgatory, who can do nothing to help themselves since they are beyond the stage of meriting. Confessors should also consider imposing on their penitents the sacramental penance of having a Mass offered in reparation for their sins.

As children of the heavenly Father, we should go to him with our petitions. But in the Mass, Jesus is always making intercession for us (Heb. 7:25), supporting our petitions by his infinite merits. Without disdaining other spiritual exercises and devotions, which produce their effects *ex opere operantis*, pastors and preachers should educate the faithful concerning the incomparable impetratory power of the Mass. Of all the forms of liturgical prayer, that of petition is the most frequent, and when our petitions are joined to the prayers of the Church and the worshipping community at Mass, blending with the intercessory prayer of Christ our Priest and Redeemer, how can the heavenly Father fail to grant our lawful requests?

The fourth value or function of the Mass is thanksgiving. We owe a debt of thanks to God that can never be adequately repaid, but just as we needed the Son of God to atone for our sins and intercede for us, so we can call upon this same Mediator to return thanks to the Father. If, in offering a Mass for a particular intention, we have called upon Christ to plead for us with the Father, we should feel obliged by a sense of gratitude to offer another Mass in thanksgiving through the same Christ our Lord. Together with adoration, thanksgiving constitutes a foretaste of glory, where all the blessed for all eternity are occupied with praise and thanksgiving to the Trinity.

In speaking of the Eucharist as sacrament, Vatican Council II states: Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of his minister, ... but especially in the eucharistic species The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the Sacrifice and to eat the Lord's Supper.

The faithful achieve a more perfect participation in the Mass when, with proper dispositions, they receive the body of the Lord sacramentally in the Mass itself, in obedience to his words, "take and eat."

For the faithful and the celebrant, therefore, the culmination of the Mass is reception of Holy Communion. It is in every sense of the word an incorporation into Christ, who comes to us in this sacrament. Through the gift of sanctifying grace, the individual Christian shares in the very nature and life of God and is thereby a dwelling-place of the three Persons of the Trinity. Worthy Communion increases sanctifying grace in the soul of the recipient and thus produces a new mission of the Holy Spirit and greater receptivity to the indwelling Trinity.

Some manuals of sacramental theology emphasize the distinction between sacrament and sacrifice in the Eucharist; but, various statements of the Church during and since Vatican Council II urge us to reunite these two aspects and to see the Mass, and Communion as a sacrificial meal. The words of consecration are words, that be speak a sacrifice - a body that is broken and blood that is shed - and the consuming of the victim as food for the spiritual nourishment of Christians is also a sacrificial act. In the reception of Communion the priesthood of the laity is admitted to its highest cultic or liturgical act. It should be evident from the foregoing that the Christian life is eminently eucharistic: incorporation in Christ who comes to us under the sacramental species.

For the worthy reception of Communion, it is necessary, as remote dispositions, that one be in the state of grace and have the right intention. The first is necessary because the Eucharist is a sacrament of the living; the second is required because the worthy reception of any sacrament demands sufficient knowledge and proper intention.

But since the grace received from Communion depends ultimately on the dispositions of the recipient it is also necessary to make a proximate preparation for receiving the Eucharist. The first requisite is faith, and for this reason, after the consecration of the sacred species, the celebrant of the Mass invites the congregation in the words: "Let us proclaim the mystery of faith." St. Thomas points out that on the Cross the divinity of Christ was hidden, but on the altar and in the Eucharist even his sacred humanity is veiled from our

eyes. It is truly a sacrament of faith.

Secondly, one should approach the Eucharist with profound reverence and deep humility. Therefore, just before receiving Communion, we say: "Lord, I am not worthy." If the Virgin Mary proclaimed her lowliness as handmaid of the Lord before receiving into her womb the Word made flesh, and if she again confessed her humble state in the Magnificat, how much more should we sinners approach the immaculate Lamb with reverence and humility.

Thirdly, one should receive the eucharistic Lord with loving confidence, trusting in the infinite love and mercy of the eucharistic Heart of Jesus who came among us precisely to redeem and save us. As our Good Shepherd he will welcome us with joy and take us in his arms to shield us from danger and comfort us with his tender love.

We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of cultivating the proper dispositions for the fruitful reception of Communion. Indeed, since the moment of grace is the moment of contact with the sacramental matter and form, preparation for Communion is much more necessary and more important than thanksgiving after Communion. However, since Christ is present as long as the sacramental species remain, it would be irreverent not to spend at least that time in prayerful thanksgiving and recollection. What better opportunity is offered us for presenting our numerous petitions to the good Jesus as when he is tabernacled within us? Since the Church has legislated that we should normally receive Communion within the Mass and has also stipulated that there be a period of silent prayer after Communion, priests should be considerate in allowing this time of thanksgiving to the congregation before ending the Mass.

Although in modern times the ease and frequency for receiving sacramental Communion have resulted in less emphasis on the practice of spiritual Communion, it is nevertheless a praiseworthy devotion. The Council of Trent had stated that there are three ways of receiving the Eucharist: sacramentally only, spiritually only, and both sacramentally and spiritually. The first case would apply to sinners who receive Communion, lacking grace and charity; the second case applies to those who with a living faith that works through charity express a fervent desire to receive the Eucharist; lastly, they receive the Eucharist both sacramentally and spiritually who receive

Communion with the proper dispositions of faith, charity, and devotion. All worthy Communion is spiritual, and even when the Communion is spiritual but not sacramental, it receives its value from its orientation to sacramental Communion. The effects of spiritual Communion depend on the intensity of one's faith and the fervor of one's love for the Blessed Sacrament (*ex opere operantis*), and it is an excellent way of uniting oneself with the eucharistic Lord and with the Masses being offered throughout the world to the glory and praise of the Father.

Penance

The sacrament of penance has been called a "second baptism," but a difficult and sometimes painful one because of the need to acknowledge one's sin, do penance, and amend one's life. Christ gave his apostles, and through them their successors, the power to forgive sins. Thus, the Council of Trent affirmed that Christ instituted the sacrament of penance particularly at the time when, after rising from the dead, he breathed upon his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit; for those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained" (John 20:23).

In instituting the sacrament of penance, Christ did not specify in particular the integral parts of the sacrament or the formula of absolution. This is determined by the Church, although the Council of Trent specified that contrition, confession, and satisfaction are, by divine institution (*ex Dei institutione*), necessary for the full and perfect remission of sins. Moreover, the same Council declared that the priest must make a judgment concerning the sins committed, which he cannot do unless he knows the sins; therefore the integral confession of one's sins was also instituted by Christ, and the Council refers to James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; and Luke 5:14; 17:14.

The sacrament of penance has both a personal and a communal aspect. So far as it relates to the individual penitent, it calls for conversion from sin (*metanoia*) and the resolve to amend one's life; as regards the Christian community, it signifies that the sinner, now forgiven, has been reconciled with the people of God. But conversion from sin and forgiveness are not granted without repentance. Consequently, the actuation of the virtue of penitence provides the necessary dispositions for worthy reception of the sacrament of penance.

The virtue of penitence or repentance includes sorrow for one's past sins as offenses against God and the resolve not to sin again. It comprises the second act required for the sacrament, namely contrition, and it also connotes conversion of life or metanoia. As St. Thomas says: "Penitence is not considered a special virtue only because it grieves over evil committed - charity would suffice for this- but because the penitent grieves over sin committed as it is an offense against God and because he has the purpose of amendment."

Since the acts of contrition, confession, and satisfaction constitute the proximate matter of the sacrament of penance, the virtue of penitence is not only a necessary disposition for worthy reception of the sacrament; it is also an essential or integral part of the sacrament itself. It will admit of varying degrees of intensity, however, and the more perfect it is, the better disposed is the recipient to receive more graces through the sacrament.

An intense and universal sorrow for sin can obtain for the soul not only forgiveness of all sins and remission of the temporal punishment due to them, but also a considerable increase in sanctifying grace, thus raising the soul to a higher degree of holiness. It is important to realize that on regaining the state of grace in the sacrament of penance, one does not receive grace in the same degree as possessed prior to mortal sin, but according to one's actual disposition in receiving the sacrament.

As regards conversion of life, if the purpose of amendment is lacking, the confession is invalid; and theologians generally list three qualities as essential: it must be a firm determination here and now not to sin again; it must be efficacious, that is, a willingness to use the usual safeguards against sin and avoid the occasions of sin; and it must be universal, that is, a resolve to avoid all mortal sins: Persons who normally confess only venial sins or absolved mortal sins of the past should be especially careful to avoid routine and mechanical confession of sins without a purpose of amendment. As we have said, the lack of a firm purpose of amendment invalidates the sacrament.

In addition to having sorrow for sin and the firm purpose of amendment, the penitent should prepare for confession by an adequate examination of conscience. By Church law, "penitents must disclose in confession all the mortal sins of which they are conscious after a

diligent examination of conscience, even if these sins be most hidden and committed against the last two commandments only. Moreover, even those circumstances that change the species of the sin must be mentioned in confession."

Mortal sins already forgiven and actual venial sins are considered "free matter" for confession; that is, the penitent may renew sorrow for forgiven mortal sins and may confess only predominant or noteworthy venial sins. The reason for this is that such penitents are already in the state of grace and hence their confessions are called "confessions of devotion." Two things should be noted about the repetition of absolved mortal sins: (1) for persons who are weak in virtue the recollection may be the occasion of a temptation to sin again, particularly if it is a sin of sensuality; (2) persons who tend to be scrupulous or are easily put in a state of doubt and anxiety should not normally confess mortal sins that have been confessed and forgiven. God forgives and forgets, as Jeremiah says: "I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34).

The examination of conscience should be made with the greatest sincerity and humility, with a serene and impartial spirit, without excusing our defects and without straining scrupulously to see faults where there are none. The time given to this examination will vary with the frequency of one's confessions, the need of the soul, and the degree of perfection of the soul at any given time. An excellent means of simplifying this task is to make a daily examination of conscience and to note especially those things that must be subjected to the confessor in the tribunal of penance. If one does this daily, it will take but a few moments to make a mental review before approaching confession. Moreover, this procedure has the advantage of keeping one's faults in mind during the week and of avoiding the anxiety that would be caused by forgetting to mention.

Meritorious Good Works

The second positive means for growth in grace and holiness is meritorious good works that, as the term indicates, comprise all the virtuous acts entitling the individual to an increase of grace and virtue. One normally thinks first of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy or of apostolate and ministry as good works, and it is on this basis that many Christians distinguish the active from the contemplative life or love of neighbor from love of God.

However, if these distinctions are pushed too far, one would have to conclude that the only meritorious good works are those that constitute a service to neighbor in the performance of corporal or spiritual works of the apostolate. But this is tantamount to saying that the first precept of charity is love of neighbor and that the contemplative life as such is not meritorious - conclusions obviously at variance with the teaching of Christ and the principles of spiritual theology.

St. Thomas offers a clear explanation of merit in relation to action and contemplation: The root of merit is charity. Although charity embraces the love of God and neighbor... to love God in himself is more meritorious than to love one's neighbor Therefore that which belongs more directly to the love of God is more meritorious on the basis of object than that which belongs to the love of neighbor because of God.

Now the contemplative life has direct and immediate reference to the love of God.... But the active life is more directly ordained to the love of neighbor.... Therefore in its nature the contemplative life is of greater merit than the active life....

Nevertheless it may happen that a person will merit more in the works of the active life than does another in the activities of the contemplative life; for example, if, out of an abundance of divine love, a person consents to be separated from the sweetness of divine contemplation for a time to fulfill God's will and for his glory.

The terms active life and contemplative life are ambiguous because they may refer to a state of life (such as active religious and contemplative religious); they may mean the type of activity that predominates at a given moment in the life of an individual (e.g., the contemplative exercises of an apostle or the good works of a contemplative); or they may signify in general the works of mercy as compared with one's interior life of prayer and recollection. In the spiritual life of the individual Christian, however, both the activity of the interior life (contemplative) and the activity of external works are necessary; they should complement each other and both should be directed to the glory of God under the impetus of charity. Indeed, if properly balanced, the works of the active life are conducive to the contemplative activity of prayer and recollection; conversely, the interior life should be the source of apostolic activity, at the risk of

reducing the apostolate to humanistic philanthropy or social work.

Prayer of Petition

St. Thomas assigns four distinct values to prayer: satisfactory, meritorious, a certain spiritual delight, and impetratory. The satisfactory value of prayer is evident. It is clear not only from the fact that it always presupposes an act of humility and subjection to God, whom we have offended by our sins, but also because prayer springs from charity, the source of all satisfaction for sin. Finally, a prayer well made is a difficult task for imperfect souls, by reason of the attention and firmness of will that it requires; hence it is also satisfactory as regards the difficulty involved.

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 condigno* whatever can be merited in this way so long as the proper conditions are fulfilled.

The third effect of prayer is a certain spiritual delight of the soul. But in order that prayer actually produce spiritual delight, attention is absolutely necessary; spiritual delight is incompatible with distractions, voluntary or involuntary. For that reason, contemplative 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. Prayer nourishes our intellect, arouses our sensibility in a holy manner, and stimulates and strengthens our will. It is truly a *refectio mentis*, which by its very nature is meant to fill the soul with sweetness.

But it is the impetratory value of prayer that 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 impetratory aspects of prayer. As a meritorious act, prayer implies a relation to justice in regard to a reward; its impetratory value implies a relation simply to the mercy of God. As meritorious, it has an intrinsic efficacy for obtaining a reward; as impetratory, its efficacy rests solely on the promise of God. The meritorious efficacy is based above all on charity; the impetratory

value is based primarily on faith. The object of merit and of impetration is not always the same, although sometimes these two aspects may coincide. Most important for our purposes, however, is the fact that prayer of petition, when it fills the requirements, infallibly obtains what is asked in virtue of the promises of God. The truth is definitely *de fide*, based as it is on several scriptural texts:

Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For the one who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. The one who knocks enters (Matt. 7:7-8). You will receive all that you pray for, provided you have faith (Matt. 21:22).

And whatever you ask in my name I will do, so as to glorify the Father in the Son. Anything you ask in my name, I will do (John 14:13-14). If you live in me, and my words stay part of you, you may ask what you will - it will be done for you (John 15:7).

I give you my assurance, whatever you ask the Father, he will give you in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:23-24). We have this confidence in God: that he hears us whenever we ask for anything according to his will. And since we know that he hears us whenever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours (1 John 5:14-15).

It is impossible to speak more clearly or with more insistence. The divine promise regarding an answer to prayer stands out in full certainty in the sources of revelation. But what conditions are required that prayer infallibly obtain and fulfill the divine promises? St. Thomas assigns four of them, to which all the others that are listed by other authors can be reduced: that one should pray for oneself; that one should pray for that which is necessary for salvation; that one should pray piously; and that one should pray with perseverance.

The reason that one must pray for oneself 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, those who pray for themselves, if they do it fittingly, are by that very fact disposed to be heard. If it were otherwise, their prayers would not be true prayers 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 that in any way is necessary or useful for salvation. As such it falls under the infallible impetration of prayer. Hence we can impetrate by prayer the growth or increase of the infused virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and even those things that cannot in any way be merited. It is evident from this that the area of impetration is much wider than that of merit. Thus by impetration one can petition actual efficacious grace in order not to fall into a grave sin or to perform some salutary act or even the gift of final perseverance that is infallibly connected with eternal salvation. The Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, frequently begs in the liturgy for these graces no one can merit in the strict sense of the word.

One must pray piously, and by this word St. Thomas refers to all the conditions 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. St. Thomas raises this very objection, and this is his solution:

The sinner cannot pray piously in the sense that his prayer is informed by the supernatural habit of the virtue of piety, which he lacks, but he can pray piously in the sense that he can ask for something that pertains to piety, just as he who does not have the habit of justice may nevertheless desire something that is just. And although the prayer of the sinner is not meritorious, it can nevertheless have an impetratory value, because merit is based on justice, while impetration is based on pure gratuity or liberality.

Consequently, although the state of grace is undoubtedly most fitting for the 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 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

Spiritual Theology

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), 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 we could not merit in an absolute sense.

Chapter 7

The Theological Virtues

We have already discussed the theology of the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now it is necessary to treat of them in particular, as meritorious good works by which one grows in holiness. The detailed study of each of the virtues and gifts belongs to systematic moral theology, and therefore we shall not repeat what is treated in that section of theology. Rather, we shall focus our attention on the principal virtues that are necessary for the perfection of the Christian life.

The virtues contribute to Christian perfection and holiness in a variety of ways. First of all, when performed under the impetus of grace and motivated by charity, the acts of the virtues are meritorious of an increase of grace. Secondly, they pertain to the essence of Christian perfection, because charity is the principal virtue of Christian holiness while the other virtues relate to Christian perfection as imperated by charity. Thirdly, the virtues constitute a kind of goal in the sense that through the perfection of the virtues the individual is configured to Christ and thus gives glory to God. Our

treatment of the virtues and the gifts will concentrate especially on the virtues as constitutive elements of Christian holiness. It should be noted, however, that while all the virtues contribute to Christian perfection, the pattern of particular virtues that are operative in the life of the individual will be determined by one's vocation or state of life, as well as by one's particular gifts or charisms. Thus, in the saints we find that each one practiced the virtues to a heroic degree and was actuated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit but one saint differs from another in the virtues that formed the pattern of holiness.

The theological virtues are so called because they enable the individual to relate directly to God, whereas the moral virtues have as their objects the proper use and control of our faculties in relation to those things that can serve as a means to personal holiness and eternal life. Thus, by faith we believe in God and accept all that he has revealed; by hope we trust God to be faithful to his promises if we correspond to his grace; by charity we love God as our perfect good and ultimate end.

The three theological virtues are the Christian virtues par excellence, and yet they are not understood or appreciated by those who live according to purely human standards, though these same persons may admire the moral virtues of justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance. The reason is that the theological virtues draw us away from the natural order to the divine and the supernatural. Faith looks beyond the horizons of human knowledge and clings to the truths and mysteries revealed by God in Jesus Christ; hope causes us to regard the things of this world of little worth when compared to the life of glory to which we are called; charity impels us to love God above all else and to love all else in God, rejecting anything that is an obstacle to that love.

However, true Christians do not overreact against the world and brand all creation as evil, nor do they disdain anything that does not bear the label of Christian. At the same time, they have the courage to stand against the purely secular when it infringes on the rights of God and of true religion. The theological virtues, therefore, enable Christians to orientate their whole life and all their actions to God, as St. Paul points out: We constantly are mindful before our God and Father of the way you are proving your faith, and laboring in love, and showing constancy of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.... We who

live by day must be alert, putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet (1 Thess. 1:3-5; 5:8).

1. Faith

If, as we have seen in the discussion on grace, the Christian life can be understood only in relation to the supernatural end to which it is directed and in view of which it must be evaluated, the first place "in the order of generation" must be given to the virtue of faith. The Church has defined the virtue of faith as follows:

It is a supernatural virtue by which, thanks to the movement and help of God's grace, we believe what God reveals to be true, not because its intrinsic truth is obvious under scrutiny according to the natural light of reason, but on the authority of God himself revealing.

In virtue of the divine and Catholic faith, all those things are to be believed which are contained in the word of God—either the written or the traditional word—and are proposed for belief by the Church. The virtue of faith is an infused gift of God, but man "cannot give his adherence to God when he reveals himself unless, drawn by the Father, he submits to God with a faith that is reasonable and free." The act of faith is an act of belief in truths revealed by God, and therefore it requires assent of the intellect. But the act of belief does not follow upon any discursus of the intellect or any evidence that necessitates belief; it rests on the authority of God revealing, and therefore it requires the command of the will preceding the faith-act. But proceeding as they do from a supernatural virtue, both the command of the will and the assent of the intellect in faith are supernatural acts, and hence the third element in the act of faith is the movement of divine grace, for actual grace is the intrinsic principle of all supernatural acts. As St. Paul says: "I repeat, it is owing to his favor that salvation is yours through faith. This is not your own doing, it is God's gift" (Eph. 2:8).

The perfect operation of the virtue of faith requires the state of sanctifying grace and the actuation of charity. Thus, the Council of Trent stated that a faith not united to hope and charity does not unite us perfectly to Christ nor make us living members of his Mystical Body. However, the same Council declared that persons in mortal sin can still possess an unformed faith (not animated by charity). They still believe the truths of faith on the authority of God revealing,

but lacking sanctifying grace, their acts are not meritorious. Only a serious sin directed against faith will destroy the virtue of faith.

The Council of Trent states that faith is the beginning, the foundation, and the root of justification, and without faith it is impossible to please God and to be numbered among his children. It is the beginning because it establishes the first contact between ourselves and God, the Author of the supernatural order. The first thing is to believe in God. It is the foundation, inasmuch as all the other virtues, including charity, presuppose faith, and are established upon it as an edifice on its foundation. Without faith it is impossible to hope or to love. It is the root, because in it, when vivified by charity, all the other virtues live. When animated by charity, faith produces, among other things, two great effects in the soul: the filial fear of God that helps the soul keep itself from sin, and the purification of the heart that raises it to the heights and cleanses it of its affection for earthly things.

Both objectively and subjectively faith can grow and develop in our souls until it reaches an extraordinary degree, but it is necessary to understand this doctrine correctly. No one has explained it better than St. Thomas, and we shall summarize his teaching.

A hábit or virtue can be considered in two ways: by reason of the object and by reason of its participation in the subject (objective faith and subjective faith). Now the object of faith (objective faith) can be considered in two ways: according to its formal motive (the authority of God revealing) or according to the things proposed for belief (the truths of faith). The formal motive of faith (the authority of God) is one and, from this point of view, faith is not diversified in believers, but it is the same in all (one either accepts the authority of God, or one does not). But the truths proposed for our belief are many, and they can be known more or less explicitly (the theologian knows many more and knows them more clearly than the simple believer). Accordingly, one person can believe explicitly more truths than another person, and thus have a greater faith according to the greater explication of that faith.

But if faith is considered according to its participation in the subject (subjective faith), it can also have two modes, because active faith proceeds from the intellect (the intellect assents to revealed truths) and from the will (which, moved by God and our free choice, imposes

this assent on the intellect). In this sense also faith can be greater in one than in another, by reason of the greater promptness with which the will commands the intellect to its assent.

There is nothing to add substantially to the foregoing doctrine. We shall now investigate the ways in which souls can intensify their faith in the various stages of the Christian life.

The principal concern of beginners is to nourish and foment their faith so that it will not be lost or corrupted. In order to do this, certain things are required:

1. Realizing that faith is a gift from God, as St. Paul teaches (Eph. 2:8), they will ask God for the grace to strengthen their faith.
2. They will reject energetically, with the help of divine grace, anything that could be a danger to their faith: doubts and temptations against the faith; dangerous literature that promotes worldly or anti-Christian values; intellectual pride, which is the primary obstacle to a docile assent to divine revelation. "God is stern with the arrogant, but to the humble he shows kindness" (1 Pet. 5:5).
3. They will attempt to increase their knowledge of the truths of faith by studying Catholic doctrine to the best of their ability, thus extending their assent to a greater number of specific truths.
4. They will endeavor to augment subjective faith by making devout acts of faith and by obedience to the Magisterium of the Church.

Advanced souls will cultivate a spirit of faith that will place them on a strictly supernatural plane from which they can see and judge all things. For this, the following things are necessary:

1. They should see God through the light of faith, without taking any account of self-love or selfish views. God is always the same, infinitely good and merciful, regardless of the consolations or dryness we may experience in prayer, and regardless of adversity or prosperity.
2. They should evaluate everything in accordance with the teachings of faith, in spite of anything that the world may say or think. For example, they must be convinced that poverty, meekness, repentance, mercy, cleanness of heart, and peace (Matt. 5:3-10) are

of more value toward eternal life than anything the world can offer. They should renounce all worldly criteria and any points of view that are purely human. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (1 John 5:4).

3. The spirit of faith intensely lived will be a source of consolation in the suffering of this life in bodily infirmity, in bitterness and trials of soul, in the ingratitude or hatred of men, in the loss of one’s relatives and friends. Suffering passes, but the reward for having suffered well will never pass. Moreover, a holy life is much more important than a long life. The apostles, and after them all the martyrs, illumined by the light of faith, walked steadfastly and tranquilly to their death, joyful that they could suffer for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:41).

In perfect souls, illumined by the gifts of understanding and knowledge, faith reaches its greatest intensity. It shines forth resplendently as a prelude to the beatific vision and the light of glory.

1.1 The Gift of Understanding

The gift of understanding is a supernatural habit infused in the soul with sanctifying grace, by which the human intellect, under the illuminating action of the Holy Spirit, is made apt for a penetrating intuition of revealed truths, and even for natural truths, so far as they are related to the supernatural end. The gift of understanding resides in the speculative intellect, which it perfects (the intellect having been informed previously by the virtue of faith), in order to receive in a connatural way the motion of the Holy Spirit.

The essence of the gift of understanding is a penetrating intuition, and this constitutes the specific difference between the gift and the virtue of faith. Faith provides a knowledge of supernatural truths in an imperfect manner (*modo humano*), which is proper, and characteristic of, the infused virtues; the gift of understanding makes the intellect apt for the profound and intuitive penetration (*modo divino*) of those same revealed truths. Simply speaking, this is a type of infused contemplation, a simple and profound intuition of truth.

The gift of understanding is distinguished from the other intellectual gifts (wisdom, knowledge, and counsel) inasmuch as its proper function is the profound penetration of the truths of faith by way of simple apprehension, without making any judgment concerning them. Judgment, so far as it relates to divine things, pertains to the gift of

wisdom; so far as it relates to created things, to the gift of knowledge; and so far as it pertains to the application of these truths to particular actions, to the gift of counsel.

The object of the gift of understanding comprises speculative and practical revealed truths, and even natural truths so far as they are related to the supernatural end. It embraces everything that pertains to God, Christ, human beings, and all creatures, but primarily to the truths of faith and secondarily to all other things as related to the supernatural end.

The gift of understanding produces admirable effects in the soul, and all of them perfect the virtue of faith. St. Thomas Aquinas points out different ways in which the gift of understanding enables us to penetrate into the truths of faith.

1. It discloses the hidden meaning of Sacred Scripture. This is what the Lord effected in regard to the disciples at Emmaus when he opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). In the profound understanding of some scriptural passage, many of the saints found the theme of their whole spiritual life: “The favors of the Lord I will sing forever” of St. Teresa (Ps. 89:2); “Let whoever is simple turn in here” of St. Therese of Lisieux (Prov. 9:4); “The praise of glory” of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity (Eph. 1:6). For that reason these mystics find great satisfaction in the inspired words of Scripture, and especially in the words of Christ himself.

2. It reveals the mysterious significance of symbols and figures. Thus St. Paul saw Christ in the rock that gushed forth with living water to appease the thirst of the Israelites in the desert: “And the rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). St. John of the Cross explains many of the symbols and figures of the Old Testament that reached their full realization in the New Testament or in the life of grace.

3. It reveals spiritual realities under sensible appearances. The liturgy of the Church is filled with sublime symbolism that for the most part escapes the notice of superficial souls. But the saints experienced a great veneration and respect for the slightest ceremony of the Church. The gift of understanding enabled them to see the sublime realities hidden beneath those symbols and sensible signs.

4. It enables one to contemplate the effects that are contained in causes. This is particularly noticeable in contemplatives and in prayerful theologians. After the long hours of meditation and study,

everything is suddenly illuminated under an impulse of the Spirit. A word or a statement is then seen in all its depth and meaning.

5. It makes us see causes through their effects. In an inverse sense, the gift of understanding reveals God and his all-powerful causality in his effects without resorting to a lengthy discursive process. In a simple gaze and by a divine intuition the soul discovers the invisible hidden beneath the visible.

Such are the principal effects produced in the soul by the actuation of the gift of understanding. Perfected by this gift, the virtue of faith reaches an astounding intensity. St. Thomas stated: "In this very life, when the eye of the spirit is purified by the gift of understanding, one can in a certain way see God." On reaching these heights, the influence of faith is extended to all the movements of the soul, all its acts are illuminated, and it sees all things through the prism of faith. These souls seem to be guided entirely by the divine instinct as to their manner of being, thinking, speaking, or reacting to the events of their own lives or to the lives of others.

The actuation of the gifts depends entirely on the Holy Spirit, but the soul can do much to dispose itself, with the help of grace, for that divine movement. These are the principal means of disposing oneself:

1. The practice of a vital faith with the help of ordinary grace. The infused virtues are perfected by the ever more intense practice of their proper acts. And although it is true that unless they go beyond the human mode of operation they can never reach their perfection, the Holy Spirit will perfect the virtues with his gifts if the soul does all that it can by the exercise of the infused virtues. God gives his graces to those that are best disposed.

2. Perfect purity of soul and body. The sixth beatitude, which pertains to the clean of heart, corresponds to the gift of understanding. Only through perfect cleanness of soul and body is one made capable of seeing God: in this life, by the profound illumination of the gift of understanding in the obscurity of faith; in the next life, through the clear vision of glory.

3. Interior recollection. The Holy Spirit is the friend of recollection and solitude. Only there does he speak in silence to souls. The soul that is a friend of dissipation and worldliness will never perceive the word of God in its interior. It is necessary to empty oneself of created

things, to retire to the cell of one's own heart in order to live there with the divine guest. When the soul has done all that it can to be recollected and detached from the world, the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

4. Fidelity to grace. The soul must be always attentive and careful not to deny the Holy Spirit any sacrifice that he may ask. Not only must the soul avoid every voluntary thought, however small, that would sadden the Holy Spirit- according to the mysterious expression of St. Paul: "Do nothing to sadden the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 4:30) - but it must positively second all his divine movements until it can say with Christ: "I always do what pleases him" (John 8:29).

5. To invoke the Holy Spirit. We cannot practice any of these methods without the help and preventive grace of the Holy Spirit. For that reason we should invoke him frequently and with the greatest possible fervor, remembering the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Spirit to us (John 14:16-17). In imitation of the apostles when they retired to the Cenacle to await the coming of the Paraclete, we should associate our supplications with those of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Acts 1:14), the most faithful Virgin and the heavenly Spouse of the Holy Spirit. The divine Spirit will be communicated to us in the measure of our fidelity to grace, and this fidelity must be obtained through Mary, the universal Mediatrix of all graces.

1.2 The Gift of Knowledge

Some authors assign to the gift of knowledge the function of perfecting the virtue of hope, but St. Thomas assigns it to the virtue of faith, while to hope he assigns the virtue of fear of the Lord. We follow the teaching of the Angelic Doctor on this matter but also admit that this gift can be related to prudence, justice, and temperance.

The gift of knowledge is a supernatural habit through which the human intellect, under the action of the Holy Spirit, judges rightly concerning created things as related to eternal life and Christian perfection. It is not a question of human or philosophical knowledge, which gives certain and evident knowledge of things deduced by natural reason from their principles or proximate causes. Nor is it a question of theological knowledge, which deduces from revealed truths the virtualities contained therein by making use of natural reasoning. It is a question of a supernatural knowledge or "divine instinct" which proceeds from a special illumination by the Holy Spirit, who enables

us to judge rightly the connection between created things and the supernatural ultimate end. As a hábit it resides in the intellect, as does the virtue of faith, which it perfects. It is primarily speculative and secondarily practical.

Under the action of this gift the individual does not proceed by reasoning but judges rightly concerning all created things by a superior impulse and by a higher light than that of simple reason illumined by faith. This distinguishes the gift of knowledge from the gift of understanding. The latter, as we have seen, penetrates revealed truths by a supernatural intuition, but without forming any judgments. The gift of knowledge, on the other hand, judges rightly concerning created things in relation to the supernatural end, and is thus distinguished from the gift of wisdom, whose function it is to judge divine things and not created things. This right judging of creatures is the “science of the saints,” and it is based on charity, which relates not only to God but also to creatures, forming a judgment of them according to their properties, and then directing all of them to God.

The effects of this gift are admirable, and all of them have a great sanctifying value. The following are the principal effects:

1. It teaches us how to judge rightly concerning created things in relation to God. This is proper to the gift of knowledge. Under its impulse, a double awareness is produced in the soul: it realizes the emptiness of created things and sees through them the God who made them.

2. It guides us with certitude concerning that which we must believe or not believe. The soul instinctively possesses the sense of faith (*sensus fidei*). Without having studied theology or without having had any education, such souls are aware whether or not a devotion, a doctrine, a counsel, or any kind of maxim is in accord with faith or is opposed to faith.

3. It enables us to see promptly and with certitude the state of our soul. Everything is clear to the penetrating introspection of the gift of knowledge. Our interior acts and the secret movements of our heart are seen in their goodness or malice. In this way we discover the evil or the good that previously escaped our notice. Rightly did St. Teresa say that “in a place where the sun enters, there is no hidden dust.”

4. It inspires us concerning the best method of conduct with our

neighbor as regards eternal life. In this respect the gift of knowledge influences the virtue of prudence, whose perfection is directly under the gift of counsel. By this gift preachers know what they ought to say to their hearers and what they ought to urge upon them. Directors perceive the state of the souls under their guidance, their spiritual needs, and the remedies for their faults. Superiors know in what way they ought to govern those under them, and parents, how to form their children. Here the gift of knowledge relates also to justice.

5. It detaches us from the things of earth. This is a consequence of that right judgment of things that constitutes the proper characteristic of the gift of knowledge. Compared to God, all creatures are as if they were not. For that reason it is necessary to rise above created things in order to rest in God alone. The gift of knowledge instructs the saints concerning the necessity of the detachment we admire, for example, in St. John of the Cross. A soul illumined by the gift of knowledge passes beyond creatures in order not to be detained in its journey to God. The whole of creation is not worth a glance from one who has experienced God.

6. It teaches us how to use created things in a holy way. It is certain that created things are nothing when compared with God, and yet they are vestiges of God, and they can lead us to him if we use them rightly. There are countless examples of this in the lives of the saints. The contemplation of created things raised their souls to God because they could see the trace of God in creation. Sometimes the most insignificant detail, which would pass unnoticed by an ordinary person, made a strong impression on them and led them to God. Here the gift relates to the virtue of temperance.

7. It fills us with repentance and sorrow for our past errors. This is an inevitable consequence of a right judgment concerning created things. In the light of the gift of knowledge, souls discover the emptiness of created things, their short duration, their inability to make us truly happy, the harm that attachment to them can cause to the soul. Then, recalling the times they were attached to created things, they feel a most profound repentance manifested by intense acts of contrition. The pathetic accents of the *Miserere* spontaneously spring to their lips as a psychological necessity to alleviate their sorrow.

Such are the principal effects of the gift of knowledge. Through it, far from seeing creatures as obstacles to union with God, the soul

uses them as instruments to be united to God. Perfected by the gifts of understanding and knowledge, the virtue of faith reaches its greatest intensity.

In addition to recollection, fidelity to grace and invocation to the Holy Spirit, which are the common means for fomenting the gifts of the Holy Spirit in general, we can point out some special means for disposing oneself for the actuations of the gift of knowledge.

1. Consider the vanity of created things. We can never attain by our own efforts the penetrating intuition of the gift of knowledge concerning the vanity of created things. And yet we can achieve something by meditating seriously on this point. God does not ask of us more than we can do at a given time, and those who do what they can, will not be refused the divine assistance for further progress.

Accustom oneself to refer all created things to God. We should never rest in creatures but should pass through them to God. Are not created beauties a pallid reflection of the divine beauty? We should endeavor to discover in all things the vestige or trace of God and thus prepare the way for the action of the Holy Spirit in us.

3. Oppose energetically the spirit of the world. The world is not concerned with anything but enjoying created things, putting all its happiness in them. There is no attitude more contrary to the spirit of the gift of knowledge. We should avoid the false maxims that are completely opposed to the spirit of God. We should always be alert lest we are taken by surprise by the artful enemy, who is constantly striving to turn our gaze away from the supernatural world.

4. See the hand of God in the government of the world and in all the events of our life, whether prosperous or adverse. It costs a great deal to acquire this point of view, and it will never be acquired completely until the gift of wisdom operates in us as well as the gift of knowledge. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to do as much as we can in this respect. God cares for us with a loving providence. He is our Father, and he knows much better than we what things are good for us. He leads us with an infinite love, although many times we cannot discover the secret design in that which he disposes or permits to happen to us.

5. Cultivate simplicity of heart. This will attract the blessing of God, and he will not neglect to give us the gifts we need to attain

perfect purity of heart, if we are faithful to his grace. There is a close relationship between custody of the heart and the exact fulfillment of all our obligations. "I have more discernment than the elders, because I observe your precepts" (Ps. 119:100).

2. Hope

Hope is the theological virtue infused by God into the will, by which we trust with complete certitude in the attainment of eternal life and the means necessary for reaching it, assisted by the omnipotent help of God. The primary object of hope is eternal beatitude; the secondary object consists in all the means leading to it. The formal motive of hope is the assisting omnipotence of God, connoting divine mercy and God's fidelity to his promises.

Hope resides in the will, because its proper object is the good, which is the object of the will, but charity and faith are more perfect than hope. Absolutely speaking, both faith and hope can exist without charity (unformed faith and hope), but no infused virtue can exist in the soul without faith.

Hope tends to its object with absolute certitude, a truth that requires some explaining. The Church teaches that without a special revelation we cannot be certain we shall attain our eternal salvation, although we can and ought to have absolute certitude that with the assistance of the omnipotent help of God, no obstacle to our salvation is insuperable.

The goods of this world fall under the secondary object of hope, but only to the extent that they can be useful to us for salvation. For that reason, St. Thomas says that, apart from the salvation of our soul, we ought not to ask God for any good unless it is in some way related to our salvation.

The act of hope, even of unformed hope, is of itself good and virtuous. This is expressly stated in Sacred Scripture (cf. Ps. 119:112; Matt. 6:33; Col. 3:1; Heb. 11:26) and can be demonstrated theologically because eternal life is the supernatural ultimate end of man. Therefore, to work with one's gaze fixed on this end is not only good and virtuous but also necessary.

By the same token, in this life there is no state of perfection that habitually excludes the motives of hope. The error of the Jansenists and the Quietists consisted in the affirmation that to work out of hope

is immoral and imperfect and gives evidence that individuals desire God as a good for themselves, thus subordinating God to our own personal happiness. But such is not the case. We desire God for ourselves, not because of ourselves but because of himself. God continues to be the end or goal of the act of hope, not ourselves.

Like any other virtue, hope can increase more and more. Let us consider the principal phases of its development in the various stages in the spiritual life.

Above all, beginners should avoid falling into one of the two extremes contrary to hope: presumption and despair. To avoid the first, they should consider that without the grace of God we can do absolutely nothing in the supernatural order. "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Without God's help one could not have a single good thought or even pronounce worthily the name of Jesus (1 Cor. 12:3). They should remember that God is infinitely good and merciful, but that he is also infinitely just (Gal. 6:7). He is disposed to save us, but on the condition that we cooperate with his grace (1 Cor. 15:10) and that we work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). To avoid despair and discouragement, beginners should realize that the mercy of God is untiring in pardoning the repentant sinner; and if it is certain that of ourselves we can do nothing, it is likewise certain that with God's grace we can do all things (Phil. 4:13). It is necessary, then, to rise courageously from one's falls and renew the journey with greater effort and zeal, taking occasion from the fault itself to redouble one's vigilance and effort. "All things work together for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his decree" (Rom. 8:28); and St. Augustine adds, "even sins," so far as they are an occasion of making the soul more vigilant and cautious.

Beginners should also endeavor to raise their thoughts to heaven, and this for several reasons:

1. In order to disdain the things of earth. No created thing can fill completely the heart of man, in whom God has placed an infinite capacity. And even in the event that such things could satisfy man completely, this would be a transitory and fleeting happiness, as is life itself on this earth. Pleasures, wealth, honors, the applause of others - all these things pass and vanish like smoke. When all is said and done, "What profit would a man show if he were to gain the whole

world and destroy himself in the process?" (Matt. 16:26).

2. To be consoled in the midst of their labors and sufferings. Suffering accompanies us inevitably from the cradle to the grave, and no one escapes it. But Christian hope reminds us that all the sufferings of this life are as nothing in comparison with the glory to be manifested in us (Rom. 8:13). If we bear them in a holy manner, these momentary tribulations prepare us for the eternal weight of a sublime and incomparable glory (2 Cor. 4:17). What a consolation for the soul that suffers tribulation if it is able to contemplate heaven through its tears!

3. To be encouraged to be good. The practice of virtue is arduous indeed. It is necessary to be detached from everything, to renounce one's own tastes and caprices, and to turn back the continuous attacks from the world, the devil, and the flesh. Especially at the beginning of the spiritual life this constant battle is most difficult. But what great encouragement the soul can experience in raising its eyes to heaven! It is well worthwhile to struggle for a short time during the brief years of this life in order to enjoy eternal blessings in heaven. Later, when the soul begins to advance along the path of union with God, the motives of disinterested love will prevail over those of the soul's own happiness, but these desires for perfect happiness will never be completely abandoned. Even the greatest saints experienced a nostalgia for heaven, and this is one of the most powerful stimuli for advancing without discouragement along the way of heroism and sanctity.

The advanced soul will strive to cultivate the virtue of hope by intensifying as much as possible its confidence in God and in his divine assistance. To this end, the following practices are helpful:

1. Never to be preoccupied with anxious solicitude for tomorrow. We are submerged in the divine and loving providence of God. Nothing necessary will be lacking to us if we trust in him and if we hope for all things from him. We have the promise of Christ himself: "Look at the birds in the sky.... Think of the flowers growing in the fields Will he not much more look after you?" (Matt. 6:26-30). Christ also tells us: "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

2. To simplify their prayer as much as possible. "In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do.... Your Father knows what you need

before you ask him” (Matt. 6:7-9). The formula of the Our Father, which came from the lips of the divine Master, will be their favorite prayer, together with the other prayers from the Gospel that are so brief and filled with confidence in the goodness and mercy of God. What simplicity and sublimity in the Gospel, but how much complication and confusion in us when we pray!

3. To advance in detachment from all earthly things. Of what value are all created goods when compared with the graces of God. Before the thought of the sovereign beauty of God, the soul will readily renounce all earthly things, and reach the point of conquering the threefold concupiscence to which so many souls are subject on earth and which prevents them from flying to heaven (1 John 2:16).

4. To advance with great confidence along the path of union with God. Nothing can detain the soul if it wishes to proceed at any cost, God, who calls the soul to a life of intimate union with himself, extends his divine hand with the absolute guarantee of his omnipotence, mercy, and fidelity to his promises. The world, the devil, and the flesh will declare war against the soul, “but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31). With good reason did St. John of the Cross say that hope is that which especially makes the soul pleasing to the beloved, and that by it the soul will attain all that it desires.

The following are the principal characteristics of the virtue of hope in perfect souls:

1. Universal confidence in God. Nothing is able to discourage a servant of God when he or she enters upon an enterprise pertaining to the divine glory. One would say that contradictions and obstacles, far from diminishing the virtue of hope, intensify and augment it. Such a soul’s confidence in God will sometimes reach the point of holy audacity. As St. Paul said of Abraham, these holy souls hope “against hope” (Rom. 4:18). They are disposed at any moment to repeat the heroic phrase of Job: “Slay me though he might, I will wait for him” (Job 13:15). This heroic confidence glorifies God greatly and is of the greatest merit for the soul.

2. Indestructible peace and serenity. This is a natural consequence of their universal confidence in God. Nothing can disturb the tranquillity of their spirit. Ridicule, persecution, calumny, injury, sickness,

misfortune - everything falls upon their souls like water on a stone, without leaving the slightest trace or alteration in the serenity of their spirit. One would say that their souls had lost contact with the things of this world and were as tranquil as if they were already in eternity.

3. The desire to die in order to reach heaven. This is one of the clearest signs of the perfection of hope. Nature experiences an instinctive horror of death. Only when grace has taken complete possession of the soul can one desire death in order to live the true life hereafter. Then the soul gives expression to the “I die because I do not die” of St. Augustine, which was repeated later by St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. “Pressing on the Christian, to be sure, are the need and the duty to battle against evil through manifold tribulations and even to suffer death. But, linked with the paschal mystery and patterned on the dying Christ, he will hasten forward to resurrection in the strength which comes from hope.”

4. Heaven begins on earth. The saints desire to die to go to heaven, but in reality their life in heaven has already begun on earth. What do the things of this world matter to them? The servants of God live on earth only in their bodies, but their souls and their yearning are fixed on heaven. It is simply another way of stating the phrase: “We have our citizenship in heaven” (Phil. 3:20).

The Gift of Fear

According to St. Thomas, the gift that pertains to the perfection of the virtue of hope is fear of the Lord. This gift also relates to temperance under certain aspects. The gift of fear is a supernatural habit by which the just soul, under the instinct of the Holy Spirit acquires a special docility for subjecting itself completely to the divine will out of reverence for the excellency and majesty of God. God in himself, as supreme and infinite goodness, cannot be an object of fear; he is an object of love. But so far as he is able to punish us for our sins, he can and ought to be feared. St. Thomas harmonizes fear and hope by saying that in God there are justice and mercy, the first of which arouses fear in us, the second, hope. And thus, for different reasons, God is the object of fear and of hope.

It is necessary to examine the nature of this fear, however, because there are many types of fear and not all of them are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some of them are not even virtues. Fear can be divided into mundane fear, servile fear, filial fear and initial fear.

Mundane fear is that which would not hesitate to offend God in order to avoid some temporal evil. This fear is always evil because it places its end and goal in this world and turns its back upon God.

Servile fear is that which serves God and fulfills his divine will because of the punishment that would fall upon us if we did not do so (temporal punishment or the eternal punishment of hell). This fear, although imperfect, is substantially good; it enables us to avoid sin, and it is directed to God as to its end.

Filial fear (also called reverential fear) is that which serves God and fulfills his divine will, fleeing from sin because it is an offense against God and for fear of being separated from him. This fear, as is evident, is good and perfect. It flees from sin without taking any account of punishment.

Initial fear is that which occupies an intermediate place between the last two types of fear. It flees from sin principally as an offense against God, but there is mixed with this flight a certain fear of punishment. This fear is better than servile fear, but it is not as perfect as filial fear.

The question now arises: which of these types of fear is the gift of the Holy Spirit? Evidently the gift of fear is not a mundane or servile fear. Mundane fear is sinful, and servile fear, although not evil of itself, could be found even in a sinner by means of an actual grace that would move him to sorrow because of the fear of punishment. According to St. Thomas, only filial or chaste fear is the gift of fear, for it is based on charity or reverence of God as Father, and it fears to be separated from him.

Three principal virtues are perfected by the operation of the gift of fear: hope, temperance, and humility. The gift of fear gives us supernatural awareness of our dependence on God and inclines us to rely only on the infinite power of God, the formal motive of hope. Therefore St. Thomas states that the gift of fear looks principally at God, and in this sense it pertains to the virtue of hope; but secondarily it helps to correct the disorderly tendency by which we experience a strong attraction to carnal delight, thus aiding and strengthening the virtue of temperance. The gift of fear also perfects humility by making the soul realize its nothingness before God and acknowledge the punishment it deserves for its offenses against God's infinite majesty.

In addition to these three fundamental virtues, the gift of fear also exercises its influence in regard to other moral virtues. It acts on the virtues of modesty and chastity by imparting a repugnance to anything shameful; on the virtue of meekness, by controlling disordered anger. Moreover, it serves as a brake on the passions when they would otherwise exceed the limits of reason.

The effects of the gift of fear are of great value in the sanctification of souls. The following are the principal effects of this gift:

1. A lively sentiment of the grandeur and majesty of God, which arouses in the soul a profound adoration filled with reverence and humility. This is the most characteristic effect of the gift of fear, and it follows from its definition. Before the infinite majesty of God the soul feels as if it is nothing or less than nothing. It is filled with such reverence, submission, and subjection that it feels great desires to suffer for God (St. John of the Cross). This reverence for the majesty of God is also manifested in all the things that have any relationship to God. A church or oratory, the priest, sacred vessels, the images of the saints all are regarded with respect and veneration. The gift of piety produces similar effects, but from another point of view, as we shall see later.

2. A great horror of sin and a lively sorrow for ever having committed sin. Once its faith is illumined by the splendor of the gifts of understanding and knowledge, and once its hope has been subjected to the action of the gift of fear, the soul understands as never before the malice of any offense against God, however insignificant. It understands the rigor with which divine justice must punish sin in the next life if penance is not done in this life. The repentance of such souls for the slightest fault is most profound. From it proceeds the anxious desire to make reparation for sin and an irresistible tendency to crucify oneself in a thousand ways.

3. An extreme vigilance to avoid the occasion of offending God. This is a logical consequence of the previous effect. These souls fear nothing so much as the slightest offense against God. They have seen clearly that in reality the only evil in the world is sin and that the others do not deserve to be called evil.

4. Perfect detachment from all created things. We have already seen that the gift of knowledge produces this effect in the soul, but from another point of view. The gifts are interrelated among

themselves and with charity, and for that reason they mutually influence each other. This is perfectly understandable. The soul that has become aware of the grandeur and majesty of God must necessarily consider all created things as empty and useless. Honors, wealth, power, and dignity - all are considered as less than straw and unworthy of a moment of attention.

In addition to the general means for disposing oneself for the impetus of the Holy Spirit - recollection, purity of heart, fidelity to grace, frequent invocation of the Holy Spirit - there are other methods more closely connected with the gift of fear.

1. To meditate frequently on the infinite grandeur and majesty of God. We can never by our own discursive methods acquire the contemplative knowledge that is given to the soul by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But we can do something by reflecting on the power and majesty of God.

2. To accustom oneself to converse with God with filial confidence, filled with reverence. We should never forget that God is our Father, but that he is also a God of terrible grandeur and majesty. Sometimes pious souls forget the latter and allow themselves to be excessively familiar with God and even to give expression to irreverent audacity. It is certainly incredible to see the extent to which the Lord gives expression of his familiarity

with souls that are pleasing to him, but it is necessary that he take the initiative and not the soul. Meanwhile the soul should remain in an attitude of reverence and submission, which is not incompatible with the sweet and intimate confidence of adopted children.

3. To meditate frequently on the infinite malice of sin and to arouse a great horror for sin. In itself, love is much more powerful and efficacious than fear as a motive for avoiding sin. Nevertheless, the consideration of fear is a great help in keeping souls from sin. The recollection of the terrible punishment God has prepared for those who definitively reject his law would be sufficient to make us flee from sin if we would meditate on it. It is a fearful thing, as St. Paul says (Heb. 10:31), to fall into the hands of an offended God. To this end, it will be of great help if we avoid all dangerous occasions that may lead us to sin, practice the daily examination of conscience with fidelity, and consider Jesus crucified as the victim of propitiation for our crimes and sins.

4. To be meek and humble in dealing with our neighbor. He who has a clear concept of what God is in his infinite majesty and realizes that God has mercifully pardoned him thousands of times, how can he dare to exact with haughtiness and disdain that which is owed to him by his neighbor (Matt. 18:23-35)? We must pardon injuries, and we must treat all our neighbors with exquisite humility and meekness. We should consider them to be better than we are, at least in the sense that perhaps they have not resisted grace as much as we have, or they would not have sinned if they had received the gifts God has given us.

5. To beg frequently of the Holy Spirit a reverential fear of God. When all is said and done, every perfect disposition is a gift of God, and it can be attained only by humility and persevering prayer. Scripture is filled with sublime formulas by which we can petition holy fear and make us understand that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Sir. 1:16). We must work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), as the Holy Spirit warns us through the psalmist: "Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling kiss his feet, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way" (Ps. 2:11).

3. Charity

St. Thomas begins his treatise on charity by stating that it is friendship between God and man. Like every friendship, it implies a mutual love based on the communication of some good. For that reason charity necessarily presupposes sanctifying grace, which makes us children of God and heirs of glory. By nature we are nothing more than servants of the Creator, but through grace and charity we become the children and friends of God. And if our servitude ennobles us so greatly, since to serve God is to reign, how much more are we elevated by the charity of God, which is "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5). Such is the lofty dignity of the Christian.

Charity is a supernatural habit infused by God into the will, by which we love God for himself above all things, and ourselves, and our neighbor for God. The object of charity is primarily God, secondarily ourselves and our fellow human beings. The object of charity is God as supreme goodness in himself and as our ultimate end.

As an infused habit, charity resides in the will because it involves

a movement of love toward the supreme good, and love and the good constitute the act and the proper object of the will. It is a supernatural habit God infuses in the degree that pleases him, without taking into account the natural qualities or dispositions of the one who receives charity.

Charity as a virtue is specifically one, for although it embraces various objects (God, ourselves, and all human beings), the motive of charity in all cases is the divine goodness. Hence, when we love ourselves - or our neighbor for any motive other than the goodness of God, we do not make an act of charity, but an act of natural human love, whether selfish love or benevolent love. Purely human love as such is of no value in the supernatural order.

Charity is the most excellent of all virtues, not only because it is the virtue that intimately unites us with God, but also because it is the form of all the infused virtues. Its intrinsic excellence derives from the fact that it is the virtue that unites us most intimately with God. It far surpasses the theological virtues of faith and hope, as St. Paul teaches: "There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

By the act of charity, the will goes forth from itself to rest in God as he is in himself. This profound doctrine gives us the key to the solution of the much-debated question concerning the superiority of the intellect or the will. The will in itself is inferior to the intellect, for it is a blind faculty and cannot produce its acts if the intellect does not place the desirable object before the will. The intellect precedes and guides the will, which could not love anything without the intellect. It is impossible to love what one does not know. But the operation of the intellect is distinct from that of the will. The intellect draws things to itself or absorbs them, so to speak, into its own intellectual mold. Consequently, when it knows inferior beings such as material things, it ennobles them and dignifies them by raising them to the intellectual order; but when it knows superior beings such as God or supernatural truths, it limits them by obliging them to assume an inferior intellectual mold. The exact opposite is true of the will. By reason of its proper act, which is to love, the will goes forth from itself to rest in the beloved object as it is in itself. Consequently, if the will loves objects that are inferior to itself, such as the things of earth, it is degraded to an inferior level; but if it loves superior beings, such as God, it is ennobled and elevated to the level of those superior beings in which

it rests through love. For that reason St. Augustine could say: "If you love the earth, you are earthly; but if you love God, what must be said except that you are God?"

It follows, therefore, that although the intellect is in itself more perfect than the will, nevertheless, in this life, by the very nature of the operation, it is more perfect to love God than to know him. A theologian may know a great deal about God, but in a manner that is cold and purely intellectual, while a humble and simple soul who knows almost nothing about theology may love God intensely, and this is much better.

Another practical consequence of great importance follows from this sublime doctrine. The only way to avoid debasing ourselves by the love of inferior created things is to love them in God, through God, and for God; in other words, for the formal motive of charity. Charity can transform whatever it touches, even the things inferior to us but directed through charity to the glory of God.

Charity can increase in this life because it is a movement toward God, our ultimate end, and so long as we are wayfarers in this life it is possible to approach more and more closely to the goal. This greater proximity is effected precisely through the increase of charity. Moreover, charity does not admit of any term or limit in this life; it can grow indefinitely. This does not mean, however, that charity cannot reach a relative perfection, as we have already explained.

Like all the other habits, charity increases, not by the addition of one form to another form, but by a greater radication of the virtue in the subject. It cannot increase by addition because such an increase is not possible in qualitative things but only in quantitative things, and habits are classified as qualities. Thus the will participates more and more in charity so far as it is more penetrated by charity.

Like the other virtues, charity is not increased by any act whatever, but only by an act that is more intense than the habit as actually possessed here and now. If charity were increased by addition, then any act of charity, however weak and remiss, would increase charity. Thus, simply by the multiplication of many remiss acts, the thermometer of habitual charity would rise to a surprising degree and even surpass the charity of many of the saints. Such an explanation of the increase of charity leads only to absurdity.

The true nature of the increase of charity is far different. As a qualitative form, it can increase only by a more profound radication in the subject, and this is impossible without a more intense act. This is in conformity with the increase of habits even on the natural level. They need a more intense act to increase as habits.

We now háve an important practical conclusion. Persons who live in slothfulness and tepidity can paralyze their Christian life completely, even if they live habitually in the grace of God and perform a large number of good but remiss works. This is amply verified in daily experience. A large number of good souls live habitually in the grace of God, without committing any serious faults but performing many good works and acts of sacrifice, but they are far from being saints. If they encounter any contradiction or difficulty, they become angry; if they are lacking anything, their laments are raised to heaven; if their superiors command something that does not please them, they murmur and complain; if anyone criticizes or humiliates them, they become enemies of those persons. All this shows clearly that such individuals are still very far from Christian perfection.

But how can one explain this phenomenon after these persons háve performed so many good works for so many years in the Christian life? The theological explanation is simple: they have performed a great many good works, it is true; but they have performed them in a lukewarm manner and not in such a way that each new act is more fervent. Rather, each succeeding act is more remiss and more imperfect. They are as lukewarm and imperfect as if they were at the very beginning of the path to holiness.

But one may ask: “Then are all those good works that were remiss and imperfect of no avail whatever? Are remiss acts completely useless and sterile?”

To this we reply that the remiss acts are not completely useless and sterile. They serve a twofold purpose, one in this life and the other in glory . In this life they prevent the dispositions of soul from becoming completely cold, which would put these people in the proximate occasion of committing a grave sin and thus destroying their Christian life completely. A person who does not perform an act that is more intense than the virtuous habit he or she possesses will not increase the virtuous hábit but neither will the habit be lost completely. The degree of charity attained will never diminish of itself,

even if a person lives for many years in tepidity and performs acts that are remiss or less intense. Therefore, something is achieved by these remiss acts because they at least help to preserve the soul in the state of grace. They likewise preserve the essential degree of merit already gained.

Remiss acts do not remain without their proper reward in the life to come, although they do not increase the degree of essential glory that corresponds to the habitual degree of one’s grace and charity at the time of death. In addition to the essential reward in heaven, however, there are many different accidental rewards. Each remiss act since it was good and meritorious for having been performed in a stati of grace and under the influence of charity, will receive its corresponding accidental reward in heaven.

Charity does not refer to God alone, but also to one’s neighbors. The love of God causes us to love whatever pertains to God or whatever reflects his goodness, and it is evident that one’s neighbor is a good of God and shares, or can share, in etemal happiness. For that reason the love of charity with which we love our neighbor is exactly the same charity with which we love God. There are not two charities but only one, since the formal motive of loving one’s neighbor is the goodness of God reflected in him. Hence, when we love our neighbors for any other motive distinct from God, we do not love them with the love of charity. We should also love ourselves with the love of charity, although strictly speaking, one cannot love oneself as a friend, for that requires another person. However, our love for ourselves is the model and root of friendship because friendship for others consists precisely in the fact that our attitude to them is the same as to ourselves. Moreover, love is divided into “friendship-love” and “desire-love.” The former is directed to a person; the latter to a thing desired for a person.

Therefore, not only does love of self come under tne virtue of charity, but it has priority over love of neighbor. In loving ourselves in charity we love ourselves as persons sharing in the nature and life of God through grace, and at the same time we love God as our ultimate end and source of our perfect happiness.

The love that is charity is “friendship-love.” It is a generous love or gift love, and it consists more in loving than in being loved. When this type of love predominates, it should produce the following effects:

1. Union with the beloved, which in the spiritual life means living constantly in the presence of God and fostering this recollection by the practice of mental prayer, which is the language of love.
2. Detachment from created things, which means that one uproots all attachments to created things in order to advance toward ever greater union with God.
3. Spiritual joy, which is the fruit of gift love, accompanied by the interior peace that flows from living in Gois grace.
4. Zeal for the beloved, which is manifested by total submission to Gois will and the works of the apostolate that are stimulated by love of neighbor.
5. Spirit of sacrifice, which enables one to bear the cross of trials and sufferings out of love and, eventually, to seek to be conformed to Jesus crucified.

The Gift of Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is a supernatural habit, inseparable from charity, by which we judge rightly concerning God and divine things through their ultimate and highest causes under a special instinct and movement of the Holy Spirit, who makes us taste these things by a certain connaturality. The gift of wisdom perfects charity by giving it the divine modality it lacks so long as charity is subject to the rule of human reason, even illumined by faith. So far as it presupposes a judgment, the gift of wisdom resides in the intellect as in its proper subject, but as a judgment by a kind of connaturality with divine things, it presupposes charity, for this is not a purely speculative wisdom but a practical wisdom. It belongs to the gift of wisdom, in the first place, to contemplate the divine, but in the second place, it pertains to wisdom to direct human acts according to divine things.

The philosophers defined wisdom as certain and evident knowledge of things through their ultimate causes. Those who contemplate a thing and know its proximate or immediate causes have scientific knowledge. Those who can reduce their knowledge to the ultimate principles of the natural order possess philosophical wisdom, which is called metaphysics. Those who, guided by the light of faith, investigate the revealed data of revelation deduce conclusions from them and possess theological wisdom. But those who, presupposing faith and sanctifying grace, judge divine things and human things

through their ultimate causes by a kind of divine instinct possess supernatural wisdom, and this is the gift of wisdom. Beyond this, there is no higher type of wisdom in this life. It is surpassed only by the beatific vision and the uncreated wisdom of God.

It is evident, therefore, that the knowledge given by the gift of wisdom is incomparably superior to all human sciences, even theology. For that reason a simple and uneducated soul lacking the theological knowledge acquired by study may sometimes possess, through the gift of wisdom, a more profound knowledge of divine things than an eminent theologian.

A certain connaturality is another note that characterizes the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it reaches its highest perfection in the gift of wisdom. Souls that experience this will understand very well the meaning of the words: "Taste and see how good the Lord is" (Ps. 34:9). They experience a divine delight that sometimes enables them to know something of the ineffable joy of eternal beatitude.

From this sublime doctrine follow two inevitable conclusions of great importance in the theology of Christian perfection. The first is that the mystical state is not something extraordinary in the full development of the Christian life; it is the normal atmosphere that grace demands, so that it can develop in all its virtualities.

The second conclusion is that an actuation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the human mode, besides being impossible, would be utterly useless for the perfecting of the infused virtues, and especially of the theological virtues. Since the latter are superior to the gifts of the Holy Spirit by reason of their nature, the only perfection they could receive from the gifts is that of the divine mode, which is exclusive and proper to the gifts.

By reason of its elevation and grandeur and by reason of the sublimity of the virtue it perfects, the effects produced by the gift of wisdom are truly remarkable. The following are the principal effects of this gift:

1. It gives to the saints a divine sense by which they judge all things. This is the most impressive of all the effects of the gift of wisdom so far as they are manifested externally. One would say that the saints have completely lost the human manner of judgment and that it has been replaced by a divine instinct by which they judge all

things. They see everything from God's point of view, whether the commonplace episodes of daily life or the great events of life. They never fix their attention on secondary causes but pass them by, to arrive immediately at the Supreme Cause, who governs and rules them from above.

2. It makes saints live the mysteries of faith in an entirely divine manner. Introduced by charity into the intimacy of the divine Persons, the divinized soul, under the impulse of the Spirit of love, contemplates all things from this center. God is present to the soul in all his divine attributes and in all his great mysteries. In the measure in which it is possible for a simple creature, the gaze of the soul resembles the vision God has of himself and of the entire universe. It is a godlike type of contemplation experienced in the light of the Deity, and in it the soul experiences ineffable sweetness.

3. It makes them live in union with the three divine Persons through an ineffable participation in their trinitarian life. The gift of knowledge acts by an ascending movement, raising the soul from creatures to God; the gift of understanding penetrates God's mysteries from without and within by a simple loving gaze; the gift of wisdom penetrates the very life of the Trinity. Thus the soul sees things only from their highest and most divine cause.

The soul that has reached these heights can give itself to all types of work, even the most absorbing, but in the center of the soul it experiences the divine company of the Three. Martha and Mary have been joined in an ineffable manner, so that the prodigious activity of Martha in no way compromises the peace and tranquillity of Mary, who remains at the feet of the divine Master.

4. It raises the virtue of charity to heroism. This is precisely the purpose of the gift of wisdom. Freed from human limitations, charity reaches tremendous proportions. It is incredible what the love of God can do in souls that are under the operations of the gift of wisdom. Such souls love God with a pure love only for his infinite goodness and without the mixture of any human motives or self-interest. True, they do not renounce their hope for heaven; they desire it more than ever, but they desire it primarily because there they shall be able to love God with even greater intensity and without any interruption.

Love of neighbor also reaches a sublime perfection through the gift of wisdom. Accustomed to see God in all things, even in the most

minute details of daily life, the saints see him in a special way in their neighbor. They love their neighbor with a tenderness that is completely supernatural. They serve their neighbor with heroic abnegation. Seeing Christ in the poor, in those who suffer, in the heart of all their brothers and sisters, they hasten to serve all with a soul filled with love. They are happy to deprive themselves of even the necessities of life in order to give them to their neighbor, whose interest they place and prefer before their own, as they would put the interests of Christ before their own.

5. It gives to all the virtues their ultimate perfection and makes them truly divine. Perfected by the gift of wisdom, charity extends the divine influence to all the other virtues, because charity is the form of all the virtues. The whole supernatural organism experiences the divine influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. All the Christian virtues acquire a godlike modality that admits of countless shades and manifestations. Having died definitively to self, being perfect in every type of virtue, the soul has arrived at the summit of the mount of sanctity, where it reads the inscription written by St. John of the Cross: "Here on this mountain dwell only the honor and glory of God."

Apart from the general means such as recollection, a life of prayer, fidelity to grace, and humility, one can dispose oneself for the actuation of the gift of wisdom by using the following means, which are within the workings of ordinary grace:

1. By seeing and evaluating all things from God's point of view. How many souls, even among those who are consecrated to God, fall into the habit of judging things from a purely natural and human point of view! If things do not go their way, they accuse others of all sorts of imperfections and even malice; but when things proceed according to their personal good and pleasure, they attribute everything to God. Actually, they are willing to do God's will whenever it happens to coincide with their own interests. Truly spiritual persons accept all things, whether pleasant or painful, with a spirit of equanimity, and if things are painful or even unjust, they can still see the spiritual value of such experiences, if only as a means of purification and penance. Even the smallest works are seen in the light of supernatural value and merit and, although they are conscious of the defects of others, they are even more aware of their own imperfections.

2. By combatting the wisdom of the world, which is foolishness in the eyes of God. St. Paul speaks frequently in this manner, but the greater percentage of us rely on this world's wisdom. Yet Christ constantly warns us in his teaching that we should expect to be a contradiction and a paradox to the world. This does not mean that the world as such is evil, but it does mean that those who live and act for worldly goals and according to worldly standards will inevitably have to jettison the standards of God. The lives of the saints are replete with instances in which the gift of wisdom caused them to perform actions that were foolish in the eyes of the worldly but were divine and prudent from a supernatural point of view.

3. By detaching oneself from things of this world, however good and useful. Everything in its proper place. Even the holiest and most beneficial created goods can become a source of temptation and sin if we are too attached to them. As soon as anything outside of God becomes a goal or end in itself rather than a means to God, the soul is diverted from its proper orientation to God. This applies not only to the obvious dangers, such as wealth and pleasure and ambition, but also to things good in themselves, such as the study of theology, the liturgy, private devotions, penitential practices - even to the use of the means to sanctity itself. All of these, if exaggerated or sought after with a selfish spirit, can become obstacles to union with God and the operation of the gift of wisdom that flows from that union.

4. By cultivating indifference to spiritual consolations. It is God's way to lead a soul to him by conferring spiritual consolations, but the time comes when these consolations are removed and the soul is tested, purified, and made strong in love. One must strive diligently to cultivate true devotion, which implies a resolute will to serve God at any cost. We naturally are drawn to those things that give us pleasure, whether spiritual or sensual; hence all the more reason for detachment and self-denial. The common error is to love the gift rather than the giver, and for that reason God withdraws consolations when the soul is ready to pass on to another phase of its spiritual development. To love and serve God in darkness and privation is by far a greater proof of one's fidelity than to love him in periods of delight and consolation.

Chapter 8

Grades of Prayer

We are indebted to St. Teresa of Avila for the clearest and best classification of the grades of prayer. Her concept that the intensity of one's life of prayer coincides with the intensity of one's charity is based on solid theology and was confirmed by St. Pius X, who stated that the grades of prayer taught by St. Teresa represent so many grades of elevation and ascent toward Christian perfection.

These grades are (1) vocal prayer, (2) meditation, (3) affective prayer, (4) prayer of simplicity, (5) infused contemplation, (6) prayer of quiet, (7) prayer of union, (8) prayer of conforming union, and (9) prayer of transforming union. The first four grades of prayer belong to the predominantly ascetical stage of the spiritual life; the remaining five grades are infused prayer and belong to the mystical phase of the spiritual life.

1. Vocal Prayer

Although we classify the grades of prayer under the headings of ascetical and mystical, there may be

mystical prayer in the early stages of the spiritual life, and there may be a return to ascetical activity on the part of souls who are well advanced in mystical ways. Hence what is meant by ascetical and mystical signifies that which is predominant and not that which is exclusive. Little remains to be said concerning vocal prayer, since much of what we have already written concerning the prayer of petition applies to the first grade of prayer.

By vocal prayer we mean any form of prayer expressed in words, whether written or spoken. This kind of prayer is the form used in public or liturgical prayer, but it is also much used by private individuals. St. Thomas gives three reasons why vocal prayer is suitable: (1) it arouses interior devotion; (2) it gives homage to God with our body as well as our mind and heart; and (3) it gives expression to the spiritual sentiments that flood the soul in prayer.

We should observe that vocal prayer is not restricted to prayer of petition (although petition would surely be included); it likewise includes adoration, thanksgiving, contrition, and all the other sentiments an individual experiences in relation to God. We want to emphasize especially the use of vocal prayer as a means of arousing one's devotion or of giving expression to one's love of God, because this leads to the higher forms of prayer: discursive meditation and affective prayer. It should also be noted that vocal prayer as the public liturgical prayer of the people of God gives greater glory to God than does private prayer and has a greater efficacy because it is the prayer of the Christian community. Yet, considering the one who prays, the Christian most perfect in love is the one who prays most perfectly.

The two requirements for vocal prayer are attention and devotion. What we have said concerning the attention required for prayer of petition applies here also; we would merely add that attention may be actual or virtual. Actual attention is present when those who pray have complete awareness of what they are doing here and now; virtual attention is that which is had at the beginning of prayer and extends throughout the prayer without being retracted, although there may be involuntary distractions. St. Teresa says:

That prayer which does not attend to the one it is addressing and what it asks and who it is that asks and of whom it asks, such I do not call prayer at all, however much one may move the lips. For although it is true that sometimes it will be true prayer even if one does not

take heed of these things, it is more truly prayer on those occasions when one does.

The second requirement - devotion - is complementary to that of attention. By attention we apply our intellect to the practice of prayer; by devotion we direct our will to God. Devotion, therefore, involves several virtues: charity, confidence, humility, reverence, and perseverance. Devotion is so important for vocal prayer that it would be better to recite one Our Father devoutly than to say many prayers in a routine and mechanical fashion, unless it is a question of prayers that must be recited by reason of some obligation.

Devotion should also be the measure for the duration of one's personal vocal prayers, for it is futile to attempt to pray well when one is fatigued. By the same token, public prayers should be arranged in such a way that they arouse the devotion of the faithful and do not cause tedium. "In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matt. 6:7-9).

It is not possible to give any fixed rule or detailed directions for the formulas to be used in vocal prayer. Perhaps the best principle to follow is that given for the selection of books for one's spiritual reading, namely, to use that which is beneficial. The words by which we express ourselves in vocal prayer will vary with our needs and our spiritual sentiments. Moreover, some persons find it difficult to express themselves, and therefore they make use of the prayers composed by others. Objectively, the best prayers are the Our Father, which was taught us by Christ himself, the prayers from the pages of scripture (the Hail Mary, Gloria, Psalms) and the prayers in the liturgy. Unfortunately, their constant repetition readily degenerates into a purely mechanical recitation.

The necessity of fervent recitation of vocal prayer cannot be emphasized too much, because vocal prayer is one type of prayer that can never be omitted completely, even when one arrives at the height of sanctity. The time comes in the practice of mental prayer when the inferior grades yield to the superior grades as one progresses in union with God, but this never occurs with vocal prayer. It is always beneficial, either to arouse devotion or to give expression to the intensity and fervor of one's love to God. Any attacks on the practice of vocal

prayer must, therefore, be interpreted as the sign of an evil spirit, and this spirit has been manifested by many deluded souls and false mystics in the history of spirituality.

2. Meditation

Discursive meditation can be defined as a reasoned application of the mind to some supernatural truth in order to penetrate its meaning, love it, and carry it into practice with the assistance of grace. The distinguishing note of meditation is that it is a discursive type of prayer, and therefore attention is absolutely indispensable.

As soon as we cease to reason or discourse, we cease to meditate. We may have given way to distraction, deliberately turned our mind to something else, or passed on to affective prayer or contemplation, but without discursus there is no meditation.

Nature of Meditation

How, then, is meditation distinguished from simple study or speculation on a supernatural truth? Unlike the latter activities, meditation is a form of prayer, and it is such by reason of its purpose or finality. Actually, meditation has a double finality, one intellectual and the other affective and practical. The intellectual purpose is to arrive at firm convictions concerning some supernatural truth; hence the importance of the intellect in meditation.

But one could acquire firm convictions by speculative study, and therefore this cannot be the principal finality of meditation nor that which makes meditation true prayer. The most important element in meditation is the act of love aroused in the will on the presentation of some supernatural truth by the intellect. As St. Teresa points out, meditation consists not so much in thinking a great deal but in loving a great deal. When the will bursts forth with acts of love, an intimate contact is established between the soul and God, and then it is that the soul can truly be said to be praying. Discursus is merely a preparation for the arousal of love.

But a meditation is not completed by arousing love for the supernatural truth on which one has speculated. Any meditation that is properly made should terminate in a practical resolution for the future. Love cannot be idle; by its very nature it urges us to action. When the meditation has passed through the steps of discursus and

acts of love, charity impels us to put love into action. Failure to make efficacious resolutions is the reason why many souls who practice daily meditation get little or no practical benefit from this exercise of prayer. They insist too much on that which is merely a preparation for prayer. They pass the time in spiritual reading or speculation, but they do not make acts of love, nor do they make any practical resolutions.

Another element of the definition of meditation requires explanation: that of the subject matter. We have stated that meditation is the reasoned discursus on some supernatural truth, meaning any truth related to God and the spiritual life. By reason of the subject matter, some authors have made a further division of meditation into imaginative meditation, dogmatic meditation, liturgical meditation, moral meditation. One can meditate on a variety of subjects; e.g., some scene or mystery from the life of Christ, the life and virtues of Mary or the saints, a particular virtue to be acquired or vice to be uprooted, a truth from dogmatic theology, such as the attributes of God or the indwelling of the Trinity, the prayers and actions of the sacraments, the Mass, and the liturgy.

The guiding principle for subject matter is to select what is needed at a particular time and will be beneficial according to one's capacities. Consequently, it is important to insist upon prudence in the selection of the material for meditation. Not all subject matters are suited for all souls, not even for a given soul in varying circumstances. In general, young people or beginners in the practice of meditation will do well to utilize what has been called imaginative meditation (scenes from the life of Christ, Mary, and the saints), liturgical meditations, or moral meditations (which help one to uproot vices and cultivate virtue).

3. Affective Prayer

Although St. Teresa of Avila does not use the expression affective prayer in any of her writings, she does refer to this grade of prayer, and it has been accepted by all the schools of spirituality.

Affective prayer may be defined as a type of prayer in which the operations of the will predominate over discursus of the intellect. There is no specific difference between affective prayer and meditation, as there is between meditation and contemplation; it is merely a simplified meditation in which love predominates. For this

reason the transition to affective prayer is usually gradual and more or less easy, although this will vary with individuals.

Some persons are by nature so affectionate and responsive that they very easily rise from intellectual discursus to the movement of the will. Others, on the contrary, are so cold and rigid by nature that their prayer is almost entirely discursive, and they seldom give expression to affections of the will. Such individuals need more time and experience to arrive at the practice of affective prayer. The method of St. Ignatius is not as conducive to affective prayer as is the simpler method used by the Carmelites and the Franciscans.

When should we expect to make the transition from discursive meditation to affective prayer? Two extremes must be avoided: to leave meditation too quickly or too late. In practice, however, these extremes can easily be avoided if we take care to simplify discursive meditation gradually, without trying to force ourselves. It is almost certain that if we practice daily meditation we will from time to time experience affections that have been stimulated by some point in meditation. When this occurs, we should give ourselves gently to the movements of love, and as these moments become more and more frequent, we shall make the transition from discursive meditation to affective prayer.

Practice of Affective Prayer

Discursive meditation should lead to the practice of affective prayer, but it is impossible to practice affective prayer exclusively because the will is a blind faculty that needs direction and enlightenment before it can love and desire the good. For that reason discursive meditation and spiritual reading play an important part in the practice of affective prayer; they supply the material that stimulates the activity of the will.

Hence we must be careful not to terminate discursive meditation before the affections have been stimulated. This would be a waste of time and could also be the source of illusion. Neither should we force the affections; when they do not come forth spontaneously, or when they have run their course, we should return to discursive or vocal prayer and not try to prolong the affection by our own efforts.

Neither should we be anxious to pass from one affection to another. Rather, we should attempt gradually to simplify the movements of

the will. The operations of the will should be reduced to unity, and the affections should be deep-seated rather than numerous. The practice of affective prayer is best guaranteed by the use of a discursive meditation that considers the material point by point and pauses at any moment in which the affections of the will have been stimulated. We should yield to this affection until it has run its course, and then return to the next point in the meditation. This is likewise a commendable method to be followed in spiritual reading or in the use of a manual of prayer. As soon as some thought has stimulated and aroused a movement of the will, we should stop reading and allow the will to perform its operation.

If properly used, affective prayer confers many benefits on the soul. Psychologically, it provides a delightful respite from the dry labor of discursive meditation. It also prevents us from becoming excessively introspective or relying too greatly upon our own efforts, as could happen easily if we were to devote ourselves exclusively to discursive meditation and never allow the will to break forth in acts of love.

Because affective prayer is essentially an operation of the will, it serves to deepen the union of the soul with God by acts of love. And since all the infused virtues are increased with the increase of charity, affective prayer is a powerful means for growth in virtue. It is likewise a great stimulus for the practice of the Christian virtues because of the sweetness and consolation it gives. It is, lastly, an excellent disposition and preparation for the prayer of simplicity.

Dangers in Affective Prayer

But certain dangers and abuses must be avoided in the practice of affective prayer. First of all, we should never use force in order to produce the affections and movements of the will. It is of no avail to clench the fist, to distort the face, and to groan or sigh in an effort to produce an intense act of the love of God. The act of love must be aroused spontaneously, and this is best done by supematuralizing one's motives and striving in all things simply and solely to give glory to God out of pure love.

Another possible danger in the practice of affective prayer lies in the fact that it often fills the heart with sensible consolation. Those who are easily stimulated to movements of affection may erroneously judge themselves to be more advanced in perfection than they really are because they feel at times as if they are going into ecstasy.

Unfortunately, many of these persons see no contradiction in the fact that in their daily life they are constantly falling into imperfections and venial sins. True progress in the spiritual life consists in the ever more perfect practice of the Christian virtues and not in the sweetness one experiences in prayer. Moreover, persons who place great value on sensible consolations are in danger of practicing prayer primarily for the delight it gives them. This is the spiritual gluttony that St. John of the Cross criticizes with severity.

Lastly, there is the danger that persons who have tasted the delight and consolation of affective prayer may fall into slothfulness, which will prevent them from returning to the discursive meditation they had formerly practiced. It is a serious mistake to think that once the soul has enjoyed habitual affective prayer it need never return to the practice of meditation. St. Teresa asserts that sometimes it is necessary to return to the lower grades of prayer even after having experienced mystical contemplation.

Fruits of Affective Prayer

There is an infallible rule for judging the value of any kind of prayer: examine the fruits it produces. This is the supreme norm for the discernment of spirits, as given by Christ himself (cf. Matt. 7:16). The value of affective prayer cannot be measured by the intensity or the frequency of the sensible consolations that are experienced; it must be judged by the increasing perfection in the life of the individual. This means that the fruits of affective prayer should be a more intense practice of the Christian virtues, an increasing purity of intention, a spirit of self-denial and detachment, an increase in charity, and the faithful and exact fulfillment of the duties of one's state in life. Affective prayer, in spite of the consolations it gives, is not the goal or terminus of the life of prayer; it is only a step along the way to the perfection of prayer in the mystical state.

4. Prayer of Simplicity

It seems that Jacques Bossuet (1627-1704) was the first author to use this expression, but this type of prayer was recognized by St. Teresa as the prayer of acquired recollection, to distinguish it from infused recollection, the first grade of mystical prayer. Other authors call this prayer the prayer of simple gaze, of the presence of God or of the simple vision of faith.

In the seventeenth century some writers began to call this prayer acquired contemplation. St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila never used that expression, and although there is no objection to the use of the term (it is simply the prayer of acquired recollection, according to St. Teresa, or the prayer of simplicity, according to Bossuet), many authors now restrict the word contemplation to the mystical grades of prayer. This is more faithful to the language of St. John of the Cross.

The prayer of simplicity was defined by Bossuet, as a simple loving gaze upon some divine object, whether on God himself or one of his perfections, on Christ or on one of his mysteries, or on some other Christian truth. It is a form of ascetical prayer that is extremely simplified. The discursus formerly used in meditation has now been transformed into a simple intellectual gaze; the affections that were experienced in affective prayer have been unified into a simple loving attention to God. The prayer is ascetical, meaning that the soul is able to attain to this type of prayer by its own efforts with the help of ordinary grace, but often it is the transition point to mystical prayer.

The prayer of simplicity is thus the bridge between ascetical and mystical prayer. It is, as it were, the final disposition before the Holy Spirit begins to operate in the soul by means of his gifts. For that reason, one may frequently experience a blending of acquired and infused elements in the practice of the prayer of simplicity. If the soul is faithful/the infused elements will gradually be increased until they dominate the practice of prayer entirely. Thus, without any shock and almost insensibly, the soul proceeds gently from the ascetical practice of prayer to mystical contemplation. This is an indication of the unity of the spiritual life and of the fact that there is only one road to perfection.

Practice of the Prayer of Simplicity

Because of its simplicity, there is no particular method for this type of prayer. It is simply a question of gazing and loving. It is useful, however, to keep in mind certain counsels. Before we actually enter upon the prayer of simplicity, we must take great care not to try to hasten the entrance into this type of prayer. So long as we are able to meditate and to practice affective prayer, we should continue with those types of prayer. The contrary extreme should likewise be avoided. We should not continue the practice of meditation or even

of affective prayer if we perceive clearly that we can remain before God in loving attention without any particular discursus or affective movement. St. John of the Cross severely criticizes spiritual directors who try to restrict souls to the practice of meditation when they have advanced far enough to enter the prayer of simplicity.

It is fitting that the soul should dispose itself for this prayer by means of some material, as was done in the use of meditation, but it should abandon it immediately if the attraction of grace so inclines. The preparation should be very brief and should not be concerned with many details. The prayer of simplicity requires that the powers of the soul be intimately united in a loving gaze, and this requires that the object of attention should be simple and unified.

During the practice of the prayer of simplicity, the soul should strive to preserve the loving attention that is fixed on God, but without forcing itself. It must avoid distractions and slothfulness; but if it exerts too much effort it will destroy the simplicity of the prayer. Psychologically it is difficult for us to remain attentive over a long period of time, and therefore we should not expect, especially in the beginning, to be able to practice the prayer of simplicity for long periods of time. As soon as the loving attention begins to waver, we should turn to the use of affective prayer or simple meditation. All must be done gently and without violence. Nor should the soul be upset if periods of dryness occur. The prayer of simplicity is not always a sweet and consoling type of prayer; it is also a transition from ascetical to mystical prayer, and therefore the soul may experience the aridity that normally accompanies transitional states.

Fruits of the Prayer of Simplicity

The fruits of the prayer of simplicity should be manifested in a general improvement and progress in the Christian life. Our entire life and conduct should benefit from the practice of this prayer. And since grace tends more and more to simplify our conduct until it is reduced to unity in love, we should foster this tendency by avoiding every kind of affectation and multiplicity in our relations with God and our neighbor. This simplification of life should characterize those who have entered the prayer of simplicity. It should be especially manifested in a deep and continuous recollection in God.

Even when occupied with the ordinary duties of daily life, the soul should be interiorly gazing upon God and loving him. The presence of

God should be especially felt during liturgical prayer and in the recitation of vocal prayer. The examination of conscience should be so implicit that a rapid glance reveals the faults and imperfections of the day: All external works should be performed with the spirit of prayer and with the ardent desire of giving glory to God, and even the most commonplace tasks should be permeated with the spirit of faith and love.

All the advantages of affective prayer over simple meditation are found as well in the prayer of simplicity, but noticeably increased. As affective prayer is an excellent preparation for the prayer of simplicity, so the latter is a disposition for infused contemplation. With much less effort than before, the soul achieves magnificent results in the practice of prayer. Thus, each new grade of prayer represents a new advance in the Christian life.

Strictly speaking, it is not possible to make a complete separation between ascetical and mystical prayer as manifested in any particular soul because persons in the ascetical state are capable of receiving certain mystical influences through the operations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and mystics will act in a purely ascetical fashion when the gifts are not actually operating. What is certain is that in the ascetical state there will be a predominance of ascetical activity, and in the mystical state the operations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be predominant. Consequently, it is not surprising that the gifts of the Holy Spirit should sometimes begin to operate while the soul is in the highest grade of ascetical prayer, namely, the prayer of simplicity.

5. Contemplative Prayer

The word contemplation signifies knowledge accompanied by delight, and the object of the knowledge is usually of such a type that it arouses admiration and captivates the soul. Since contemplation is an operation of the cognitive powers, there is such a thing as a purely natural and acquired contemplation in the natural order.

But contemplation is a distinctive type of knowledge. It is an experimental knowledge in the sense that it calls into play the affective powers of the individual. Contemplation is, therefore, an operation in which one experiences the happy blending of the cognitive and the affective powers in an activity providing great delight. The knowledge involved is not discursive but intuitive; the movement of love is not toward the possession of the object loved but one of surrender to the

object loved. Perhaps the best example of natural contemplation is found in the aesthetic experience of the beautiful.

6. Prayer of Quiet

The prayer of quiet is a type of mystical prayer in which the intimate awareness of God's presence captivates the will and fills the soul arid body with ineffable sweetness and delight. The fundamental difference between the prayer of quiet and that of infused recollection, apart from the greater intensity of contemplative light and more intense consolations, is that the prayer of quiet gives the soul an actual possession and joyful fruition of the sovereign Good.

Nature of the Prayer of Quiet

Infused contemplation principally affects the intellect, which is withdrawn from the other faculties, but the prayer of quiet especially affects the will. Although the intellect and the memory are now tranquil, they still remain free to realize what is occurring, but the will is completely captivated and absorbed in God. For that reason, the prayer of quiet as its name indicates, tends to contemplative silence and repose. Since the other faculties remain free, however, they can be occupied with the work of the active life, and they may do so with great intensity. The will does not lose its sweet quietude, but the activities of Martha and Mary begin to merge in a beautiful manner, as St. Teresa points out. Yet the perfect blending of the active and contemplative life will not be achieved until the soul has reached the state of union with God.

St. Teresa describes the prayer of quiet in the following way: "From this recollection there sometimes proceeds an interior quiet and peace that are full of happiness because the soul is in such a state that it does not seem to lack anything, and even speaking (I refer to vocal prayer and meditation) wearies it; it wishes to do nothing but love. This state may, last for some time and even for long periods of time."

Effects of the Prayer of Quiet

The sanctifying effects produced in the soul by the prayer of quiet are enumerated by St. Teresa in the Fourth Mansions of her Interior Castle: (1) great liberty of spirit; (2) filial fear of God and great care not to offend him; (3) profound confidence in God; (4) love of mortification and suffering; (5) deep humility; (6) disdain for worldly

pleasures; and (7) growth in all the virtues.

7. Prayer of Union

The prayer of union is that grade of mystical prayer in which all the internal faculties are gradually captivated and occupied with God. In the prayer of quiet only the will was captivated; in the sleep of the faculties the intellect was also captivated, although the memory and the imagination remained free. In the prayer of union all the interior faculties, including the memory and the imagination, are captivated. Only the external bodily senses are now free, but they too will be captivated in the following grade of prayer.

Nature of the Prayer of Union

The intensity of the mystical experience caused by the prayer of union is indescribable. It is superior beyond compare to that of the preceding grade, to the point that the body itself is affected by the working of God in the soul. Without being entirely captivated, the external senses become almost helpless and inoperative. The soul experiences divine reality with such intensity that it could easily fall into ecstasy. At the beginning, this sublime absorption of the faculties in God lasts but a short time (a half hour at most), but as the intensity increases, it may be prolonged for several hours.

The following excerpt from the writings of St. Teresa describes the prayer of union: It seems to me that this kind of prayer is very definitely a union of the entire soul with God, although it seems that his Majesty desires to give permission to the faculties to understand and enjoy the great things that he is effecting there. It sometimes happens, and indeed very often, that when the will is in union, the soul understands that the will is captive and enjoying fruition and that the will alone is experiencing much quiet, while the intellect and the memory are so free that they can attend to other matters and be engaged in works of charity. This, although it may seem to be the same, is actually different from the prayer of quiet of which I have already spoken, partly because, in that prayer, the soul would not wish to be occupied in anything else, or to be active, since it is enjoying the holy repose of Mary; but in this prayer it can also be Martha, so that it is, as it were, occupied in both the active and the contemplative life, performing works of charity and the duties of its state, and reading, although souls in this state are not masters of themselves and they realize that the better part of the soul is occupied elsewhere. It is as

if we were speaking to one person while another person is speaking to us, with the result that we cannot be fully attentive to the one or the other.

Signs of the Prayer of Union

The essential characteristics of the prayer of union and the signs by which it can be recognized and distinguished from other grades of prayer are the following:

1. Absence of distractions. The reason for this is that the memory and imagination, which are the faculties that usually cause distraction, are now fixed on God and held captive. There may be a return to lower grades of prayer from time to time, and then distractions may again disturb the soul, but during the prayer of union distractions are psychological by impossible.

2. Certitude of being intimately united with God. The soul cannot doubt that it experiences God during the prayer of union. On leaving the lower grades of prayer, the soul may experience certain doubts or fears that it was not truly united with God, or that it was deceived by the devil, but in the prayer of union the certitude of experiencing God is so absolute that St. Teresa maintains that, if the soul does not experience this certitude, it did not have the true prayer of union.

3. Absence of weariness and tedium. The soul absorbed in God never wearies of its union with the Beloved. It is overwhelmed with delight, and however long the prayer of union may last, the soul never experiences any fatigue. For that reason, St. Teresa says that this grade of prayer can never do any harm to the individual, no matter how long it may last.

St. Teresa lists the principal effects of the prayer of union in the Fifth Mansions of her Interior Castle. The soul is so anxious to praise God that it would gladly die a thousand deaths for his sake. It has an intense longing to suffer great trials, and experiences vehement desires for penance and solitude. It wishes that all souls would know God, and it is greatly saddened when it sees that God is offended. The soul is dissatisfied with everything that it sees on earth, since God has given it wings so that it can fly to him. And whatever it does for God seems very little by comparison with what it desires to do. Its weakness has been turned into strength, and it is no longer bound by any ties of relationship or friendship or worldly possessions. It is grieved

at having to be concerned with the things of earth, lest these things should cause it to sin against God. Everything wearies it because it can find no true rest in any created thing.

8. Prayer of Conforming Union

The prayer of union, as we have seen, unites the soul intimately with God and is, in a sense, the last grade of mystical prayer, although it admits of degrees of intensity. St. Teresa treats of the prayer of union in the last three mansions of The Interior Castle and assigns the types of this prayer as follows: fifth mansions, the prayer of union; sixth mansions, spiritual betrothal; seventh mansions, spiritual marriage. But she likewise explains that these three are generically the same prayer; the difference lies in the degree to which God unites the soul to himself.

Some authors, wishing to use St. Teresa's terminology, call this degree of union the spiritual betrothal or espousal; others call it the prayer of ecstatic union, taking the name from the predominant external phenomenon of this prayer. We prefer, however, to use the expressions conforming and transforming union for these last two degrees of mystical prayer; first, because some persons find the betrothal and marriage symbols distasteful, and secondly because the term ecstatic union stresses a concomitant phenomenon rather than the union between the soul and God.

Nature of Conforming Union

In the prayer of simple union all the interior faculties of the soul are centered on God alone; only the external senses are still free. But in the prayer of conforming union God captivates even the external senses, with the result that the soul is totally divinized, so to speak, and prepared by God to move to the full and final commitment of the transforming union. This means that the conforming union is closely connected with the prayer of simple union and is indeed its expansion. St. Teresa says as much when she remarks that what there is in the fifth and sixth mansions is the same, but the effects are different.

In the prayer of conforming union, therefore, the soul loses the use of its external senses, either partially or totally, because all the interior faculties are absorbed in God and the senses are alienated from their proper natural functioning. It is with difficulty that the soul turns its attention to external activity, though it knows that sometimes

it must “leave God for God” in performing its duties or services of charity for others. But the predominant sentiment of these souls is the longing for full and perfect union with God, accompanied by a longing for death. The soul now echoes the yearning of St. Paul to be dissolved and to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23) and the statement of St. Teresa as a child: “I want to see God, but to see God we must die.”

St. Teresa has given us a clear and detailed description of the prayer of conforming union in *The Life* and in the sixth mansions of *The Interior Castle*. St. John of the Cross treats of this grade of prayer in *The Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame*, but he says that although this would be a place to discuss the different kinds of rapture and ecstasy experienced by spiritual persons, “I pass over the subject because the blessed Teresa of Jesus, our mother, left notes admirably written upon these things of the spirit.” We shall, therefore, follow closely the teaching of St. Teresa in describing the conforming union, which she calls spiritual betrothal.

And now you are going to see what His Majesty does to confirm this betrothal, for this, as I understand it, is what happens when he bestows raptures which carry the soul out of its senses; for if, while still in possession of its senses, the soul saw that it was so near to such great majesty, it might perhaps be unable to remain alive....

The position, in this case, as I understand it, is that the soul has never before been so fully awake to the things of God or had such light or such knowledge of His Majesty. This may seem impossible because, if the faculties are so completely absorbed that we might describe them as dead, and the senses are so as well, how can the soul be said to understand this secret? I cannot say, nor perhaps can any creature.

St. John of the Cross speaks of the prayer of conforming union in similar terms: That we may the better understand what flight this is, it is to be noted that, as we have said, in that visitation of the divine Spirit the spirit of the soul is enraptured with great force, to commune with the Spirit and abandons the body, and ceases to experience feelings and to have its actions in the body, since it has them in God. For this cause said St. Paul with respect to that rapture of his, that he knew .not if his soul was receiving it in the body, or out of the body .

In the ecstatic experience of the conforming union, the soul not

only has contact with God in the very center of its soul, but also it seems to peer into the very essence of God and discover divine secrets. St. Teresa emphasizes also that ecstatic prayer is characterized by a new and great light, unlike any the soul has ever known before, so much so that the soul feels as if it has been in another world.

9. Prayer of Transforming Union

The last grade of prayer is the transforming union, identified by many mystics as the spiritual marriage. It constitutes the seventh mansions of *The Interior Castle* of St. Teresa and is the highest degree of perfection that one can attain in this life. It is, therefore, a prelude to the beatific life of glory. This state is nothing less than a transformation into God, and St. John of the Cross does not hesitate to use such expressions as “transformed into God by love,” “God of God by participation,” and “more divine than human.” Such expressions may seem daring and even excessive when applied to the spiritual life of the soul, but they are fully justified by a usage that goes back to St. John, St. Paul, and the Fathers of the Church, especially the Eastern Church. St. John of the Cross says of this grade of prayer:

There is as great a difference between these states as there is between betrothal and marriage. For in betrothal there is only a consent by agreement, and a unity of will between the two parties, and the jewels and the adornment of the bride-to-be, given her graciously by the bridegroom. But in marriage there is likewise communication between the persons, and union.

St. Teresa says practically the same thing: There is the same difference between the spiritual betrothal and the spiritual marriage as there is between two betrothed persons, and two who are united so that they cannot be separated anymore.

In this grade of prayer there is a total transformation of the soul into the Beloved. The soul has entered into its very center, so to speak, which is the throne room of the interior castle where the Trinity dwells through grace. There God and the soul give themselves to each other in the consummation of divine love, so far as is possible in the present life. There is no more ecstasy, for the soul has now been strengthened to receive the full power of love, but in the brightness of an intellectual vision the soul experiences the Trinity with vivid

awareness.

It sees these three Persons individually and yet, by a wonderful kind of knowledge which is given to it, the soul realizes that most certainly and truly all these three Persons are one substance and one power and one knowledge and one God alone; 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 the soul, for it is no imaginative 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.

We can distinguish three elements in this loftiest degree of the prayer of union: transformation in God, mutual surrender, and the permanent union of love. As St. John of the Cross states:

The soul becomes brilliant and transformed in God, and God communicates to the soul his supematural being to such an extent that the soul appears to be God and to have all that God has. Such a union is effected when God grants to the soul this supematural mercy; as a result of which all the things of God and the soul are one in a participated transformation. The soul seems to be more God than soul and is truly God by participation, although it is true that its being, so distinct by nature, is possessed by the soul as something distinct from the being of God, as it was formerly, even though transformed, just as the window is distinct from the ray of light which illumines it.

As to the mutual surrender, it is a natural consequence of the transforming union just described. Between God and the soul there are a perfect communication and the mutual gift of self, for which reason the prayer of transforming union is called a spiritual marriage. Lastly, St. Teresa teaches that in this grade of prayer, unlike the grades that preceded it, there is a permanency of union and love.

Concomitant with the permanent union of love is the soul's confirmation in grace. St. John of the Cross maintains that the transforming union never falters and the soul is confirmed in grace, but St. Teresa warns that as long as we are in this world we must walk with caution, lest we offend God. However, the apparent contradiction is readily resolved when we say that confirmation in grace does not mean intrinsic impeccability, for the Church teaches

that it is an impossibility in this life. Nor is it a question of avoiding all venial sins in this life, for that would require a special privilege of grace as was bestowed on the Virgin Mary. Consequently, confirmation in grace must be understood as the special grace and assistance from God to avoid all mortal sins and thus have moral certitude of salvation.

Effects of Transforming Union

Perhaps no one has described as clearly as St. Teresa the marvelous effects produced in the soul by the transforming union or mystical marriage. We shall summarize her description of these effects as given in her Interior Castle, Seventh Mansions, Chapter 3:

1. A forgetfulness of self so complete that it seems as if the soul no longer existed. There is no longer any knowledge or remembrance of heaven or life or honor as regards the soul, so completely is it absorbed in seeking the honor of God. The soul lives in a state of forgetfulness so that it has no desire whatever in regard to self, but desires only to do what it can do to promote the glory of God, and for this it would gladly lay down its life.

2. A great desire to suffer, but now the desire does not disturb the soul as it did previously. So great is the soul's longing that the will of God be done in it that it accepts whatever God wills as the best for it. If he sends suffering, well and good; if not the soul does not worry or fret about it as it did previously.

3. Joy in persecution. When the soul is persecuted, it experiences great interior joy and much more peace than formerly. It bears no enmity toward those who treat it badly or desire to do so. Rather, it conceives a special love for such persons, and if it were to see them in some affliction it would be deeply grieved and would do all in its power to relieve them. It loves to commend such persons to God, and would rejoice at relinquishing some of the favors it receives from God if it could bestow them on its enemies, and thus perhaps prevent them from offending God.

4. Desire to serve God. Whereas the soul formerly suffered because of its longing to die and to be with God, it now experiences a strong desire to serve God and to help any soul that it can. Indeed, it now desires not to die but to live for many years and to suffer the most severe trials if in this way it can be a means whereby God is

praised. Its conception of glory is now connected in some way with helping Christ, especially when it sees how often people offend him and how few there are who are truly concerned about his honor.

5. Detachment from everything created. The desires of the soul are no longer for consolations because the soul realizes that now the Lord himself dwells within it. As a result, the soul experiences a marked detachment from everything, and a desire to be alone or to be occupied with something that will be beneficial to the soul. There is no more aridity or interior trial, but only a constant recollection in God and a tender love for him. There is no fear that this period of tranquillity may be caused by the devil, because the soul has an unwavering certitude that it comes from God. This experience takes place in the very center of the soul and in the highest faculty, into which the devil cannot enter.

6. Absence of ecstasies. Upon reaching this state, the soul has no more raptures, or very seldom. The great weakness that formerly was the occasion for raptures has now given place to a great strength granted by God. Nevertheless, the soul walks with great care and still does all in its power to strengthen itself with the help of God's grace. Indeed, the more it is favored by God, the more cautious it becomes and the more aware of its own littleness and humility.

Chapter 9

Aids to Spiritual Growth

Although these aids to spiritual growth are not all of equal value, they do mutually assist one another. They are only secondary means of growth in perfection, however, and therefore no one of them should be used to the exclusion of the basic and fundamental means already discussed.

1. The Presence of God

The practice of the presence of God consists in recalling as frequently as possible that God is present in all places, especially in the depth of the just soul, and consequently in doing all things in the sight of God. Sacred Scripture and tradition are unanimous in stressing the importance and sanctifying effect of the practice of the presence of God. "Walk in my presence and be blameless," God said to Abraham (Gen. 17:1). The one necessarily follows from the other, for if we are convinced that God sees us, we will endeavor to avoid sin and will strive to be as recollected as possible in God's presence. If properly used, this spiritual practice will keep the soul in a spirit of prayer and will

lead it to intimate union with God. St. Francis de Sales goes so far as to say that interior recollection accompanied by pious ejaculations can supply for any pious practice and that its absence cannot be remedied by any other.

It is a theological fact that we are constantly in Gois presence, which admits of five distinct types. The presence of immensity flows from the divine attribute of the samé name; it signifies that God is truly present to all things, and this in a threefold manner by essence, presence, and power. He is present by essence so far as he gives and preserves the existence of all things (creation and conservation), so that nothing could exist or continue to exist without Gois presence. He is present by presence in the sense that absolutely nothing escapes his gáze, but all things are naked and open to his eyes. He is present by power in the sense that all things are subject to his power. With one word he creates; with one word he could annihilate whatever he has created.

Gois presence by indwelling is a special type of presence effected through grace and the operations flowing from grace, in virtue of which God is present to the just soul as a friend and a father, enabling the soul to share in his own divine life. Gois sacramental presence is that which Christ enjoys in the Eucharist, so that he is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine.

Gois personal or hypostatic presence is properte Christ the Second Person of the Trinity, so that the humanity of Christ subsists in the Person of the Word.

Gois presence by manifestation signifies that which is properte him in heaven. So far as we are concemed, however, we shall be aware of this manifestation only when we enjoy the beatific vision.

Of these five types of presence, those which most directly affect the practice of the presence of God are the first two, namely, the presence of immensity, and the presence of indwelling. The first is verified of the soul at all times and under all conditions, even if the soul should be in the state of mortal sin. The second is found only in souls in the state of grace.

The practice of the presence of God has several consequences of great importance for the spiritual life. The following are the principal ones:

1. It reminds us to avoid even the slightest deliberate fault. If we

are careful of our behavior in the presence of superiors or persons of dignity lest we offend them, how much more so in the presence of God, who sees not only our extemal actions but also our interior thoughts and movements.

2. It impels us to do all things with the greatest possible perfection. This is a natural consequence of love, especially if we are performing an action in the very presence of the one we love. Faithful observance of this norm is sufficient to lead a soul to the heights of sanctity. Although it is true that God does not demand perfection of us here and now, he does expect us to do the best we can at a given time.

3. It enables us to observe modesty in our deportment at all times. Whether alone or with others, those who are constantly aware of Gois presence will maintain a sense of Christian dignity in all their actions and in their very bearing. To this end, it is important that souls in the stati of grace be mindful of the indwelling of the Trinity.

4. It increases our fortitude in the struggles of the Christian life. It is much more difficult to overcome obstacles and to suffer trials when we are alone. But God is always with us to animate our courage and give us the positive assistance of his grace.

There are two principal methods of practicing the presence of God. The first consists in a kind of exterior representation by which we visualize God as ever present to us. We do not see him, but he is really there, and we cannot do anything that escapes his divine gaze. This method of practicing the presence of God is greatly aided by the use of crucifixes and other religious symbols placed in a prominent place.

The second method is that of interior recollection. It requires that one should live in an ever-increasing awareness of Gois presence in the soul, whether by immensity or by the indwelling. The result of this method is a more profound understanding of what Jesus meant when he said: "The kingdom of God is within you." When properly used, interior recollection serves to unite the practice of the presence of God with a deep and intimate union with God. It is also, therefore, one of the necessary conditions for cultivating a deep and abiding spirit of prayer.

Other methods for practicing the presence of God háve been proposed by various writers: to see the hand of God in all the events of one's life, whether adverse or prosperous; to see God in all creatures; to see God in the person of one's superior and in one's neighbor. One

should use the method that is most helpful in cultivating the practice of the presence of God.

2. Examination of Conscience

As its name indicates, the examination of conscience is an investigation of one's conscience in order to discover the good or evil acts one has performed, and especially to verify one's basic attitude regarding God and personal sanctification. We are not referring to the examination of conscience made prior to confession, which is simply a review and enumeration of one's sins, but of an examination made in view of one's progress in holiness. It should take into account the strength or weakness of one's virtues, as well as the number and frequency of one's sins. To place too great an emphasis on one's failings may result in meticulousness, anxiety, discouragement, and even scrupulosity.

Spiritual writers are unanimous in stressing the importance of the examination of conscience as a spiritual exercise. Outstanding among them, of course, is St. Ignatius Loyola, who for a long time used no other methods of spiritual formation for his companions but the examination of conscience and the frequent reception of the sacraments.

St. Ignatius distinguishes two types of examination: general and particular. The first is an overall view of one's spiritual state and those things that would contribute to the improvement of one's spiritual life. The second is focused particularly on some definite vice one is trying to eliminate or some virtue one is trying to cultivate.

The particular examen has three steps or points. First on arising in the morning, one resolves to correct the particular fault one is trying to eliminate, or to avoid failure in the practice of the particular virtue one is trying to cultivate. Secondly, after the noon meal one makes an examination of the faults committed during the morning and resolves to avoid them in the afternoon. Thirdly, after the evening meal one repeats the examination and resolution as at noon.

The general examination proposed by St. Ignatius has five points: (1) give thanks to God for benefits received; (2) beg the grace to know one's sins and to rid oneself of them; (3) make a detailed examination, hour by hour, of one's thoughts, words, and deeds; (4) beg pardon of God; (5) resolve to amend one's life and recite the Our Father. The general examen is made once a day, before retiring.

In order to obtain the maximum benefit from the examination of conscience, it is necessary to know how to practice it. The following extract provides a more detailed explanation of the Ignatian method of examination:

1. One's spiritual exercises should be unified; otherwise they will not exert their influence throughout the day. The examination of conscience should be the bond of union for all of one's spiritual exercises and the great means of achieving unity in one's spiritual life.

2. Philosophy teaches us that acts are transitory, but habits are permanent. Hence we should especially examine our habits. The mere knowledge of our acts will not give us an intimate knowledge of our souls. What resides in the sanctuary of conscience is not our acts, which have already passed away, but our habits or dispositions of soul. If we have succeeded in knowing them, we have verified the true state of our souls, but not otherwise.

3. In order to know our souls, it is necessary to ask ourselves this simple question: "Where is my heart?" Immediately we shall find the answer within ourselves. The question makes us look into the intimate depths of the soul, and immediately the salient point stands out. This is an intuitive function, and it can be repeated many times during the day.

There is no need for investigations, feats of memory, mathematical calculations. It is simply a rapid, all-inclusive glance that tells us at once the state of our souls. That is the mainspring of all our actions, and that is what must be corrected and made right if all else in our life is to go well.

4. The details and exact number of the external manifestations of our fundamental disposition of soul are of least importance. We don't waste time cutting the branches from a tree when we are going to cut down the whole tree. It is true that external acts reveal the internal condition, but we can discover this condition by looking at it directly instead of searching for it in the forest of external acts.

5. But if we attend exclusively to the principal interior disposition, shall we not lose sight of the other dispositions of soul, thus allowing them to grow in the darkness without paying any attention to them? There is no danger of this. The other dispositions of soul cannot emerge if one's whole soul is directed to God as a result of the examination.

Moreover, the dominant inclination or disposition of soul is not always the same; one's defects are manifested according to circumstances, and as soon as a disposition comes to the fore, the examination of conscience overcomes and controls it.

6. But can we rest content with this glance? Does everything consist in seeing? By no means. It is necessary to rectify all disorders and to foster all good movements and inclinations. The glance at one's state of soul should lead to contrition and resolution. Contrition corrects evil, and resolution affirms good. Contrition looks to the past, and resolution prepares for the future. The resolution should be a particular one that will touch the special point dominating one's soul. It should place our hearts completely in the presence of God.

7. There are, therefore, three steps in the examination of conscience: a glance at one's state of soul, contrition, and resolution. All three can be utilized in the general and particular examinations of which St. Ignatius speaks. In the general examination, the glance embraces one's predominant disposition throughout the day. Then it can extend to the secondary dispositions that have been manifested but have not been predominant. The particular examination is easier. As a matter of fact, it has already been done when one discovers one's fundamental predominant disposition of soul. The morning examination should be used to assure one's proper orientation during the day and the avoidance of the evils to which one is most exposed.

8. In this way, the examination of conscience will give unity and consistency to all of one's spiritual life. By means of it one can avoid dangers and correct defects. It serves to reveal one's interior state, so that one cannot remain in evil but is obliged to advance in holiness.

There is no doubt that the faithful practice of examination of conscience will have profound effects on one's spiritual life. But in this, as in so many things, its efficacy depends to a great extent on perseverance. To omit the examination frequently or to make it in a purely mechanical fashion is to render it absolutely sterile. The soul that earnestly desires to become holy must be convinced that many of the other means of sanctification are frustrated if one does not make the daily examination of conscience.

3. The Desire for Perfection

Of all the psychological factors that play a part in our spiritual life, a prominent place must be given to the sincere desire for attaining perfection. It is said that when St. Thomas Aquinas was asked by

one of his sisters what she should do to reach sanctity, he answered her in one brief sentence: "Will it."

The desire for perfection is an act of the will, under the influence of grace, which aspires unceasingly to spiritual growth until one reaches sanctity. It is under the influence of grace because such a desire is manifestly supernatural and surpasses the exigencies and tendencies of pure nature. It must be constant in its aspiration for ever greater perfection, and it must not stop at any intermediate degree but must aspire to the heights of sanctity.

Sanctity is the supreme good we can attain in this life. By its very nature it is something infinitely desirable, but since it is also an arduous and difficult good, it is impossible to tend toward it efficaciously without the strong impulse of a will that is determined to attain it at any cost. St. Teresa of Avila considers it of decisive importance "to have a great and very determined resolve not to stop until one reaches it," without reckoning the difficulties along the way, the criticism of those around us, the lack of health, or the disdain of the world. Therefore, only resolute and energetic souls, with the help of divine grace, will scale the heights of perfection.

In order that it will possess the greatest possible sanctifying efficacy, the desire for perfection should have the following qualities:

1. It should be supernatural, that is, should flow from grace and be directed to the greater glory of God. This means that the desire for perfection is a gift of God, for which we should petition humbly and perseveringly until we obtain it. "Lord, make me want to love you!"

2. It should be profoundly humble, without reliance entirely on our own strength, but placing our trust in him from whom all graces flow. Nor should we aspire to sanctity for any other motive than to love and glorify God. In the beginning, it is difficult to avoid every trace of presumption and egoism, but it is necessary to be constantly purifying

one's intention and perfecting one's motives until they are directed only to the glory of God.

3. It should be filled with confidence. Of ourselves we can do nothing, but all things are possible in him who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). Countless souls abandon the road to perfection in the face of obstacles because, becoming discouraged and lacking confidence in God, they think that sanctity is not for them. Only those who persevere in spite of hardships will receive the crown of victory.

4. It should be the predominant desire. All other goods must be subordinated to this supreme good. Hence the desire for perfection is not simply one among many, but it must be the fundamental desire dominating one's entire life. Those who wish to become saints must dedicate themselves to this task professionally, and this requires that they put aside anything that may prove an impediment. Many souls have failed in the pursuit of sanctity because they have fluctuated between the things of God and the things of the world.

5. It should be constant. Numerous souls, on the occasion of some great event, such as the termination of a retreat, reception of the religious habit or sacred orders, or profession of vows, experience a great spiritual impulse, as a result of which they resolve to dedicate themselves henceforth to the pursuit of sanctity. But they weary of the pursuit when they experience difficulties, and they either abandon the road to sanctity, or the desire becomes cool.

Or sometimes they grant themselves vacations or pauses, under the pretext of resting a while to recover their strength. This is a great mistake because the soul not only does not gain any strength but also is greatly weakened. Later, when it wishes to renew its efforts, a greater effort is required to recapture the spiritual gains previously made. All this could have been avoided if the desire for perfection had remained constant, without undue violence or extremes, but also without respite or weakness.

6. It should be practical and efficacious. This is not a question of wishful thinking but of a definite determination that must be put into practice here and now, using all the means at one's disposal for attaining perfection. It is easy to imagine that one has a desire for perfection because of occasional good intentions or certain noble sentiments experienced during prayer.

But a desire is efficacious only when it is put into execution. To desire perfection in a theoretical way and to postpone one's efforts until some later date is to live in an illusion. The individual passes from one delay to another, and life passes on, so that the person runs the risk of appearing before God with empty hands.

Since the desire for perfection is of such great importance in the struggle for holiness, one should note carefully the following means for arousing this desire:

1. To beg for it incessantly from God. Since the desire is

supernatural, it can come to us only from above.

2. To renew it frequently. It should be renewed daily at the most solemn moment of the day, namely, at the moment of Communion; at other times, on principal feasts, the monthly day of recollection, during the annual retreat, on special anniversaries.

3. To meditate frequently on the motives that inspire this desire. The principal motives are the following: (a) our obligation to strive for perfection, (b) consciousness that this is the greatest good we can seek in this life; (c) awareness of the danger we risk if we do not truly strive to sanctify ourselves; (d) recognition of the fact that the perfect imitation of Christ demands perfection and sanctity.

4. Conformity to God's Will

Perfect conformity to the divine will is a most efficacious means of sanctification. St. Teresa of Avila says in this regard that those who begin the life of prayer must work and resolve and dispose themselves with as much diligence as possible to make their will conformable to that of God; in this consists the greatest perfection that can be attained on the spiritual way.

Conformity to the will of God consists in a loving, total, and intimate submission and harmony of our will with that of God in everything he disposes or permits in our regard. When it reaches a perfect state it is known by the name of holy abandonment to the will of God; in its less perfect state it is called simply Christian resignation.

In order to understand this practice in an orthodox sense, it is necessary to keep in mind certain doctrinal points. In the first place, sanctity is the result of the action of God and the free cooperation of man. God is the director of the work of our sanctification, and therefore nothing should be done that is not in conformity with his plans and under the impulse of his grace.

The basis of abandonment to the will of God is charity. The reason is that love unites the will of the lover to the will of the beloved, and perfect abandonment requires the complete surrender of our own will to that of God. Perfect abandonment is found only in souls that are far advanced in perfection.

In order to attain this total abandonment the following theological points should be meditated upon frequently:

1. Nothing happens that has not been foreseen by God from all

eternity and willed or permitted by him.

2. God could not will anything that is not in conformity with the purpose for which he created all things, namely, his own external glory.
3. All things contribute in some way to the good of those who love God and persevere in his love (Rom. 8:28).
4. Abandonment to the will of - God does not excuse anyone; from fulfilling the divine will of expression by obeying the precepts and commands of God, and then submitting himself or herself as regards all things else to the divine will of good pleasure, without any anxiety.

From what has already been said, it should be evident that abandonment to the will of God is not only an excellent spiritual practice but also a necessary one for the attainment of sanctity. Its excellence lies in its incomparable efficacy for removing the obstacles that impede the action of grace, for making one practice the virtues as perfectly as possible, and for establishing the absolute dominion of God over our will.

The necessity of practicing abandonment to the will of God is based upon the following points:

1. divine right. As God's creatures, we are also his servants. He created us, he conserves us, he redeemed us, he has made us for himself. We do not belong to ourselves, but we are God's (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). We are also his children and friends through grace, but children should be subject to their father, and friends should be of one mind and one heart.

2. Our utility. Abandonment to God's will has a great sanctifying efficacy, and our sanctification is the greatest good we could seek in this world.

3. The example of Christ. All during his life on earth Christ fulfilled the will of his heavenly Father. He proclaimed this by his actions and openly professed it in words. His last words from the Cross were a submission and yielding of his whole being to the hands of his Father. Mary, too, handmaid of the Lord, practiced this total abandonment in imitation of her Son.

Having traced the general lines of the practice of abandonment to the will of God, we shall now offer some suggestions regarding the

method of conforming to God's Will in the circumstances of daily life.

1. Whatever God positively and directly wills is best for us, even if for the time being it causes pain and suffering. In the face of incurable sickness or the death of loved ones, the only Christian attitude is: "Thy will be done." And if our love of God is strong enough to enable us to rise above simple resignation, and through our pain or sorrow give thanks to God, we shall have reached a high degree of abandonment to the will of God.

2. God never wills positively and directly that which refers to evil, which God cannot will as such. But in his infinite goodness and wisdom, God knows how to convert into good the evil he permits, and that is why he permits it. Hence we manifest a lamentable shortsightedness when, in the evils God permits to happen to us, we do not raise our eyes to heaven to adore God, who permits these things for our greater good. We must, therefore, strive to see in the injustice of men the justice of God, which punishes us for our sins, and even his mercy, which gives us an opportunity to make satisfaction for them.

3. It is necessary to conform ourselves to the will of God as known through his precepts and laws. It would be a grave error to attempt to please God with works freely selected by ourselves, and then disregard the laws he has imposed on us directly or through his representatives. The first things that we should observe conscientiously are God's commandments, the laws of the Church, the commands of superiors, and the duties of our state in life. "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord, I shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven'" (Matt. 7:21).

4. The first and most basic step toward conformity of one's will with that of God is to avoid most carefully all sin, however small.

But what is to be done if we fall into a grave sin? It is necessary to distinguish two aspects of the sin: the offense against God and the humiliation of the sinner. The first must be rejected completely, and one can never repent of it sufficiently. The second can be accepted with penitence and gratitude because one's humiliation through sin is a means of learning the significance of God's law (cf. Ps. 118:71).

5. The soul that wishes to attain perfect abandonment to the will of God must be disposed to practice the evangelical counsels. Religious make a vow to practice certain counsels in their daily life; lay persons are not called upon to do this, but they should observe the spirit of the

counsels and carry them out in practice when the duties of their station in life permit. However, it would be an error for the laity gratuitously, to assume a manner of life proper to religious; the first duty of the laity, whether married or living singly in the world, is to fulfill the duties imposed by their particular vocation.

We do not know what God has decreed for our future, but we do know some things for certain: that the will of God is the supreme cause of all things; that the divine will is essentially good and beneficent; that all things, whether adverse or prosperous, contribute to the good of those who love God. Therefore, we should cultivate a holy indifference, not preferring health to sickness, wealth to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life, and so likewise with everything else, but that we desire and choose that which best leads us to the end for which we were created.

If the divine will is the supreme cause of everything that happens, and if the divine will is infinitely good, holy, wise, and powerful, then the more our wills conform to that of God, the more certain we can be that nothing evil will befall us. The evils that God permits will contribute to our greater good if we know how to utilize them in the way God desires.

But in order to understand the nature of holy indifference; the following principles should be kept in mind:

1. The purpose of holy indifference is to give oneself completely to God and to become utterly detached from self. It is not a stoical indifference to whatever befalls us, but an efficacious means of uniting our wills to, that of God.

2. This indifference applies only to the superior part of the soul, for it would be impossible to demand of our lower faculties that they remain insensate and indifferent. Therefore one should not be disturbed if one experiences the repugnance or revolt of nature, so long as the will accepts sufferings and trials as coming from the hand of God.

3. This indifference is not merely passive but truly active. In those instances in which the divine will is made manifest, the human will rushes forth to obey with generosity; in those cases in which the divine will is not yet manifested, the human will is perfectly disposed to accept and fulfill whatever God decrees as soon as his will becomes manifest.

Would it be permissible to reach such a point of indifference that

one is disinterested in one's own salvation? By no means; God wills that all be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4), and he permits those to be condemned who have deliberately turned away from him and have died unrepentant. It is not that they could not have been saved, but they would not be saved. Hence to renounce one's own salvation under the pretext of practicing perfect abandonment to God's will would be in contradiction to God's will, as well as a violation of man's innate desire for perfect happiness. Moreover, since the glory of God is the prime motive for our existence, we should positively seek our own salvation, which is the perfect way in which we give glory to God.

The blessings of complete abandonment to God's will are innumerable. In addition to those already mentioned, the following should be noted:

1. It gives a sweet intimacy with God, such as a child experiences with its mother.
2. The soul travels with simplicity and freedom, desiring only what God wills.
3. The soul remains constant and serene in all events of life because God wills or permits them.
4. The soul is filled with true joy that no one can destroy, because it wills whatever God wills.
5. One can expect a happy death if one remains faithful in abandonment to God's will.

Fidelity to Grace

Fidelity in general signifies the faith and loyalty one person has for another. Fidelity to grace means loyalty or docility in following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in any form in which they are manifested to us.

Inspirations are the interior attractions, movements, feelings of remorse, or the knowledge God causes in us, in order to arouse us and draw us to virtue and to good resolutions. Divine inspirations are produced in various ways. Even sinners receive them in order to be converted.

The Holy Spirit works in us according to his will (cf. John 3:8). Sometimes he enlightens us, as when he gives us the knowledge by which we may resolve a doubt; at other times he moves us, as when

we perform some good action we had already intended to do; but most often he both enlightens and moves us at the same time. At times he inspires us in the midst of some work or even distraction, sometimes during prayer, at the times of Communion, or in moments of recollection and fervor. He rules and governs the adopted children of God in the ordinary events of daily life as well as in affairs of great importance. He does not always inspire us directly, however, but sometimes sends the inspirations through a secondary cause such as a good book, a sermon, or someone's good example. Nevertheless, in the last analysis the Holy Spirit is always the principal author of the inspiration.

It would be impossible to insist too strongly on the importance and necessity of fidelity to grace in order to advance on the way of perfection. It is, in a certain sense, the fundamental problem of the Christian life because it determines whether one will make constant progress toward the heights of sanctity. Practically the only task of the spiritual director is to lead the soul to a most exquisite and constant fidelity to grace. Without this, all other methods are doomed to failure. The theological reason for this can be found in the divine economy of actual grace.

Actual grace is necessary for every salutary act. Without actual grace it is impossible to perform the smallest supernatural action, even if the soul possesses sanctifying grace, the infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But actual grace is continuously offered to us in the fulfillment of the duties of the moment. That is not all. In the ordinary economy of divine providence, God subordinates consequent graces to those graces that have previously been given. Therefore, infidelity to grace at a given time may deprive us of many other graces that God would have given us if we had used the earlier graces. Only in eternity shall we see that a great number of frustrated saints were such because of their infidelity to actual grace. It should be noted that we are not here speaking of serious sins, which cause the loss of habitual grace, but of those venial sins, which frustrated the action of the Holy Spirit.

The negative effects that follow infidelity to grace should be sufficient to impress upon the soul the importance of being faithful to the graces God gives, but it is also important that we understand the positive sanctifying value of fidelity to grace. We must rely on the inspirations and directions of the Holy Spirit if we are to purge ourselves of all evil and grow in goodness. Hence, we should strive

to be so possessed by the Holy Spirit that he alone governs all our faculties and regulates all our interior and exterior movements. In this way we shall no longer live, but Christ will live in us, due to our faithful cooperation with the actual graces given us through the Holy Spirit. It may happen that an inspiration from God is met with repugnance, doubt, or difficulties, but it is necessary to overcome our unruly nature and to follow at any cost the inspirations that come to us from God. We can never reach perfection so long as we are governed and guided by a natural and human spirit because perfection requires that God should live in us and work through us according to his will.

The inspiration of the Holy Spirit is to an act of virtue what temptation is to a sinful act. The Holy Spirit proposes the virtuous act to the intellect and arouses the will; the just person accepts and approves the inspiration and then carries it out. Possessing in our souls the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are given in order to make us docile to the inspirations and movements of the Holy Spirit we may rightfully ask for these inspirations and expect them. Indeed, the *Veni Creator Spiritus* is nothing other than a litany of petitions to the Holy Spirit asking him to grant us his inspirations and his graces.

Three things are necessary for our response to the inspirations from the Holy Spirit: (1) attention to the inspirations; (2) discretion for distinguishing them from natural inclinations or movements from the devil; and (3) docility in carrying out the inspiration.

1. Attention. We should consider frequently that the Holy Spirit dwells within us through sanctifying grace. If we were able to detach ourselves completely from all earthly things and withdraw to the silence and recollection of our own interior, we would undoubtedly hear the voice of God speaking within us. This is not a question of an extraordinary grace; it would be something completely normal and ordinary in the Christian life. Why then do we not hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? In the first place, because of our habitual dissipation. God is within us, but we live outside ourselves. The Holy Spirit says that he will lead us to solitude and will speak there to our hearts (cf. Hos. 2:16).

God does not choose to impose himself nor to take from us our own initiative. He does not force himself upon the soul; he does not enter if he is not wanted. And even if the soul is in the state of grace and enjoys the indwelling of the Trinity, God's presence is silent and hidden until the soul itself turns to him with love and attention.

Another reason why we do not hear the voice of God within us is our sensuality. The animal man, says St. Paul, does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14).

For that reason it is absolutely indispensable that we cultivate and preserve a spirit of mortification. Indeed, one of the first things that is lost by those who give themselves over to the things of the world, and especially to sensual delight, is the taste for prayer and the things of God.

The third reason why we do not hear the voice of God is our own disordered affection. Even in seeking God, we may deceive ourselves and actually seek ourselves. It is not at all unusual to find persons who are externally very pious and observant in their religious duties, but inwardly filled with egoism and self-complacency. The will can easily deviate from God and seek the self as the object of love. It is easy to see, therefore, why those who seek themselves first and even subordinate God to themselves, hear only the voice of their own desires, while God remains silent.

2. Discretion. The discernment of spirits is of great importance if we are to know for certain the spirit that moves us at a given moment. The following points will be of help in recognizing divine inspirations.

(a) The devil never inspires us to virtue, and neither does fallen human nature, as a rule, if it is a question of some virtuous act that is difficult.

(b) God does not generally inspire us to perform actions not in keeping with our state in life or particular vocation. In this respect we must be cautious lest we try to do what we personally wish to do, and then justify it by calling it an inspiration from God.

(c) St. Francis de Sales maintains that one of the best signs of the goodness and authenticity of an inspiration, and especially of an extraordinary one, is the peace and tranquillity with which it is received, because God does not use violence but acts sweetly and gently. This is another way of saying not to presume that the inclination to perform some extraordinary action, such as changing one's vocation or state in life, is an inspiration from God unless there are sufficiently grave reasons for making the change. If, on the other hand, a soul is upset and perturbed by what it considers to be an inspiration from God, it is not to be presumed that the inspiration in question is from God.

(d) Those who claim to be acting by divine inspiration and refuse

to obey their superiors are impostors, says St. Francis de Sales. The first question a spiritual director should ask in cases of doubt is whether or not such individuals are obedient to the laws of God and the Church and the duties of their state in life. The spirit of disobedience has been responsible for numerous apostates, heretics, and fraudulent mystics.

(e) In the ordinary events of everyday life, it is not necessary to deliberate or seek counsel. As a rule, it suffices simply to choose that particular action that seems to be in conformity with the divine will, and not be troubled by any scruples of conscience. In cases of doubt concerning matters of greater importance, however, one should always consult a spiritual director, one's superiors, or someone who is able to make a prudent decision.

3. Docility. This is a quality by which one follows the inspiration of grace promptly, without waiting for a second movement of grace. This, of course, applies only in those cases in which the divine inspiration is clear, because we have already stated that in doubtful cases it is necessary to deliberate or to consult someone in authority. The soul should always be disposed to fulfill the will of God at any given moment.

Cardinal Mercier advised persons to spend some time each day in complete recollection and to address the Holy Spirit in the following words: "O Holy Spirit soul of my soul, I adore you. Enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me. Tell me what I ought to do. Give me your commands. I promise to submit myself to whatever you ask of me and to accept whatever you permit to happen to me. Grant only that I may know your holy will."

Spiritual Reading

The attentive and assiduous reading of spiritual books is an efficacious aid to the practice of prayer and the acquisition of knowledge of spiritual doctrine. It is a laudable custom to have at hand a book of spirituality that can be read from time to time as one's occupation permits. A good book will not only renew the desire to strive for greater perfection, but it will impart invaluable knowledge concerning the spiritual life.

Not all spiritual books, however, have the same value or sanctifying efficacy. Objectively, Sacred Scripture should hold the first place, and especially those parts that are most instructive and doctrinal. Nevertheless, not all persons are able, for one reason or another, to

obtain the maximum benefits from reading Sacred Scripture. This applies especially to the Old Testament, for there is no doubt that the New Testament, especially the Gospels and the Epistles, can be read by all with great benefit.

The lives of the saints can also be a source of edification and instruction, but here it is necessary to remark that one should be selective in the choice of biographies. If too much emphasis is placed on the extraordinary in the life of a given saint, the reader may acquire a distaste for such books or a feeling of incredulity regarding the veracity of such phenomena. What is worse, the reader may attempt to imitate particular details in the life of a saint who belonged to a different age, a distinct culture, or lived in a state of life having little or nothing in common with that of the reader.

In general, one should select spiritual books that offer solid and practical doctrine regarding the Christian life. And since moods of the individual vary greatly, the book used at a given time is not always the one that is most beneficial at that time. Some books may be of great value in a particular period of a person's spiritual development but would cease to be of use later on. Other books would prove to be harmful to certain individuals because they are only beginners in the spiritual life, because of their lack of understanding of spiritual doctrine, or because of some particular defect at a given time.

Once a book has been selected for spiritual reading, it is of prime importance that it be read properly. Spiritual reading is not purely for reasons of study; it is an exercise of piety. Although it is true that one derives much instruction through the reading of spiritual books, the ultimate purpose is to arouse one's love of God and to intensify one's desire for perfection. Hence the important thing is not to read many books but to assimilate what is read.

Sometimes it is very beneficial to reread certain sections of a book or to return again and again to the same book so that its doctrine can be deeply impressed upon the mind and heart. The important thing to be kept in mind about spiritual reading is that we should use a book as long as we need it and can derive benefit from it. Sometimes it is necessary to resist the temptation to change books frequently, without ever finishing any one book.

It would be equally erroneous, however, to believe that we must necessarily finish every book that is started. If we begin a book that proves unsatisfactory, the prudent thing to do is to select a different

book rather than waste time on something that is not beneficial. If the book is properly selected and properly read, we will easily pass from reading to prayer, and sometimes the two exercises will be so closely connected that we will not know when we ceased to read and began to pray.

Holy Friendships

Father Lacordaire (1802-61) once said that true friendship is a rare and divine thing, a sure mark of a noble soul, and one of the greatest rewards of true virtue. We read in Sacred Scripture that a faithful friend is a powerful protector and that anyone who has found such a friend has found a treasure (Sir. 6:14-16). The truth of these statements is evident from daily experience. A virtuous friend is one of the greatest inspirations for the conquest of self and the practice of good.

True friendship is an alliance of souls who are united to do good. It is disinterested, generous, sincere, and patient to the point of heroism. True friendship does not know the meaning of duplicity or hypocrisy; it does not deny the defects that exist in the friends, but it enables them to love each other in spite of their defects and weaknesses. Neither is it a sensual love, because the love of true friendship must be a love that seeks primarily, not the good of oneself, but the good of the other. That is why the love of friendship is synonymous with true charity.

There are three outstanding advantages that flow from a true and holy friendship. In the first place, a friend can be an intimate confidant to whom one can open the heart and receive advice and counsel when confronted with problems and doubts. Secondly, a friend can be a prudent and sympathetic corrector who will frankly point out one's defects and prevent many acts of imprudence. Thirdly, a friend will console in times of sorrow and will know how to select the proper words and remedies in times of trial.

If true friendship has been highly praised, even by pagan philosophers, as one of the greatest blessings in a person's social life, it is reasonable to expect that it can be a powerful aid in the attainment of perfection. The struggle for perfection is the work of a lifetime, and it demands fidelity in the face of many obstacles. Even heroic souls have experienced the discouragement that comes from the recognition of the loftiness of the goal and the weakness of human nature. The love of a friend who has the same high ideals can be a

Spiritual Theology

source of encouragement and inspiration in times of darkness. Through all the centuries of the Church's existence there have been outstanding examples of holy friendship in the lives of the saints.

Since human love can so easily become tainted with selfishness and sensuality, however, it is necessary that one maintain a strict vigilance lest one's love should exceed the limits of virtue and become an occasion of evil. For if it is true that a good friend is a powerful stimulus to virtue, it is no less true that one of the most destructive forces in the Christian life is that of a sinful friendship. St. Francis de Sales warns that it happens frequently that a human friendship begins in a virtuous manner but imperceptibly but surely becomes mixed with sensual love and finally terminates in carnal love.

For this reason it is extremely important that one know the signs by which one can determine whether a friendship is sensual. The first and most evident sign of a sensual friendship is that it is exclusive. This exclusiveness is shown by the fact that the two friends withdraw from the company of others in order to be alone, are annoyed if others join their company, and are jealous of each other to the point of becoming angry if one sees the other in the company of a third party.

Secondly, a sensual friendship is characterized by possessiveness, which may reach such a point that one cannot tolerate the absence of the other, seeks to prolong conversations and visits unduly, and dominates the other person. Thirdly, sensual friendships are obsessive. At the slightest provocation one's thoughts turn to the friend; on entering a room the first person sought is the friend; the imagination seems always to be focused on the face of the friend, and this to the point of distraction in prayer or in the performance of one's duties.

In order to avoid this type of friendship, which is harmful to the spiritual life, the best remedy is to prevent such a friendship from developing. As soon as any of the signs have been noticed, one should react as to the symptoms of a disease. If, however, such a friendship has already been allowed to develop, it may be necessary to avoid any drastic and sudden measures but rather to let the friendship gradually cool until it can be rectified. Spiritual directors and confessors, who are prone to react violently to such friendships and to demand of their penitents an immediate and definitive break between the friends, may unwittingly cause a psychological upheaval more serious than the disorder they hoped to cure.