

# LIFE EVERLASTING

AND THE IMMENSITY OF THE SOUL

A Theological Treatise on the Four Last Things:  
Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell

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*"For I know not how long I shall continue, and  
whether after a while my Maker may take me away."*  
—Job 32:22

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*To the*  
*BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,*  
*Mother of God,*  
*Patroness of a Good Death,*  
*in token of profound gratitude and humble obeisance*

## P R E F A C E

WE propose in this book to speak of life everlasting, to show what light falls on our life here below from the life there beyond. Our chief concern will be the immensity of the human soul, first in our present life, then in the particular judgment at the moment when the soul is separated from the body. Thus we shall attain a better understanding, first of what hell is: that boundless void which can never be filled; the unmeasured depths of the soul forever deprived of that sovereign good which alone could fill those depths. Secondly of what purgatory is: the state of the soul which cannot as yet possess God, which is deprived for a period short or long of the vision of God, because by its own fault it was not ready for its appointed meeting. Thirdly of what the moment of entering heaven is, an instantaneous moment which will never pass away: the unchanging possession of life everlasting, of God who alone can fill the boundless depths of the human will. This soul-depth, as we shall see, is explained by the truth that already in the natural order our will is illumined not merely by sense and imagination but by the intellect which, grasping universal reality, grasps likewise universal and boundless good, a good which, speaking concretely, is found in God alone, the infinite good.

Life everlasting then throws great light on our life here below. It draws us up out of our superficiality and drowsiness. It reveals the immensity of our soul, which either must remain eternally in a desert waste or then be completely filled

with the eternal possession of God, Truth supreme and Sovereign Good.

The mystics, Tauler <sup>1</sup> above all and Louis de Blois, often use the term soul-depth in a metaphorical sense, in contrast to the exterior sense world. Similarly they use the term soul-height, in contrast to the same sense world as inferior. Less known is the teaching of St. Thomas, who in language less metaphorical explains the immeasurable depths of the will. His doctrine on this point illumines the solution of many great problems and prevents us from resting in a superficial attitude of mind.

We endeavor in the following pages to maintain theological preciseness in the use of terms. In the rare cases where we have recourse to metaphors we note explicitly that we do so of necessity, when proper terms are lacking. Our book is to be a theological treatise on the last things (*de novissimis*).

Our purpose is to enlighten souls, to arouse conscience and responsibility. Our book would recall those who may be on the road to perdition, would instruct those who often commit deliberate venial sins, who take no pains to expiate mortal sins already remitted in the tribunal of confession. Above all we would give the reader a high idea of heaven, of eternal happiness, in its opposition to hell, in its retardation by purgatory, in its infinite elevation. To attain heaven is to reach our ultimate and supernatural goal, to see God as He sees Himself, to love Him as He loves Himself, to possess Him unfailingly forever.

A handmaid of God once heard these words: "I gave you a religion of life, and you have made it a religion of formulas.

<sup>1</sup> *The Sermons of Tauler*, translated by Hugueny, 1935, I, 76 ff., 201-3; III, 52.

I am the Creator of good, and you have made me a tyrant, since in my precepts you see only what displeases you."

We pray our Lord Jesus and His Blessed Mother to bless these pages that they may bring to many, many souls a benefit that will last for all eternity.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

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FIRST PART

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S OUL IMMENSITY IN OUR PRESENT  
LIFE

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## SENSIBILITY

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ORDER demands that we study first the depths of our emotional life as illumined by sense cognition and then those of our voluntary life as illumined by our intellect. Progress in acquired virtue and, still more, progress in infused virtue will reveal immense depths and will clarify in particular the growth of charity in the souls of the saints, both in their hours of trial and in the joy of their apostolic triumphs.

Sensibility, the source of passion and emotion, is, like sense knowledge and imagination, common to animals and men. This sensibility we call sense appetite to distinguish it from the will, which is a spiritual faculty, common to man, angel, and God. Passions, emotions, the movements of sense appetite arise when sense knowledge or imagination puts before us a sense object, attractive or repellent. Thus we note that the desire for food appears under a peaceful form in the dove and the lamb, but under a violent form in the wolf, the tiger, and the lion.

The first among all passions, the source of all others, is sense love, the love, for example, of the animal for the food it needs. From this love rises a series of passions: desire, joy, hope, audacity, hate, aversion, sadness, despair, fear, and anger.

Passion is not always, but may become, keen, vehement, dominating. In man the passions are meant to be ruled and

disciplined by reason and will. Thus ruled, they are weapons which defend a great cause. On the contrary, if they remain unruly and undisciplined, they become vices: love becomes gluttony and lust, aversion becomes jealousy and envy, audacity becomes foolhardiness, fear becomes faintheartedness and cowardice.

These wide contrasts, both in good and in evil, show how deep and immense is the world of passion. Even in the animal kingdom what heights are scaled by love and hate: in the lion, for example, attacking his prey, in the lioness defending her young!

But this width and depth of passion is still more immense in man, because man's intellect grasps universal good and man's will desires that boundless good which is found in God alone. Hence when man's will does not follow the straight road to God, when man seeks supreme happiness not in God but in creatures, then his concupiscence becomes insatiable, because he has unlimited desires for a good that is limited. Man's will was created to love supreme good and the irradiations of that supreme good. Hence when the will turns aside, its tendency to universal good continues under that deviation, and this tendency of man's highest faculty now becomes foolish, exercises a lamentable influence on man's lower faculties. This truth is a proof, a sad proof indeed, but still a proof, of the spirituality of the soul. The ruins of decay are a souvenir of grandeur.

Passion, says St. Thomas,<sup>1</sup> when it is truly natural, that is, founded on man's nature, cannot be boundless, because it desires only what nature demands, and the sense good which nature demands is limited, in food, for instance, and drink. Unnatural desire, on the contrary, can be unlimited, because

<sup>1</sup> Ia Iae, q. 30, a. 4.

it arises from reason gone astray, which sees unlimited good in a good which is in reality limited. Thus a man who desires wealth can desire it in limitless measure, can see in wealth the ultimate purpose of his life.

Natural desire, then, in animal and man is limited. The animal (e.g., wolf, tiger, lion) when it is sated no longer seeks prey. But intelligent man when depraved conceives and pursues ever more wealth and pleasure. Hence quarrels among neighbors and endless wars among nations. The miser is insatiable, likewise the man of pleasure and the man of power. Love when thwarted begets hate, and that hate becomes boundless. Hate, says Baudelaire, is the cask of the pale Danaides. These Danaides, says mythology, slew their husbands on their wedding night, hence were condemned to fill a cask without bottom: endless punishment of boundless depravity.

If passions which man shares with beast be so deep and wide, what must be the depth and breadth of the will which is a spiritual faculty common to man and angels? <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> This depth of human sensibility is less noticeable in the order of good, because in this order it disposes us to love a spiritual good which is not accessible except to the spiritual will. We have illustration of this in the love of family and of fatherland, if this love is fastened on the common good which is above all a matter of justice and equity.

On the contrary, the sensibility of a depraved person looks for the infinite in sense goods. He asks of them what they cannot give. As a result he falls into disillusion and disgust, since nothing can longer please him.

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## WILL AND INTELLECT

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FEW people reflect deeply on the superiority of the intellect over the imagination, of the concept over the accompanying sense image.

The mind, intellect, differs from all sense powers, external and internal, because it has as primary object not mere accidental facts, external or internal, color, for example, or sound, or tactile resistance, but rather intelligible and universal reality. By reason of this object the mind knows the *raison d'être* of things, the causes of events, and their purpose or goal.

The concept of being, of reality, underlies all other concepts. The verb "to be" underlies every sentence. "Peter runs" means "Peter is running." In a priori judgments this "is" expresses essence. In a posteriori judgments the "is" expresses existence. Thus the infant's mind grows on a series of whys: Why does the bird fly? Because it is looking for food (its goal and purpose). To fly it needs wings (instrumental cause). Its nature requires wings (formal cause). It dies because it is composed of matter and hence is corruptible.

Now these *raisons d'être*, these sources and causes (final, efficient, formal, material) are accessible to reason only, not to sense and imagination. Reason alone knows purpose as purpose. Imagination grasps the thing which is purpose, but it does not grasp the principle of finality.

Here we see the immeasurable distance between image and concept. The image, say, of a clock is a composite of sense qualities, color, sound, and so forth. A concept of the clock makes this sense-composite intelligible: a clock is a machine which by maintaining uniform movements indicates solar time. This concept, this *raison d'être*, inaccessible to the animal, is easily grasped by the child.

Whereas sense and imagination are restricted to sense objects as individual, as limited in space and time, the intellect grasps these same objects as universal, as realizable in whatever part of space and time. Thus it grasps what the clock must necessarily be, everywhere and always, in order to indicate solar time. In like fashion the intellect rises from the limited and particular sense good to the good that is universal and unlimited.

Thus we conceive also what we need in order to become what we should be. We need an object that is always and everywhere good. Further we see that this object must be unlimited reality, a supreme being wherein unlimited good is completely realized.

The intellect conceiving supreme being, unlimited good, sees likewise, at least confusedly, that this being must exist. The mind sees things which begin and end, corruptible things. Hence they must derive existence from something that is self-existent and able to give existence to other things. Otherwise the more would arise from the less: effect without cause. Similarly this truth holds universally: no motion without a first mover, no living thing without a first life, no mundane order without a supreme ruler, no intelligent being without a first mind. Shall we trace St. Augustine's genius back to a blind, material fatality?

Now in the world of the will, in the moral world, we meet

this same truth: no morality, no law, without a supreme legislator, no holiness without a supreme holiness. Reason more or less confusedly grasps these necessary truths.

How unmeasured, then, must be the immensity of man's will, which is illumined, not by sense and imagination, but by reason and intelligence! Imagination, sense perception, leads animals, herbivorous or carnivorous, each to the food it needs. Intelligence leads man to an unlimited good, a good which is to be found only in that unlimited reality which is God, because He alone is unlimited and essential good. Hence if sense has such an inexhaustible reach in the daily life of the animal world, how boundless must be the reach of man's will in the pursuit of an unmeasured world of good!

### ✱ III ✱

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## SOUL IMMENSITY AND BEATIFIC VISION

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IF, AS St. Thomas <sup>1</sup> says, the miser has the desire of riches in an infinite degree, what must we then say of the spiritual desire of the will? The higher knowledge rises, the higher also, the deeper also, is our spiritual desire. And Christian faith tells us that God alone, seen face to face, can satisfy this immeasurable desire. Hence we may say, in a true sense, that our will has a depth without measure.

Hence beatitude, that true happiness which man desires naturally and inevitably, cannot be found in any limited good, but only in God, seen at least in natural fashion and loved efficaciously above all things. St. Thomas <sup>2</sup> demonstrates the beatitude of man from the fact that he conceives that universal good cannot be found either in riches or in honor or in glory or in power or in any material, corporeal good, not even in any finite subjective good of the soul, like virtue, lastly in no limited good whatever. The saint's <sup>3</sup> thesis rests on the very nature of our intelligence and our will. When we

<sup>1</sup> Ia IIae, q. 30, a. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 2, a. 8.

<sup>3</sup> The beatitude of man cannot be found in any created good, for beatitude is a perfect good, something that totally satisfies the appetite. Otherwise it would not be the last end and there would still be something to desire. Now the object of the will, which is the human appetite, is universal good, just as the object of the intellect is universal truth. Hence it is clear that nothing can satisfy the will of man except universal good. Now this universal good cannot be found in anything created, but only in God, because creatures have nothing but a share in goodness. Therefore God alone can fill the will of man. Ia IIae, q. 2, a. 8.



try to find happiness in the knowledge of a science or in a friendship however noble, we are not slow in recognizing that we are dealing with a limited good, such as made St. Catherine of Siena express herself as follows: "If you wish any friendship to endure, if you wish to quench your thirst for a long time, you must always refill your cup at the source of living water, otherwise it cannot continue to reply to your thirst."

It is impossible, in fact, for man to find true happiness which he desires naturally in any limited good, because his intelligence at once seizes on this limit, and thus conceives a higher good, and thus his will naturally desires that higher good.

Even if it were to be granted to us to see an angel, to behold without medium his suprasensible and purely spiritual beauty, we would indeed at first be amazed. But our intelligence, knowing universal good, would not be slow in telling us that even this great good is a finite good, and would find this finite good very poor in comparison with good itself, without limits and without any imperfection.

Even the simultaneous collection of all finite good would not constitute goodness itself, no more than an innumerable multitude of idiots can equal a man of genius.

Following St. Gregory the Great, St. Thomas writes: Temporal goods appear desirable when we do not have them; but when we do have them, we see their poverty, which cannot meet our desire and which therefore produces disillusion, lassitude, and often repugnance. In spiritual goods the inverse is true. They do not seem desirable to those who do not have them and who desire especially sensible good. But the more we possess them the more we know their value and the more we love them.<sup>4</sup> For the same reason, material goods,

<sup>4</sup> *Ia IIae*, q. 31, a. 5; q. 32, a. 2; q. 33, a. 2.

the same house, the same field, cannot belong simultaneously and integrally to many persons. Spiritual goods, on the contrary, one and the same truth, one and the same virtue, can belong simultaneously and completely to all. And the more perfectly we possess these goods, the better we can communicate them to others.<sup>5</sup> This is especially true of the sovereign good.

Of necessity, then, there exists an infinite good which alone is capable of answering our aspirations. Otherwise the universal amplitude of our will would be a psychological absurdity, a thing radically unintelligible, without *raison d'être*.

Had God created us in a state purely natural without grace, our last end would have been to know Him naturally, by the reflection of His perfection in creatures, and to love Him efficaciously above all things.

But gratuitously God has called us to know Him in supernatural fashion by the immediate vision of His divine essence, to know Him as He knows himself, to love Him as He loves Himself and this for all eternity. There, above all, we will understand that God, seen face to face, can fill the immense void of our heart, that He alone is able to fill the depth of our will.

In what sense, then, is this depth of soul without measure? One may object: Our soul like every creature is finite and limited. Hence the soul-faculties are also limited. Without doubt, the creature, even the most elevated, is finite. Not only is our body limited, but our soul also. Consequently the faculties of our soul, as being characteristics of the soul, are finite. Nevertheless our intelligence, however finite, is created to know the universal truth, even the infinite truth, which is God. Similarly our will, although finite, is made to

<sup>5</sup> Ia IIae, q. 28, a. 4 ad 2; IIIa, q. 23, a. 1 ad 3.

love a good that has no limits. Without doubt, even in heaven, our act of the beatific vision, considered from the side of the subject which knows, will be finite, but it is addressed to an infinite object. It attains that object, though it attains that object in a finite manner. It does not comprehend God, but it understands Him, it sees Him without medium, sees His infinite essence, His infinite perfection. Thus, to illustrate, the open eye, however small it may be, sees the immensity of the ocean, sees into the night, even as far as the stars, though they are millions of leagues away. Thus, in heaven also, our act of seeing the divine essence, though it has not the penetration of the uncreated vision, attains immediately the divine essence. Our love of God, though it remains finite subjectively considered, rests immediately on the infinite good, which we love indeed in our own finite manner, but which makes it impossible for us to rest except in Him. No other object can satisfy all our aspirations. Then alone, says the Psalmist,<sup>6</sup> I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear. Our heart can never find a durable rest except in the love of God.

In this sense, seen from the objective side, our will has an infinite depth. Our will is indeed finite as being, just as our intelligence, but it opens upon the infinite. As the Thomists express themselves: Our faculties are infinite intentionally, from the side of the object, i.e., our superior faculties are finite in their entity, as characteristics of the soul, but they have an object which is without limit. Thus even in the sensible order our eye, however small, reaches out to grasp the nebulae in the immensity of the firmament.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 16:15.

## THE SOURCE OF LIBERTY

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IT FOLLOWS from what has been said that God alone, seen face to face, can draw our will irresistibly. In the presence of every finite object the will is free. St. Thomas writes: "If we have as our object of sight a thing actually colored, luminous from every viewpoint, the eye cannot but see this object. But if we propose to it an object which is colored or luminous only on one side, whereas it is obscure on the other (as during the night when we use a lantern), the sight will not see this object if it is presented to it on the side where it is not colored or luminous. Now just as the colored object is presented to the eye, so good is the object presented through the will. If therefore we propose to the will an object which is good, good from every point of view, the will must necessarily desire that object and cannot wish for its opposite. On the contrary, if the object presented is not altogether good from every point of view, the will can refuse to will it. Now, as the absence of any good can be called non-good, only the sovereign good, which lacks nothing, is such that the will must necessarily will it. This good is beatitude."<sup>1</sup> We cannot but wish happiness, we cannot but wish to be beatified, but we often forget that the true and perfect happiness cannot be found in any object except God loved for Himself alone. And here below we love freely; because we do not see Him

<sup>1</sup> Ia IIae, q. 10, a. 2.

immediately as He is, we can turn away from Him when we consider that what He commands is displeasing to our pride or to our sensuality.

But if God Himself, who is the infinite good, were immediately and clearly presented to us face to face, we could not but love Him. He would fill perfectly our affective capacity, which would be drawn irresistibly toward Him. It would not keep any energy to withdraw itself from this attraction. It could not find any motive to turn away from Him, or even to suspend its act of love. This is the reason why one who sees God face to face cannot sin. As St. Thomas says: "The will of him who sees the essence of God without medium, necessarily also loves that essence and cannot love anything else except in its relation to God, just as here below we wish everything in virtue of our desire for happiness."<sup>2</sup> God alone seen face to face can make our will invincibly captive.<sup>3</sup>

By opposition, our will remains free to love or not to love any object which is good under one aspect and not good or insufficiently good under another. The very definition of liberty is that of the dominating indifference of the will in regard to any object which is good from one viewpoint and not good from another. This definition of liberty is to be found, not only in human liberty, but also in angelic liberty, and, analogically, in divine liberty. Hence we see that God was free to create or not to create, to elevate us to the life of grace or not to elevate us.

Our will, then, has an infinite profundity, in the sense that God alone, seen face to face, can fill it and irresistibly draw it. Created goods cannot, for this reason, exercise on the will an invincible attraction. They attract it only superficially; the

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 4, a. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 1a, q. 105, a. 4.

will remains free to love or not to love. Hence, here below, our will itself must go to meet this attraction, which in itself is incapable altogether of overcoming the will. Here lies the reason why the will must determine the judgment before it determines itself.<sup>4</sup> For the same reason the will keeps the intelligence suspended in consideration as long as it pleases, suspends the intellectual search, or ceases to pursue it. This is the reason why it depends in last analysis on the will, whether such and such a practical judgment shall or shall not be the last. Hence the free act is a gratuitous response, proceeding from the depth of the will, to the weak solicitation of a finite good.

Only God, seen face to face, draws our will infallibly and makes it captive even to the very source of its energy. Even an angel seen immediately as he is, however beautiful he may be, cannot draw our will irresistibly. The angel is only a finite good, and two finite goods, however unequal, are equally distant from the infinite. In this sense the angel and the grain of sand, in comparison with God's supreme good, are equally low.

The depth of our will, considered from the viewpoint of the object which can fill it, is without limit. Why does it come that a particular truth (not a good), for example, the existence of Marseilles or Messina, necessitates our intellect, whereas only God, the universal good, seen face to face, can necessitate our will? St. Thomas replies: "Our intelligence is necessitated by an object which is true from every point of view, but it is not necessitated by an object which can be true or false, which is only probable, as, for example, the

<sup>4</sup> Here we have a case of reciprocal causality, between the intellect which guides and the will which consents. We have here, as it were, a marriage which is not concluded except when the will has said yes.

existence of a distant town which may have meanwhile been destroyed by an earthquake. Our will, similarly, is not necessitated except by an object which is good from all viewpoints. Such an object is our own happiness, the source of all our acts. Such an object is, above all, God seen face to face. Here below we can cease to think on His goodness, whereas those who see God face to face cannot cease to see Him, and can never find the least pretense for suspending their action of love."<sup>5</sup>

This doctrine explains several problems which are very difficult, in particular that of the liberty of Christ. For three reasons Christ here on earth was impeccable: His divine personality, the beatific vision, His plenitude of grace. Consequently He could not disobey. But, if so, how could He obey freely? Free obedience is a condition of merit. In particular, how could He freely obey the precept of dying for us on the cross, the precept which He Himself<sup>6</sup> spoke of when He said, "I lay (My life) down of Myself. . . . This commandment have I received of My Father."

The reply of St. Thomas runs thus: Christ, although He was incapable of disobedience, since He was absolutely impeccable, could still feel that attractiveness of non-obedience. To illustrate: a good religious who receives an order that is very severe does not even have the thought of disobeying. But he does have the consciousness that he is accomplishing freely this act, difficult as it may be, and that even while he does the act he has the power of not doing it. Disobedience is a privation, non-obedience is a negation.

How then did freedom remain in the presence of death

<sup>5</sup> See Ia IIae, q. 10, a. 2 ad 2.

<sup>6</sup> John 10:18; 15:10; 14:31; Phil. 2:8. We have developed this doctrine elsewhere in *The Savior and His Love for Us*. The Savior's sinless liberty is a pure image of the sinless liberty of God Himself.

on the cross? This death was an object, good under one aspect, namely, for our salvation, and frightful under the other. Hence this object could not attract the human will of Christ irresistibly, as would the view of the divine essence seen immediately. On the other hand the precept, since it demands free and meritorious obedience, could not destroy the liberty of the will, since it would thus destroy itself.

Certainly we are here in the presence of a great mystery, a chiaroscuro of the most amazing kind. The solution lies in the universal amplitude of the will, created in such fashion that God alone seen face to face can fill its capacity, and consequently free in the presence of any good mingled with non-good.

What we have now said of the free will shows that each soul is a universe, *unum versus alia omnia*, because each soul is opened by reason of its intelligence to universal truth, and by its will to universal good. Each soul therefore is a spiritual universe which gravitates toward God, the sovereign good.

But each of these spiritual universes, since each has free will, can deviate from its orb, can leave the straight road, can take the road to perdition. Further, each of our deliberate acts must be performed for an end, hence each must be directed, either toward moral good or toward evil. In illustration, take a watershed, where each drop falls either to the right or to the left. In Switzerland, for example, on St. Gotthard, one drop goes to the Rhine and on to the foggy seas of the north, the other goes to the Rhone and on to the shining shores of the Mediterranean.

Similarly, in the spiritual order, each of our deliberate acts should be done for a good end and thus be directed virtually to God. If not, it is wicked and takes the opposite direction. Even the act of walking, in itself an indifferent



thing, if it is done for a good end, say for proper recreation, is a good act, whereas, by a bad intention, it becomes a bad act.<sup>7</sup>

This is a serious consideration, but it is also very consoling, because in the just man each deliberate act is good and meritorious. It goes toward God and brings us near Him.

We see from this point of view that it is never by chance that two immortal souls meet, be it that they are each in the state of grace or that one only has the divine life and can by its prayers, its attitude, its example, bring back the other to the right road which leads to eternity. It was not by chance that Joseph was sold by his brethren to the Ismaelite merchants. God had determined from all eternity that these merchants would pass at such and such an hour, not earlier, not later. It was not by chance that Jesus met Magdalen or Zacheus, or that the centurion found himself on Calvary.

This depth of the human will illumines, as we shall see, the teaching of divine revelation on the subject of heaven, purgatory, and hell. The just man, were he to live on the earth fifty thousand years, could still, before dying, say to God: "Father, Thy kingdom come. Let Thy will be found ever more profoundly in the depth of my will. Let Thy infused charity be rooted in my will ever more deeply." May it please God to grant us experience of the profound depths of our soul which He alone can fill.

<sup>7</sup> Ia IIae, q. 18, a. 9.

## THE ROOTS OF VICE AND VIRTUE

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THAT we may understand better the immensity of the soul, in particular of the will, we must now speak of vices and virtues, those roots which penetrate into the soul, either for our loss or for our salvation.

Virtue makes man perfect, inclines him to a good end, makes of him not only a good painter, a good sculptor, a good mathematician, but a good man. Vice is an evil habitude, that of acting contrary to right reason. It deforms man entire in the conduct of his life, because it taints the will and inclines it to an evil end. Vice makes of a man not a bad painter, a bad sculptor, but a bad man, a criminal. This condition begins at times even in children of fourteen or fifteen years. All vices have one root in common, namely, the disordered love of self, opposed to the love of good, and especially of the sovereign good which is God. This evil root tends to sink itself ever more deeply into the will, and from this root there is born an evil tree. The trunk of this tree is egoism, of which the central and principal branch, the continuation of the trunk, is pride, of which the lateral branches are the concupiscence of the flesh and concupiscence of the eyes. Thus St. John.<sup>1</sup>

The branches of this wicked tree have numerous sub-branches which are called capital sins.

From concupiscence of the flesh is born gluttony and

<sup>1</sup> 1 John 2:16.

luxury. From concupiscence of the eyes, that is, immoderate desire of external goods, is born avarice, and then perfidy, fraud, cheating, and hardening of the heart. From the pride of life are born vainglory and ambition, disgust for spiritual things, forgetfulness of God, envy, anger, injuries to neighbor.

The capital sins conduct man to others that are still more grave, to sins against the theological virtues. They lead to blasphemy, opposed to confession of the faith, to despair, opposed to hope, to the hate of God and neighbor, opposed to charity.

Some of these vices in the most wicked men have roots that are very deep, which manifest in their own sad manner the immensity of the soul. We know those words of St. Augustine: "Two loves have built two cities: the love of self extending to the scorn of God has made the city of Babylon, that is, the city of the world, the city of immorality, whereas the love of God even to the scorn of self has made the city of God."<sup>2</sup> Just as man does not arrive all at once at sanctity, so too he does not arrive at once at complete perversity. Inordinate love of self, when it becomes dominating, puts forth roots more and more deep, to be seen in certain souls which are on the road to perdition. Their voice often has a sharp and piercing sound. They close their eyes to the divine light which alone could illumine and deliver them. At times they combat the truth, although it be evident. This is one of the forms of the sins against the Holy Spirit, *impugnatio veritatis agnitae*. After a miraculous healing obtained by St. Peter in the name of Jesus, the members of the Sanhedrin said: "What shall we do to these men? For indeed a miracle hath been done by them, known to all the inhabitants of Jeru-

<sup>2</sup> *City of God*, Bk. XIV, chap. 28.

salem. It is manifest, and we cannot deny it; but that it may be no farther spread among the people, let us threaten them that they speak no more in this name to any man.”<sup>8</sup> Thus they forbade Peter and John to speak further in this name to anyone. To which these two replied: “If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” The measureless depths of the human soul reveal themselves in this unregulated love of self, which rises at times to the scorn and hate of God. This malice is accompanied by a hate which is inveterate and incomprehensible, even against their greatest benefactors. Certain frightening perversities, as, for instance, those of Nero and other persecutors, would not yield even to the constancy and goodness that radiated from the suffering martyrs.

Now this unbelievable degree of malice manifests by contrast the grandeur of God and of the saints. The Lord permits malice and persecution in order to let the sanctity of the martyrs shine forth the more brightly. In Spain, in 1936, during the Communist persecution, the faithful would come to their priest and say: “How is it that God permits such atrocities?” And the priest would reply: “Without persecution there can be no martyrs, and martyrs are the glory of the Church.” The faithful understood and were comforted.

The immensity of the human soul appears still more in those great virtues which are rooted in it, and which could grow still greater if the time of temptation and merit were not a mere prelude to eternal life.

In virtues we distinguish the acquired virtues, which arise by repetition of natural acts, from infused virtues, which are supernatural virtues that are received at baptism, and that

<sup>8</sup> Acts 4:16.

grow in us by means of the sacraments, by Holy Communion, and by our merits.

But even acquired virtues manifest the depths of the soul. Temperance and courage send the light of right reason down into our sensibility, there to resist temptations, at times very vivid, of impurity and laxity. Similarly the acquired virtue of justice reveals the grandeur of the human soul, particularly when, for the common good of society, it establishes and observes laws demanding great sacrifices, even those of life. We need only recall the unjustly accused Socrates, whose reverence for the laws of his land made him refuse to escape from prison.

But the infused virtues manifest still more clearly the grandeur of the soul. They proceed from sanctifying grace, which is received in the very essence of the soul as a divine root. Grace communicates to us a participation in the intimate life of God, the very vitality of God. Sanctifying grace is in truth the seed of everlasting life, *semen gloriæ*; when it is widely expanded and developed, it enables us to see immediately God as He sees Himself, and to love Him as He loves Himself. Thus it becomes in us a germination of eternal life. If the germination of grain gives thirty or sixty or even a hundred per cent, what will be in the supernatural order the germination of eternal life?

From this divine root, which is sanctifying grace, there flows into our intelligence infused faith, and into our will infused hope and infused charity. And from these virtues derive the infused virtues of Christian prudence, of justice, of religion, of courage, of chastity, of humility, of sweetness, of patience, and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The infused virtues, flowing from sanctifying grace, give to our faculties the power of acting supernaturally in order

to merit eternal life. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which accompany these infused virtues, render us docile to the inspirations of the inner master. He alone draws forth from our faculties, even from our sense faculties, harmonies that are not only natural, but supernatural, harmonies that we hear especially in the lives of the saints. Sanctifying grace gives us an entirely new spiritual organism.

Infused faith, resting on divine revelation, extends very widely the frontiers of our intelligence, because it lets us know God as the author of nature, and also as the author of grace—a share in His own intimate life. Faith makes us adhere infallibly and supernaturally to truths which surpass the natural forces of any created intelligence, even of the highest angel. It enables us to adhere to the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, the elevation of the human race to the supernatural order, to the mysteries of the Fall and of the redemptive Incarnation, and of the means of salvation. And the gift of intelligence renders this infused faith more and more penetrating.

Infused hope makes us tend toward God, toward the life of eternity. Although it does not give us certitude of salvation, which would require a special revelation, it has a certitude of tendency toward that goal. By infused hope we tend surely to our last end, just as the swallow tends to its home. This certitude is augmented by the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, who, in the midst of the greatest difficulties, consoles the just man and lets him feel that he is approaching heaven. The gift of filial fear preserves us from presumption. The gift of knowledge shows us the emptiness of terrestrial things, and the gift of piety increases our confidence in God our Father. In all these ways we see the height and the depth of the soul. We see it still better when we treat of charity.

Charity is a true friendship, a supernatural friendship, which unites us to God. Already in the Old Testament <sup>4</sup> Abraham is called the friend of God. Similarly the name is given to the prophets.<sup>5</sup> In the New Testament we hear Jesus say to us: "You are My friends if you do the things that I command you. I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you."<sup>6</sup> These words were spoken to the apostles, but also to us. This truth leads us far onward if we are faithful to it.

This virtue makes us love our neighbor, since he is loved by God, our common Father, inasmuch as he is a child of God or is called to be a child of God.

This charity should become ever more rooted in the depths of our soul and thus drive out the unregulated love of self. Charity widens our heart, gives it something of the grandeur of divine goodness, and makes us love, as God does, all men without exception. Yea, more, if a just man were to live on earth for an indefinite time, for millions of years, he could throughout all that time advance in merit, and charity would not cease to grow greater in the depths of his will.

St. Thomas expresses this truth in these words: "Charity can always grow greater in itself, because it is a participation in uncreated love and unlimited love. Further it can also always grow as a gift of God, its author, who can always make it grow greater. Lastly it can grow greater by our own co-operation, because the more charity grows the more the soul becomes capable of receiving its augmentation."<sup>7</sup> Charity, thus progressing, widens our heart, which in some sense has

<sup>4</sup> Judith 8:22.

<sup>5</sup> Wisd. 7:27.

<sup>6</sup> John 15:15.

<sup>7</sup> IIa IIae, q. 24, a. 7.

been invaded by the love of God.<sup>8</sup> This love grows only in order to grow still greater. At times we are capable of experiencing this truth when we are in prayer.

This page of St. Thomas clarifies the unmeasured depths of our will. Infused charity is rooted ever more deeply, excludes more decisively the unregulated love of self. It drives us on to love ourselves and our neighbor, to glorify God in time and in eternity, on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven. It lets us grow into the immensity of the heart of God.

Length corresponds to depth and height. Listen to St. Paul: "Charity never falleth away."<sup>9</sup> Faith gives place to vision, hope to possession, but charity, like sanctifying grace, lasts forever. The life of grace and charity is already eternal life in embryo. Thus Jesus spoke: "He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life."<sup>10</sup> He who believes in Me with a living faith not only will have eternal life, but already has it in germ.

The infused cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, courage, temperance, are far superior to the acquired virtues of the same name. These infused virtues are the virtues, not only of the perfect man, but of the child of God. Between acquired prudence and infused prudence there is a greater distance than that between two musical notes of the same name separated by an entire octave. Infused prudence is of another order than acquired prudence, to such a degree that this latter could grow continually greater without ever attaining the least degree of the other. And the same truth holds good for the other acquired moral virtues in relation to the infused virtues of the same name. If acquired virtue is silver, infused virtue is gold, and the gift of counsel, still higher, is a

<sup>8</sup> "I have walked in the way of Thy commandments, since Thou hast widened my heart." Ps. 118:32.

<sup>9</sup> I Cor. 13:8.

<sup>10</sup> John 3:36; 5:24; 6:40, 47.



diamond. But acquired virtue does facilitate the exercise of the infused virtue and of the gift which accompanies it, just as manual agility facilitates the exercise of the musician's art, which is in his intellect.

Certain Christian virtues have a very special elevation by reason of their affinity with the theological virtues.

Humility, comparable to an excavation made for the construction of an edifice, recalls our Savior's word: "Without Me you can do nothing," and St. Paul's word: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?"<sup>11</sup> We are not capable of drawing for ourselves, as coming from ourselves, the least thought profitable for salvation. Grace is required even for the least supernatural act.

Humility recalls to us also these words ascribed to St. Augustine: "There is no fault committed by another man of which we ourselves are not capable if we were placed in the same circumstances and surrounded by the same evil examples from the time of our youth." Hence we read that St. Francis of Assisi, when he saw a criminal led to execution, spoke to himself: "If this man had received the same grace as I have received, he would have been less faithless than I. If the Lord had permitted in my life the faults which he has permitted in this man's life, I would be in his place today." We must thank God for all the good He has enabled us to accomplish, and for avoidance of all the faults we could have committed. We are dealing here with the great depths of Christian life.

Infused magnanimity perfects acquired magnanimity. It completes humility and preserves us in spiritual equilibrium. It enables us to undertake great deeds for God, even in the most humble conditions, for instance, that of a good servant

<sup>11</sup> I Cor. 4:7.

faithful to his master throughout his life. It enables us to avoid ambition as well as pusillanimity, reminds us that no great deeds are done without humility, without the succor of God which we ask for in prayer daily: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."<sup>12</sup>

Patience, that Christian sweetness which shines so gloriously in the martyrs, enables us to support the evils of the present life with equanimity, without worry. Patience supports inevitable evils, remains on the right road, continues the ascent to God. Martyrs are in the highest degree masters of themselves. They exercise the principal act of courage, which consists, not in attacking, but in enduring. They do not yield to persecutors, but pray for them.

The virtue of religion, aided by the gift of piety, carries us on to offer to God the worship which is His due, with that filial affection which the Holy Spirit inspires, with boundless confidence in the efficaciousness of prayer, in the goodness of God, even when all seems lost.

Penance carries us forward, in union with the Sacrifice of the Altar, to repair offenses against God. It kindles zeal for the glory of God, for the salvation of our neighbor. It goes on to make reparation for sinners. A little Roman child, Antonetto Meo, who died in the odor of sanctity (July 3, 1937), had, at the age of less than six, to undergo amputation of a leg because of cancer. When his mother said to him: "If the Lord asked you for this leg, would you give it to him?" he answered, "Yes, Mama." Then after a moment of reflection he added: "There are so many sinners in the world, someone must make reparation for them." During the course of the second operation, not less painful, his father asked: "Is your suffering very great?" His answer was: "Yes, Papa,

<sup>12</sup> Ps. 126:1.

but suffering is like cloth. The stronger it is, the more value it has." This spirit of reparation, which characterizes the great saints, leads into the high things of God. All infused virtues grow simultaneously. The saints reach "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ."<sup>13</sup>

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are to the soul what seven sails are to a ship, or rather as seven spiritual antennas to the inspirations of a harmony of which God is the author.

If perversities show in sad fashion the depths of the soul, virtues reveal that depth still better, above all infused virtues, especially charity. Its roots sink ever more deeply into our will, where they chase away all egoism, all unregulated love of ourselves. Charity grows by Holy Communion. Let each Communion be substantially, if not more emotionally, more fervent, more fruitful, than the preceding Communion. A good Communion today disposes us for a better Communion tomorrow. Thus it is in the lives of the saints, since they put no obstacle in the road of this progress. Saints exemplify the parable<sup>14</sup> of the sower: grains fall upon good ground, and they bring forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Seen from this viewpoint, old age, with all its drawbacks, is yet man's most beautiful age, since it is the age where merit reaches its full development, wherein we are most near to the eternal youth of heaven.

The depths of the soul, thus manifested by growth in virtue, are manifested still more clearly by those purifications of the spirit which enable us to have our purgatory before we die to the earth.

<sup>13</sup> Eph. 4:13.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 13:8.

## • VI •

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### PURGATORY BEFORE DEATH THE NIGHT OF THE SOUL

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THESE deep purifications of the soul have often been treated, for example, by Tauler, by Louis de Blois, and by St. John of the Cross.

Louis de Blois,<sup>1</sup> explaining the phrase which Tauler uses, namely, the depth of the soul, speaks as follows: "The substance of the soul cannot operate directly. It cannot feel, cannot conceive, judge, love, will, except by its faculties. In this it differs from the divine substance, which alone is pure act, and hence is immediately operative of itself.<sup>2</sup> God has no need of faculties by which to pass from potentiality to act. He is thought itself, He is love itself. God is like a flash of genius and love, eternally subsistent. On the contrary, the human soul and the angel need faculties. They cannot know except by the faculty of intelligence, they cannot will except by the faculty of will. Hence we cannot admit, following St. Thomas,<sup>3</sup> that the essence of the soul has latent acts of knowledge and of love, acts which would not proceed from our faculties.

But it is true that our most profound acts, roused into activity by God, differ strikingly from the superficial judgments of daily life. These acts are so deep, so profound in

<sup>1</sup> *Institutio spiritualis*, chap. 12. See also *The Sermons of Tauler*, chap. 1, pp. 74-82, 105-20.

<sup>2</sup> Ia, q. 54, a. 1; q. 77, a. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the depths of our superior faculties, that they seem rooted in the very substance of the soul. In this sense, excellent authors like John of the Cross speak of substantial touches of the Holy Spirit in the depth of the soul, touches that bring forth a mystic knowledge, very elevated and intense acts of infused love.<sup>4</sup>

Since God is more intimate to the soul than itself, since He preserves it in existence, He can touch and move it *ab intus*, from within. He touches the very bottom of our faculties by a contact, not spatial but spiritual, dynamic, divine.

Comparison has often been made between our superficial consciousness and the shell which envelops the body of a mollusk. Man, too, has his shell, that is, routine habitudes of thinking, willing, acting, attitudes which are the result of his egoism, of his illusion, of his errors. Nothing of all this is in harmony with God, hidden in the depth of our soul. This shell, this superficial consciousness, must be broken before the soul can know what lies in its most profound depths.

That which breaks the shell is the trials, especially the trial which is called purgatory before death. A poor woman, mother of many children, suddenly loses her husband, on whom the family depended. The soul of this poor woman suddenly reveals a great Christian. The father of a family is captured and kept in a war prison for many years. If he is faithful, God bends toward him, reveals to him the grandeur of the Christian family for which he suffers.

We can see the same truth in a king robbed of his crown: in Louis XVI, say, the king of France, condemned to death

<sup>4</sup> *The Ascent of Carmel*, Bk. II, chap. 30. St. John of the Cross, like Tauler, speaks the concrete and descriptive language of experimental psychology, not the ontological and abstract language of rational psychology.

and executed during the Terror. Having lost his own kingdom, he came to see before death the grandeur of the kingdom of God.

All Europe at this moment is passing through this purifying trial. Please God that we may understand. Pain is, in appearance, the most useless of things, but it becomes fruitful by the grace of Christ, whose love rendered His sufferings on Calvary infinitely fruitful. The Holy Father in Rome recently recalled in a congress of Catholic physicians these words of a French poet:

Man is an apprentice, pain is his master:

Nothing can be known, except so far as man has suffered.

Thus pain, suffered in a Christian manner, is most useful. Already in the physical order it is useful, in admonishing us, for instance, of the beginning of a cancer. Similarly moral pain is useful, since it makes us desire a life superior to that of sense. Pain makes us desire God, who alone can heal certain wounds of the heart, and who alone can fortify and remake the soul. Pain invites us to have recourse to Him who alone can restore peace and give Himself to us.

Listen to St. John Chrysostom: "Suffering in the present life is the remedy against pride, which would turn us astray, against vainglory and ambition. Through suffering the power of God shines forth in weak men, who without His grace would not be able to bear their afflictions. Suffering, patience, manifests the goodness of him who is persecuted. By this road he is led to desire eternal life. Memory of the great sufferings of the saints leads us to support our own, by imitating the saints. Finally, pain teaches us to distinguish false goods which pass away from true goods which last eternally."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Consolationes ad Stagira*, Bk. III.

Listen to Holy Scripture: "My son, reject not the correction of the Lord, and do not faint when thou art chastised by Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."<sup>6</sup>

We must purify the depths of the soul. Our Lord says often: "If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."<sup>7</sup> Again: "I am the true vine (you the branches) and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me . . . that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

This lesson is particularly necessary for those who by vocation must work, not only for their own personal sanctification, but also for that of others. Hence St. Paul says: "We are reviled, and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it; we are blasphemed, and we entreat."<sup>8</sup>

The purifying action of God on the depths of the soul appears above all in what is called purgatory before death, that purgatory which generally souls must traverse in order to arrive at divine union here below. During this purgatory charity is rooted more and more in the depths of the souls and ends by destroying all unregulated love of self. This unregulated love is like a blade of dogs-tail grass, which grows again and again. This bad root receives its deathblow when charity reigns entirely in the depth of the soul.

Purgatory before death means passive purification, both of sense and of spirit. Its goal is to purify the very depths of our faculties, to extirpate, with iron and fire, all germs of death. During this anticipated purgatory the soul merits, whereas after death the soul cannot merit. St. John of the Cross says: "In spite of its generosity the soul cannot arrive at complete purification of itself, cannot render itself entirely suited for

<sup>6</sup> Prov. 3:11; Heb. 12:6.

<sup>7</sup> John 15:2.

<sup>8</sup> I Cor. 4:12.

the world of divine union and the perfection of love. God Himself must set His hand to the work and purify the soul in His own dark fire.”<sup>9</sup>

Purification of sense comes first. We are deprived of consolations which may have been useful for the moment, but which become an obstacle when we seek them for their own sake with a sort of spiritual gluttony. The ensuing sense-aridity leads us into a life much more disengaged from the senses, from the imagination, from reasoning. We begin to live by the gift of knowledge, which gives us an experimental and intuitive knowledge, first of earthly vanity, then of God’s grandeur. Temptations, which become very frequent, lead us to make meritorious acts, even heroic acts, of chastity and patience. We are purified by losing certain friendships, by losing fortune, by undergoing sickness, by family trials, for example, in the case of a person unsuitably married.

This purification of sense has as its goal to subject our superior faculties entirely to God. But these superior faculties too have need of purification. The stains of the old man, says St. John of the Cross,<sup>10</sup> persist in the spirit though the soul itself may not be conscious of them. They yield and disappear only under the soap and lye of purification.

Even those far advanced often seek themselves unconsciously. They are much attached to their own judgment, to their particular manner of doing good. They are too sure of themselves. They may be seduced by the demon, who carries them on to presumption. Their faults can become incurable, being taken for perfections.<sup>11</sup> Selfishness prevents them from seeing these faults.

Hence purification of the spirit is also indispensable. It is

<sup>9</sup> *The Dark Night*, Bk. I, chap. 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. II, chap. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



a purgatory before death, meant to purify humility and the three theological virtues. This purification proceeds under an infused light, an illumination from the gift of knowledge, a light which seems obscure because it is too strong for the feeble eyes of our spirit, just as the light of the sun is too strong for nocturnal birds. This light manifests more and more the infinite grandeur of God, superior to all the ideas we ourselves can make. On the other hand, it shows us also our own defectiveness, reveals in us deficiencies that of ourselves we would never find. Humility becomes genuine humility. The soul wishes to be nothing, wishes God to be all-in-all, wishes to be unknown and reputed as nothing. Temptations against the theological virtues, common at this stage, lead to the highest heroism.

Purification sets in strong relief the formal motive of the three theological virtues. Secondary motives seem to disappear. We believe, in the absence of every other reason, for this sole and unique motive: God has said it. We adhere more and more strongly to Primal Truth, in an order immensely beyond miracles and human reasonings. We hope against hope, resting solely on God's omnipotence and goodness. We are to love, not consolations, sensible or spiritual, but God for His own sake, because of His infinite goodness. And this pure love of God leads us to a pure love of our neighbor, whatever be our neighbor.

The three formal motives of the theological virtues, namely, Primal Truth, aiding Omnipotence, Infinite Goodness, are three stars of the first magnitude shining in this night of the spirit. St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus<sup>12</sup> passed through this night in the last years of her life. St. Vincent de Paul, suffering for another priest tormented in his faith, was

<sup>12</sup> *Life of St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus*, chap. 9 (toward the end).

himself assailed for four years with temptations against the faith, so strong that he wrote the creed on a parchment, which he pressed against his heart every time the temptation became vehement. These four years in the dark night of faith multiplied his heroic acts a hundredfold. St. Paul of the Cross, the founder of the Passionists, endured a similar trial for forty-five years. This trial was meant chiefly to repair the sins of the world. Further, since he himself was already deeply purified and had arrived at the transforming union, he was thus prepared to be the founder of an order devoted to reparation.

This passive purification of the spirit leads to mystic death, to the death of irregulated self-love, of spiritual pride, often subtle and little recognized, to the death of egoism, the principle of every sin. It cleanses the depth of the will from all wicked roots. Love of God and of neighbor now reigns without rival, according to the supreme command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind."<sup>13</sup>

Thus the soul has passed through purgatory before physical death, and it has passed through in the state of merit, whereas in the other purgatory after death merit is not possible. Thus even here on earth the soul is spiritualized, supernaturalized, down to its very depths, where all spiritual life begins and ends. The soul aspires more and more to reach its source, to re-enter the bosom of the Father, that is, the depths of God. It aspires more and more to see Him without medium. It experiences ever more keenly that only God can satisfy it.

Great saints exemplify St. Augustine's word: "The love of God has reached the scorn of self." Thus we read that the apostles,<sup>14</sup> after their imprisonment, came forth rejoicing be-

<sup>13</sup> Deut. 6:5; Luke 10:27.

<sup>14</sup> Acts 5:14.

cause they had been judged worthy to suffer opprobrium for the name of Jesus. "And every day they ceased not, in the temple and from house to house, to teach and preach Christ Jesus." Their blood, shed with that of thousands of other martyrs, was the seed of Christianity. The love of God even to the scorn of self triumphed over selfishness reaching to the scorn of God. Unselfish love of God converted the world, Roman and barbarian.

What will reconvert the world of today? Only a constellation of saints can lead the masses back to Christ and the Church. Mere democratic aspirations, as conceived by Lamennais and many others, are not sufficient. There is need of the love of a Vincent de Paul if we would reach the depths of the modern soul. Everlasting life must again become, not a mere word, but an experienced reality.

## SECOND PART

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# DEATH AND JUDGMENT

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## FINAL IMPENITENCE

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IN THIS second part we shall consider: first, final impenitence; secondly, good death; thirdly, the unchangeableness of the soul, whether in good or in evil, after death; fourthly, the knowledge which the separated soul has; and fifthly, the particular judgment.

Since our life in eternity depends on the state of the soul at the moment of death, we must here speak of final impenitence. By contrast, we speak of deathbed conversion.

Impenitence is the absence, the privation, of that contrition which alone can destroy in the sinner the moral consequences of his revolt against God. These consequences are destroyed by satisfactory reparation, that is, first, by sorrow for having offended God, secondly, by an expiatory compensation. As St. Thomas<sup>1</sup> explains, these acts of the virtue of penance are demanded by justice and charity toward God, and also by charity toward ourselves.

Impenitence is the absence of contrition or of satisfaction. This impenitence can be either temporal, lasting throughout the course of our present life, or final, existing at the moment of death.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IIIa, q. 84, a. 5; q. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Bossuet, *Defense of Tradition*, Bk. XI, chaps. 4-8.

## Dispositions toward Final Impenitence

Temporal impenitence is the cause of final impenitence. Final impenitence presents itself under two different forms: impenitence of fact, the simple absence of repenting, and impenitence of will, namely, the positive resolution not to repent. In this last case we have the special sin of impenitence, which, in its final development, becomes a sin of malice. In illustration, think of a man who signs an agreement to have no religious funeral.

There is certainly a great difference between these two forms. But, if a man is seized in death in the simple state of impenitence of fact, this state is for him one of final impenitence, even though it has not been directly prepared by a special sin of hardening of heart.

Temporal impenitence of will leads directly to final impenitence, even though at times the Lord, by special mercy, preserves the soul from final impenitence. The soul on this road perseveres in sin, deliberately and coldly. It repels all thought of penance which might deliver it. Thus, as St. Augustine says, it is not only a sin of malice, it is also a sin against the Holy Spirit, that is to say, a sin which contradicts directly that which would save the sinner.<sup>3</sup>

The sinner, therefore, must do penance at the proper time, for example, at the time of Easter Communion, otherwise he falls from impenitence of fact into impenitence of will, at least by a deliberate omission. One cannot stay long in mortal sin without committing new mortal sins which accelerate his downfall.<sup>4</sup>

Hence we must not put off the time of repentance. Scripture urges us to do penance without delay. "Humble thyself

<sup>3</sup> IIa IIae, q. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 109, a. 8.

before thou art sick.”<sup>6</sup> St. John the Baptist<sup>6</sup> unceasingly urges the necessity of repentance. Jesus, too, from the beginning of His ministry, cries out: “Repent and believe the gospel.”<sup>7</sup> Again He says: “Except you do penance, you shall all perish.”<sup>8</sup> St. Paul writes to the Romans: “According to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works.”<sup>9</sup> In the Apocalypse word comes to the angel of Pergamus: “Do penance! If not I will come to thee quickly.”<sup>10</sup> This is the visit of divine justice, if one has not paid attention to mercy.

The degrees of temporal impenitence are numerous.<sup>11</sup> Passing from forms of impenitence which are least grave, but which for that reason are already very dangerous, we find those who are hardened by culpable ignorance, who are fixed in mortal sin, in a blindness that makes them continually prefer the goods of today to those of eternity. They drink iniquity like water. Their conscience is asleep because they have gravely neglected to instruct themselves in their numerous duties. Further, we have those who are hardened by neglect, who, though they are more enlightened than the preceding and more culpable, do not have the energy to break the bonds which they themselves have forged, bonds of luxury, of avarice, of pride, of ambition. They do not pray to obtain the energy they lack. Finally we have those who are hardened by malice, those, for example, who never pray, who are in revolt against providence, on account of, say, some misfortune. Further, free livers, who are sunk in their disor-

<sup>6</sup> Ecclus. 18:21.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 3:3.

<sup>7</sup> Mark 1:15.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 13:5.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. 2:5.

<sup>10</sup> Apoc. 2:16.

<sup>11</sup> Ia Hae, q. 76-78; IIa Hae, q. 15, a. 1. *Dict. théol. cath.*, “Impenitence.”

ders, who blaspheme, who become materialistic, who speak of God only to insult Him. Lastly, sectaries who have a satanic hatred of the Christian religion and cease not to write against it.

There is a great difference between these classes, but we cannot affirm that, to arrive at final impenitence, we must start with the hardening of malice, or at least with the hardening that comes from neglect or voluntary ignorance. We cannot affirm that God does mercy to all other sinners who are less culpable. Neither must we say that all those who are hardened by malice will be condemned, because divine mercy at times has converted great sectarians who seemed to be obstinate in the way of perdition.<sup>12</sup>

The Church Fathers and the great preachers have often threatened with final impenitence those who put off their conversion from day to day.<sup>13</sup> After such long-continued abuse of God's grace, will they ever have the efficacious grace necessary for conversion?

<sup>12</sup> St. John Bosco came to the bed of a dying Freemason. This Freemason said to him: "Don't speak to me of religion. Otherwise here is a revolver whose bullet is for you and another one whose bullet is for me." "Well, then" said the saint, "let us speak of something else." Then Bosco spoke to him of Voltaire, relating the latter's life. Toward the end of his account, Bosco said: "Some say that Voltaire never repented and had a bad death. This I do not say, because I do not know." "You mean," said the Freemason, "that even Voltaire could repent?" "Oh, certainly." "Then I, too, could repent." Thus this man who was in despair seems to have had a good death.

A prison chaplain, a holy priest, while assisting a condemned criminal who would not go to confession, ended his words as follows: "Well, then, if you wish to be lost, just be lost." When beatification was in question, this chaplain, by reason of this word, was judged unworthy of beatification, since he seemed to doubt the mercy and possibility of return to God.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. St. Ambrose, *De poenitentia*, chaps. 10-12; St. Jerome, *Epist.* 147, ad Sabinianum; St. Augustine, *Sermons* 351, 352; St. John Chrysostom, *Nine Homilies on Penitence*, P.G., XLIX, 277 ff.; St. Bernard, *De conversione ad clericos*; Bossuet, *Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent*.



## Return Difficult but Possible

Return is difficult. Hardening of heart supposes blindness of mind, and a will carried on to evil, with feeble movements toward good. The soul no longer derives profit from good advice, from sermons, it no longer reads the Gospel, no longer frequents the church. It resists even the warnings of genuine friends. It falls under the indictment of Isaias: "Woe to you that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceits!" <sup>14</sup> This condition is the consequence of sins often reiterated, of vicious habitudes, of criminal entanglements, of erroneous reading. After such abuse of grace, the Lord may refuse a sinner, not only the efficacious succor of which every sinner is deprived at the moment when he falls, but also the grace, proximately sufficient, to make obedience possible.

But return to God is still possible. The sinner, even though hardened, receives remotely sufficient graces, for example, during a mission or during a trial. He can begin to pray. If he does not resist, he receives efficacious grace to begin praying effectively. This is certain, because salvation is still possible, and, against the Pelagian heresy, conversion is not possible except by grace. If the sinner does not resist this last appeal, he will be led from grace to grace, even to that of conversion. The Lord has said: "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." <sup>15</sup> St. Paul says: "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." <sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 5:20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Ezech. 33:11, 14, 16.

<sup>16</sup> I Tim. 2:4.

Return is always possible. Calvinism indeed says that God destines certain souls to eternal damnation and that consequently He refuses them all grace. The truth, on the contrary, says with St. Augustine and the Council of Trent: "God never commands the impossible, but He warns us to do what we can, and to ask of Him the grace to accomplish that which we of ourselves are unable to do."<sup>17</sup> Now there lies on the hardened sinner a grave obligation to do penance, and this is impossible without grace. Hence we must conclude that he receives from time to time sufficient graces that he may begin to pray. Salvation is still possible.

But if the sinner resists these graces, he steps into quicksand, where his feet sink down when he attempts to emerge. Sufficient grace blows from time to time, like a fresh breeze, to renew his forces. But if he continues to resist, he deprives himself of the efficacious grace which is offered in sufficient grace as fruit is offered in the blossom. Hence when, later on, he wishes for that efficacious grace, will he have that succor which touches the heart and converts him in truth? Difficulties grow greater, the will grows weaker, graces diminish.

Temporal impenitence, if it is voluntary, manifestly disposes the soul for final impenitence, although divine mercy at times saves the sinner, even on his deathbed.

### Impenitent Death

It is possible to die in the state of mortal sin, even though the thought of such a death has not presented itself to the spirit. Many die suddenly, and we say, looking at their abuses of graces, that they have been surprised by death. They did not pay attention to warnings received beforehand. They have

<sup>17</sup> Denz., no. 804.

not had contrition, or even attrition, which with the sacrament of penance would have justified them. Such souls are lost for eternity. Here we find final impenitence, without any special previous refusal of the last grace.

If, on the contrary, death is foreseen, we are met with an impenitence that is final. This last rejection of grace, offered before death by infinite mercy, is a sin against the Holy Spirit, which takes on different forms. The sinner shrinks back from the humiliation involved in acknowledgment of his sins, and chooses consequently his own personal evil. At times he even scorns the duty of justice and reparation before God, scorns the love which he owes to God by the supreme precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind."<sup>18</sup> These terrible lessons show us the importance of repentance, a state quite different from remorse, which can continue to exist in hell without the least attrition. Condemned souls do not repent of their sins as guilt against God, though they see that for these sins they are punished. They hate the pain which is justly inflicted. They hate the worm of remorse which arises from their sin. They are at war with everything, especially with themselves. Judas had remorse and anguish, but he did not have repentance which gives peace. He fell into despair instead of confiding in infinite mercy and asking pardon.<sup>19</sup>

It is terribly dangerous to put off conversion. Father Monsabré<sup>20</sup> dwells on this subject: "First, in order to profit by our last hour, we must foresee it. Everything conspires to hide this moment when it arrives: the sinner's own illusions,

<sup>18</sup> Luke 10:27.

<sup>19</sup> IIa IIae, q. 13, a. 4; IIIa, q. 86; a. 1; *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 89.

<sup>20</sup> *Easter Retreat at Notre Dame*, 1888, 3rd instruction.

his negligence, the lack of sincerity on the part of those who surround him. Secondly, to profit by this last hour, if he foresees it, he must wish to be converted. But it is greatly to be feared that the sinner does not wish this. The tyranny of habit gives to his last acts a character of irresolution. Calculated delays have weakened his faith, have blinded him to his own state. Hence even the last hour does not move him, and he dies impenitent. Thirdly, to profit by this last hour, even if he wishes for conversion, the conversion must be sincere, and for this the soul needs efficacious grace. Yet the delaying sinner counts rather on his own will than on grace. If he does count on grace, he does so with a cowardly look toward the mercy of God. Will he thus reach a true regret for the offense done against God, to a genuine and generous act of repentance? The sinner who delays may forget what penitence is, and runs great risk of dying in his sin. Hence the conclusion: Seize the grace of repentance now, lest you lack it then when you must have it to decide your eternity.”<sup>21</sup>

### Deathbed Conversion

Deathbed conversion, however difficult, is still possible. Even when we see no sign of contrition, we can still not affirm that, at the last moment, just before the separation of soul from body, the soul is definitively obstinate. A sinner may be converted at that last minute in such fashion that

<sup>21</sup> Let us not forget that attrition, which disposes us to receive the sacrament of penance and justifies with that sacrament, must always be supernatural. According to the Council of Trent, attrition presupposes the grace of faith and of hope, and must detest sin as an offense against God. Denz., no. 798. Now this presupposes, probably, as in the baptism of adults, an initial love of God as the source of all justice. Denz., no. 798. We cannot detest a lie without loving the truth, we cannot detest injustice without beginning to love justice and Him who is the source of all justice.

God alone can know it. The holy Curé of Ars, divinely enlightened, said to a weeping widow: "Your prayer, Madame, has been heard. Your husband is saved. When he threw himself into the Rhone, the Blessed Virgin obtained for him the grace of conversion just before he died. Recall how, a month before, in your garden, he plucked the most beautiful rose and said to you, 'Carry this to the altar of the Blessed Virgin.' She has not forgotten."

Other souls, too, have been converted *in extremis*, souls that could barely recall a few religious acts in the course of their life. A sailor, for example, preserved the practice of uncovering his head when he passed before a church. He did not know even the Our Father or the Hail Mary, but the lifting of his hat kept him from departing definitively from God.

In the life of the saintly Bishop Bertau of Tulle, friend of Louis Veuillot, a poor girl in that city, who had once been chanter in the cathedral, fell first into misery, then into misconduct, and finally became a public sinner. She was assassinated at night, in one of the streets of Tulle. Police found her dying and carried her to a hospital. While she was dying, she cried out: "Jesus, Jesus." Could she be granted Church burial? The Bishop answered: "Yes, because she died pronouncing the name of Jesus. But bury her early in the morning without incense." In the room of this poor woman was found a portrait of the holy Bishop on the back of which was written: "The best of fathers." Fallen though she was, she still recognized the holiness of her bishop and preserved in her heart the memory of the goodness of our Lord.

A certain licentious writer, Armand Sylvestre, promised his mother when she was dying to say a Hail Mary every day. He kept his promise. Out of the swamp in which he lived, he

daily lifted up to God this one little flower. Pneumonia brought him to a hospital, served by religious, who said to him: "Do you wish a priest?" "Certainly," he answered. And he received absolution, probably with sufficient attrition, through a special grace obtained for him by the Blessed Mother, though we can hardly doubt he underwent a long and heavy purgatory.

Another French writer, Adolphe Rette, shortly after his conversion, which was sincere and profound, was struck by a sentence he read in the visitors' book of the Carmelite Convent: "Pray for those who will die during the Mass at which you are going to assist." He did so. Some days later he fell grievously ill, and was confined to bed in the hospital at Beaune, for many years, up to his death. Each morning he offered all his sufferings for those who would die during the day. Thus he obtained many deathbed conversions. We shall see in heaven how many conversions there are in the world, owing to such prayers.

In the life of St. Catherine of Siena we read of the conversion of two great criminals. The saint had gone to visit one of her friends. As they heard, in the street below, a loud noise, her friend looked through the window. Two condemned men were being led to execution. Their jailers were tormenting them with nails heated red-hot, while the condemned men blasphemed and cried. St. Catherine, inside the house, fell to prayer, with her arms extended in the form of a cross. At once the wicked men ceased to blaspheme and asked for a confessor. People in the street could not understand this sudden change. They did not know that a near-by saint had obtained this double conversion.

Several years ago the chaplain in a prison in Nancy had the reputation of converting all criminals whom he had ac-

accompanied to the guillotine. On one occasion he found himself alone, shut up with an assassin who refused to go to confession before death. The cart, with the condemned man, passed before the sanctuary of Our Lady of Refuge. The old chaplain prayed: "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who had recourse to thy intercession was abandoned. Convert this criminal of mine: otherwise I will say that it has been heard that you have not heard." At once the criminal was converted.

Return to God is always possible, up to the time of death, but it becomes more and more difficult as hardheartedness grows. Let us not put off our conversion. Let us say every day a Hail Mary for the grace of a happy death.

## \* VIII \*

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### THE GRACE OF A HAPPY DEATH THE GIFT OF PERSEVERANCE

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PERSEVERANCE is defined: that gift which makes the moment of death coincide with the state of grace, either continued or restored. Let us see, first, what Scripture and tradition say of this grace. Then we shall listen to the explanation furnished by the theology of St. Thomas.<sup>1</sup> Scripture attributes to God the grace of death in the state of grace.

In the Book of Wisdom, on the subject of the death of the just as opposed to the death of the wicked, we read: "His soul pleased God, therefore the Lord hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities."<sup>2</sup> In the New Testament we read these words of St. Peter: "The God of all grace, who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect you and confirm you and establish you."<sup>3</sup> St. Paul says: I am confident that He who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> Again to the Romans: "To them that love God all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints. . . . And whom He predestined, them He also called. And whom He called, them He also justified. And whom He justified,

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *De dono perseverantiae*, chaps. 13, 14, 17; St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109, a. 1, 2, 4, 9, 10; q. 114, a. 9; IIa IIae, q. 137, a. 2. See the commentaries of Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, the Salmanticenses, Gonet, Billuart, and Hugon. See also *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Perseverance finale," by A. Michel.

<sup>2</sup> 4:11-13.

<sup>3</sup> I Pet. 5:10.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. 1:6.



them He also glorified.”<sup>5</sup> This glorification supposes that God preserves the soul in that grace which justifies it. He says to Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.”<sup>6</sup> This mercy of final perseverance is given to all the elect.

St. Augustine<sup>7</sup> says that death in the state of grace is a pre-eminent gift of God, even in the case of infants. In the case of adults this gift sustains their own voluntary and meritorious choice, and hinders them from being cast down by adversity. But while each predestined soul will have this gift, none can know, without special revelation, that he will persevere. Hence we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. St. Augustine<sup>8</sup> adds that this gift is not given to us according to our merits, but according to the will of God, a will very secret, very wise, very beneficent. Only to God does it belong to give it, since He alone determines the end of our life. But this gift, even if it cannot be merited, can be obtained by humble supplication.<sup>9</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>10</sup> explains this doctrine. His teaching, generally admitted by theologians, may be reduced to this: The principle of merit, namely, the state of grace, cannot be merited, since a cause cannot be the effect of itself. But final perseverance is nothing but grace, preserved by God up to the moment of death. Hence it cannot be merited. It depends on God alone, who alone can preserve the state of grace or restore to the state of grace. Yet this final perseverance can be obtained by humble and confident prayer, which we address, not to divine justice as in the case of merit, but to divine mercy.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 8:28-33.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. 9:14.

<sup>7</sup> *De dono perseverantiae*, chaps. 13, 14, 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 6, no. 10. (*Suppliciter emereri potest.*)

<sup>10</sup> Ia IIæ, q. 114, a. 9.

Whence comes it, then, that we can merit eternal life, if we cannot merit final perseverance? The reason runs thus: Eternal life, far from being the principle of merit, is the terminus and the goal of merit. We shall obtain it on condition that we do not lose our merits. St. Thomas adds: "Since free will is of itself changeable, even after it has been healed by habitual grace, it is not in its power to fix itself immutably in good. It can choose this good, but it cannot realize it."<sup>11</sup>

The Council of Trent<sup>12</sup> confirms this traditional doctrine. "This succor is a great gift, very gratuitous, which we cannot obtain except from Him who, according to St. Paul,<sup>13</sup> can sustain him who stands and lift up him who falls." The Council adds that, without special revelation, we cannot in advance be certain of receiving this gift, but we can and should hope firmly for it, battling against temptation, and working out our salvation by the practice of good works.

As regards the grace given for this last meritorious act, Thomists hold that this grace is intrinsically efficacious, that is, efficacious of its own self, though without violating in any way the liberty which it actualizes. Molinists say, on the contrary, that it is efficacious extrinsically, namely, by our consent which God had foreseen by *scientia media*. According to Thomists, such prevision would put a passivity in God, who would thereby become dependent in His foreknowledge on a created determination which would not come from God Himself.

If we cannot be certain in advance of the grace of a good death, we can nevertheless exercise the signs of predestination, particularly those that follow: care to preserve ourselves from mortal sin, the spirit of prayer, humility which draws

<sup>11</sup> IIa IIae, q. 137, a. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Denz., nos. 806, 826, 832.

<sup>13</sup> Rom. 14:4.

down grace, patience in adversity, love of neighbor, assistance to those who are afflicted, a sincere devotion to our Lord and His Holy Mother. In this sense, according to the promise made to St. Margaret Mary, those who have received Communion in honor of the Sacred Heart on the first Friday of nine successive months can have the confidence of obtaining from God the grace of a good death. A condition is here understood, namely, that the nine Communions have been made well. The grace of receiving them well is a grace given to the elect by the Sacred Heart.<sup>14</sup>

### The Death of the Just

In the Old Testament the death of the just is painted in that of Tobias: At the hour of his death he calls to him his son and the seven sons of his son and says to them: "Hearken, my children, to your father: Serve the Lord in truth, and seek to do the things that please Him. And command your children that they do justice and almsdeeds, and that they be mindful of God and bless Him at all times in truth and with all their power."<sup>15</sup>

In the Book of Ecclesiasticus<sup>16</sup> we read that the just man is not scandalized by the inequality of human conditions, and that it is especially at the time of his death that he judges wisely. Why are there poor and rich? Why are there those who are unfortunate and those who are fortunate? Ecclesiasticus replies: Why does one day excel another and one light

<sup>14</sup> See *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Cœur-sacré," by Father Jean Baintel, S.J.: "The promise is absolute, supposing that the Communions have been well made. That which is promised is final perseverance, which brings with it contrition and the last sacraments in the necessary measure." See *ibid.*, the original text of this great promise of the Sacred Heart.

<sup>15</sup> Tob. 14:10.

<sup>16</sup> Ecclus. 33:7-15.

another, and one year another year, when all come from the sun? By the knowledge of the Lord they were distinguished . . . and He ordered the seasons and holidays of them; . . . some of them God made high and great days, and some of them He put in the number of ordinary days. And all men are from the ground and out of the earth, from whence Adam was created. With much knowledge the Lord hath divided them and diversified their ways. Some of them hath He blessed and exalted, . . . and some of them hath He cursed and brought low." God gives to every man according to his works. The just man sees this above all at the moment of his death.

In the same Book of Ecclesiasticus we read that God hears the prayer of the poor man, especially at the time when this man has to die, and that He punishes hearts that are without pity. "The Lord is judge, and there is not with Him respect of person; the Lord will not accept any person against a poor man; He will hear the prayer of him that is wronged . . . (and of) the widow. . . . The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, and he will not depart till the most High beholds." <sup>17</sup> This doctrine is verified particularly at the hour of death. God will be with him in that last hour. These high thoughts occur repeatedly in the Old Testament, and still more in the New, which sees clearly in the death of the just man the prelude of eternal life.

It was the writer's privilege to see the death of a just man, a poor man, Joseph d'Estengo, who lived with his family in the eighth story of a house near the Campo Santo in Rome. He was gangrened in his four limbs, suffered much from the cold, especially when his nerves began to writhe before death. Nevertheless he never complained. He offered all his suffer-

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 35:11-17.

ings to the Lord for the salvation of his soul, for his own people, for the conversion of sinners. Then he was struck by rapid consumption, and had to be carried to the other extremity of Rome, to the hospital of the Littorio, where three weeks later he died, in a perfect state of abandonment to God in the middle of the night.

At the precise instant when he died, his elderly father, a very good Christian, who was at the other extremity of the city, heard the voice of his son saying: "Father, I am going to heaven." And his excellent mother dreamed that her son mounted up to heaven with healed hands and feet, just as he will be in fact after the resurrection of the dead.

I count it one of the great graces of my life that I knew this poor man, who was pointed out to me by a Vincentian helper who said: "You will be happy to know him." She spoke truly. He was a friend of God. His death confirmed this. Blessed are they who die in the Lord. He was one of those "who taste death" as the prelude of eternal life.

### Preparation for Death

The just man awaits death, prepares himself for it by vigilance, above all by a reverent fear, recalling his past sins and considering the expiations that are to come. He has a vivid faith in everlasting life, the goal of his journey, the inamissible possession of God in the beatific vision, union with Christ the Redeemer, union with His holy Mother, with the saints, with those whom he has known, who have died or who will die in a Christian manner.

To this faith the just man joins a confidence ever more firm in the help of God, who enables him to arrive at his goal. And as his charity grows greater day by day, the Holy

Spirit <sup>18</sup> gives testimony to his spirit that he is a child of God. Hence arises the certitude of tendency, which strengthens hope in him more and more. The just man also urges friends to warn him of approaching death. It is a lack of faith when friends do not dare warn a sick person that he is going to die. It is a sin. They deceive him and prevent him from preparing himself. It is good to have an understanding with one special friend that each may warn the other.

Finally it is appropriate that, as man nears the goal of his life, he often make the sacrifice of his life in union with the sacrifice of the Mass, which perpetuates on the altar the sacrifice of the cross. Let him unite his own life and death with the four ends of all sacrifice: adoration, to recognize the sovereign excellence of the Creator; secondly, reparation, to expiate past sins; thirdly, supplication, to gain the grace of final perseverance; fourthly, thanksgiving, for innumerable benefits which God prepared for us from all eternity, which we have received daily from the time of our birth.

Daily offering of our life is counseled by His Holiness, Pius X: "Lord, my God, whatever be the kind of death which it pleases Thee to reserve for me, I from this moment on receive that death with all my heart and with all my soul. I accept that death from Thy hands, with all its anguish, pains, and sorrows."

Thus prepared, we may hope to sacrifice our life at the last moment in union with the Masses that will be celebrated then, far or near, in union with the oblation, always living, of the heart of Christ, who ceases not to intercede for us.<sup>19</sup> A last act of love for God obtains the remission of a great part of the temporal punishment due to sin, and thus shortens purgatory. A very good practice is to have Mass celebrated

<sup>18</sup> Rom. 8:16.

<sup>19</sup> Heb. 7:25.

for obtaining the grace of graces, which is that of a good death.

The Christian is fortified by the grace of extreme unction against the natural horror of death, and against the temptations of the enemy of salvation. In sorrow at leaving those whom he loves, a Christian is consoled by the Holy Viaticum, by the prayers for the dying. These prayers are extraordinarily beautiful, especially the following: "Go forth, Christian soul, go forth in the name of the almighty Father who created thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who has suffered for thee, in the name of the Holy Spirit, who has been given to thee, in the name of the glorious and holy mother of God, the Virgin Mary, in the name of blessed Joseph, her spouse, in the name of the angels and archangels, the thrones and dominations, the principalities and powers, the cherubim and seraphim, in the name of the patriarchs and prophets, in the name of the apostles, the evangelists, the martyrs, the confessors, the virgins, and of all holy men and women of God. May thy dwelling today be in peace, in the heavenly Jerusalem, with Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

Thus the blessed come down to surround the Christian soul, to carry it from the Church on earth into the Church in heaven.

Bossuet <sup>20</sup> has a little work called *Preparation for Death*. Faith, hope, and charity are founded on an act of perfect abandonment: "O my God, I abandon myself to Thee. My fear is that I may not abandon myself completely to Thee through Jesus Christ. I put the cross of Thy Son between my sins and Thy justice. My soul, why art thou sad, why dost thou trouble me? Hope in Him, say to Him with all your power: 'O my God, Thou art my salvation. The time is approaching when faith is to turn into vision. My Savior, I

<sup>20</sup> *Opuscule sur la préparation à la mort.*

believe. Help Thou my unbelief. Sustain my feebleness. I have nothing to hope in from myself, but Thou hast commanded me to hope in Thee. I rejoice when I hear them say that I shall go into the house of the Lord. When shall I see Thee, my one and only God? My God, my strength, my life, I love Thee. I rejoice in Thy power, in Thy eternity, in Thy goodness. Soon, in a moment, I shall be able to embrace Thee. Take me to Thyself.”

“Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness made like the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. . . . And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”<sup>21</sup>

After these words of St. Paul, Bossuet continues: “My Savior, I run to Thy feet in the Garden of Olives. I lie prostrate with Thee on the ground. I draw near, as near as possible, to Thine own holy body, to receive on my body the precious blood which flows from Thy veins. I take in my two hands the chalice which Thy Father gives me. Come, consoling angel of Jesus Christ, who is now suffering and agonizing in my members. Flee away, ye powers of hell. O my Savior, let me say with Thee: ‘All is consummated. I commend my soul into Thy hands. Amen.’ My soul, let us commence the eternal Amen, the eternal Alleluia, the joy and the song of the blessed for all eternity. Adieu, my mortal brethren. Adieu, holy Catholic Church. Thou hast borne me in thy bosom, hast nourished me with thy milk. Continue to purify me by thy sacrifices, because I die in unity with thee and in thy faith. And yet, O holy Church, I do not leave

<sup>21</sup> Phil. 3:10, 4:7.



thee. I go to find thee in heaven, thy own home, where I shall find thy apostles, thy martyrs, thy confessors, thy virgins, with whom I shall sing forever the mercies of the Lord." Let us conclude with St. John of the Cross: "In the evening of our life, we shall be judged by love, namely, by the sincerity of our love for God, for our own soul, for our neighbor."

## • IX •

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### I MMUTABILITY AFTER DEATH

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WHY does the soul become immutably fixed, in good or in evil, immediately after death? This mystery might be studied after that of the particular judgment, because it becomes more clear by what revelation tells us of this judgment. Nevertheless, since the time of merit is finished, we must study this immutability first.

Let us see what Scripture and tradition tell us of the nature and immutability of the soul. Then we will examine what theologians say in explanation and will distinguish three different explanations of this immutability.<sup>1</sup>

#### Immutability in Itself

We do not speak here of the question, studied by physiologists and physicians: When does real death, not merely apparent death, take place? It seems certain in many cases, particularly in accidental and sudden death, that latent life can remain many hours in the organism which a moment before was perfectly sound. It can last, it seems, at least a half-hour when death was brought on by a malady which for a long

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chaps. 91, 92, 94, 95 (Commentary of Ferrariensis); *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 11; Ia, q. 64, a. 2 (Commentary of Cajetan); Salmanticenses, *De gratia, de merito*, Disp. I, dub. 4, no. 36; Billot, *De novissimis*, 1921, p. 33; *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Mort."

time has undermined the organism. We consider here only real death, the moment when the soul is separated from the body.

The ordinary magisterium of the Church teaches that the human soul, immediately after death, undergoes judgment on all the actions, good or bad, of its earthly existence. This judgment supposes that the time of merit has passed. This common doctrine has not been solemnly defined, but it is based on Scripture and tradition. There are no merits after death, contrary to what many Protestants teach.

Already in the Old Testament <sup>2</sup> we read: "It is easy before God in the day of death to reward everyone according to his ways, . . . and in the end of a man is the disclosing of his works." <sup>3</sup> According to the New Testament <sup>4</sup> the last judgment is concerned solely with the acts of the present life. In the Gospel according to St. Luke <sup>5</sup> there is question of particular judgment. The rich man and Lazarus are judged, each on the acts of his life, and are judged irrevocably. Abraham replies to the rich man: "Between us and you there is fixed a great chaos."

Jesus said to the good thief: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." <sup>6</sup> We are urged to vigilance and to penance, that we may not be surprised by death. After the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, He says: "Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour." <sup>7</sup> St. Paul is still more explicit: "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil." <sup>8</sup> Again: "Behold now is the acceptable time,

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. 11:12.

<sup>3</sup> Eccles. 9:10.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 25:13; Luke 13:22; John 5:29.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 16:19-31.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 23:43.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 25:13; Mark 13:33.

<sup>8</sup> II Cor. 5:10.

behold now is the day of salvation.”<sup>9</sup> Again: “Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men.”<sup>10</sup> And again: “I have a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better.”<sup>11</sup> In the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Exhort one another every day whilst it is called today: that none of you be hardened.”<sup>12</sup> And again: “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.”<sup>13</sup> The following verse makes allusion to the last judgment, but this last judgment also deals exclusively with the acts of the present life.

In the Gospel of St. John, Jesus says: “I must work the work of Him that sent Me whilst it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.”<sup>14</sup> The Fathers<sup>15</sup> have often explained this text of St. John in this sense, particularly Saints Cyprian, Hilary, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. These Fathers teach that after death no one can longer either merit or demerit.

This, too, is manifestly the doctrine of the ordinary universal magistracy of the Church. Although there is no solemn definition on this point, there are declarations of the Church which are to be understood in this sense. The Second Council of Lyons says: “The souls of those who die in the state of mortal sin or with original sin go down at once into hell, there to suffer, though not all with equal pains.”<sup>16</sup> We find the same expression in the Council of Florence,<sup>17</sup> and in the Constitution *Benedictus Deus* of Benedict XII.<sup>18</sup> Leo X<sup>19</sup> condemns this proposition of Luther: “The souls in purgatory are not certain of their salvation, at least not all of them,

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:2.

<sup>10</sup> Gal. 6:10.

<sup>11</sup> Phil. 1:23.

<sup>12</sup> Heb. 3:13.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 9:27.

<sup>14</sup> John 9:4.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. A. de Journal, *Enchiridion patristicum, Index theologicus*, no. 584.

<sup>16</sup> Denz., no. 464. <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 693. <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 531. <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 778.

and it cannot be proved by Scripture nor by theological reasoning that they can no longer merit or that they cannot increase in charity." Lastly the Council of the Vatican proposed to promulgate this dogmatic definition: After death, which is the terminus of our life's road, all of us must be made manifest before the tribunal of Christ,<sup>20</sup> where each one is to give an account of what he himself did in the body, either good or evil. Nor does there remain after this mortal life any place for penance that would lead to justification.<sup>21</sup>

### Immutability in Its Cause

Some theologians, notably Scotus and Suarez,<sup>22</sup> think that obstinacy, immutability in evil, is explained both for man and for demon by saying that God no longer offers the grace of conversion, and that the despair which follows confirms them in this state of obstinacy.<sup>23</sup>

In this explanation we find a difficulty. A great Thomistic theologian, Cardinal Cajetan,<sup>24</sup> sought to explain the obstinacy of man in the same manner as St. Thomas explains the obstinacy of the demon. The Cardinal says in substance: The human soul, in the first instant of its separation from the body, commences to judge in the same manner as do pure spirits. But a pure spirit has a judgment that is immutable, a judgment that resembles the judgment of God. And why? For God the reason is clear: because from all eternity God sees all that can happen, all that will happen. God can learn nothing, nothing that could change His eternal decrees. Now there

<sup>20</sup> II Cor. 5:10.

<sup>21</sup> Mansi, *Concil.*, LIII, 175.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Scotus, *II Sent.*, dist. 7; Suarez, *De angelis*, Bk. III; chap. 10; Bk. VIII, chap. 10.

<sup>23</sup> The souls in purgatory, so these authors say, are preserved from sin by a special protection of Providence.

<sup>24</sup> Ia, q. 64, a. 2, no. 18.

is a proportional truth for the pure spirit, the pure created spirit. We on earth, living in time, see only successively the different aspects of an object. Hence, after having chosen, we can learn something new and thereby modify our choice. The pure spirit, on the contrary, has a knowledge entirely intuitive, sees simultaneously all aspects, sees simultaneously what is for it and what is against it, sees all that is to be considered. Having thus freely chosen, it can learn nothing new, nothing that could change its choice. From this moment its choice remains immutable, and resembles God's decrees, free but immutable. This follows from the perfection of the intelligence which characterizes pure spirits.

Hence, according to the Cardinal, the soul separated from its body, at the very instant when it begins its life as a separated soul, chooses immutably that which it wills by a last instantaneous act, meritorious or demeritorious. At that moment it fixes itself in its choice, and therefore understands why God, infinitely good, no longer offers the grace of conversion to the soul fixed in obstinacy.

This opinion of Cardinal Cajetan, however ingenious it is, has not been accepted, at least not entirely, by later Thomists or by other theologians. They have replied: If it were so, then a sinner, dying in the state of mortal sin, could reconcile himself at once after death. Conversely, a just man, dying in the state of grace, would lose himself by a sin committed immediately after death, after the separation. But this position seems contrary to the testimony of Scripture.<sup>25</sup> Subsequent Thomists<sup>26</sup> answer Cajetan thus: "According to Scripture, man cannot merit except before death. This truth

<sup>25</sup> Thus Suarez and many others.

<sup>26</sup> Thus speak in particular Ferrariensis, *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 95, and the Salmanticenses, *Cursus theol.*, *De gratia, de merito*, disp. 1, dub. 4, no. 36.

is expressed most clearly in the words of our Savior: 'I must work the work of Him that sent Me, whilst it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.'"<sup>27</sup> Thus these theologians admit, as a common teaching, that one of the conditions of merit is that man be still in the state of life, a *viator*, a voyager, a traveler. Consequently it is man who merits, not the soul separated from the body.

What, then, is the solution? It lies between the two preceding solutions and above them. It is the golden mean, and at the same time the summit which best expresses the thought of St. Thomas. This view is thus explained by the great theologian, Sylvester of Ferrara: "Although the soul in the first instant of separation from the body has a view, an apprehension, intellectually immutable, and although it commences at that moment to be obstinate either in evil or in good, nevertheless at this same time it no longer has a possibility of merit or demerit, whatever others say on the matter, because merit or demerit belongs not to the soul alone, but to the man, the *viator*, the traveler, the man who still lives. But in the first instant of separation man no longer exists, hence he can no longer merit. Whence then comes obstinacy in evil? It is caused, initially by the changeable apprehension of such and such an end, during the time when the soul is still united to the body. It is caused definitively by the unchangeable apprehension of the soul from that moment on when it is separated from the body. The same truth holds good for immutable fixation in good."<sup>28</sup> This seems indeed to be the thought of St. Thomas.<sup>29</sup> And Scripture says in this sense: "If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> John 9:4.

<sup>28</sup> Ferrariensis, *In Contra Gentes*, 4, 95.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 95, and *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Eccles. 11:3.

This notion, we say, seems to contain in a higher synthesis what is true in the two preceding views. First, obstinacy in evil or fixation in good are caused initially by the last merit or demerit of the soul united to the body. Secondly, they are caused in a definitive fashion by the immovable apprehension or intuition by the separated soul which adheres henceforth immutably to that which it has chosen before death. Briefly to repeat, the soul begins to determine itself by the last free act of the present life, and it attains this fixation immutably, in regard to its knowledge and its will, in the first instant after death. Thus it immobilizes itself in its own choice. Hence it is not a lack of God's mercy which fixes the soul in obstinacy.

But, then, says an objector, the liberty of this second act, at the precise instant following death, is diminished by its conformity with the act which preceded it in life. We must reply that the liberty of the second act is indeed diminished, in the case of the sinner who has not repented before death, because "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."<sup>81</sup> But in the case of the just man who has died in the state of grace, the liberty of the act which he makes immediately after death is greater, because liberty, which is a consequence of intelligence, grows greater with the lucidity of that intelligence. Thus the liberty of the angel, and consequently much more that of God, is much greater than our liberty. Nevertheless the choice of God, though it be sovereignly free, is posited in an immutable fashion and does not change. It will be the same with our free act posited immediately after our death. It will no longer change.

When, at the last judgment, the soul again receives its

<sup>81</sup> John 8:34.



body, it will not change, because it is immobilized in its own choice. Repossession of its body will not change its choice of its last end.

This truth is easier to grasp for immutability in good, but it holds good likewise for obstinacy in evil. Only we must note that the mysteries of iniquity are more obscure than the mysteries of grace, because the mysteries of grace are in themselves sovereignly luminous, whereas the others are darkness itself.

Entrance into the state of separation from the body fixes forever the freely determined choice before death, just as in winter frost fixes moisture on the window in varied figures. But the best image is that of Scripture: "If a tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there it shall be."

We can complete this doctrine by what St. Thomas<sup>82</sup> says in *Contra Gentes*. Every man judges according to his inclination, especially according to the inclination whereby he has chosen his last end. Thus the ambitious man judges by his inclination to pride, the humble, by his inclination to humility. Our inclination to our last end can change as long as the soul is united to the body (which has been given to it as an instrument of tendency to its end), but this inclination can no longer change after separation from the body, because then the soul judges in an immutable fashion, according to this last inclination, and thus is fixed in its choice. The humble man will continue to judge definitively according to the inclination to virtue; the proud man will continue to judge according to his pride, with a bitterness indeed that will never end. His pride is now eternalized, hence his voluntary choice,

<sup>82</sup> *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 95.

fixing himself in obstinacy, is forever perverted, incapable of choosing the only road of return, namely, humility and obedience.<sup>33</sup>

Let us listen to a second objection: Cannot the damned, learning from their own suffering, change their mind, and make a new choice?

Theology replies with St. Thomas:<sup>34</sup> The damned do not learn, practically and effectively, from their sufferings. Without doubt, they indeed wish not to suffer, but they do not will for that reason to come back to God, because the only road possible is that of humility and obedience, and this they refuse. If the Lord opened this road, they would not take it. They do not regret their sins as guilt, says St. Thomas,<sup>35</sup> but only as the cause of their sufferings. They do not have the repentance which would lead them to ask forgiveness. They have only remorse. And between penance and remorse there is an abyss.

A third objection: But it is incredible that the demon can prefer his proud isolation to supernatural beatitude, to the vision of God, to a good infinitely superior to the bitter joys of pride. Theology,<sup>36</sup> resting on revelation, replies that the demon once for all chose his own intellectual life, his own natural beatitude, proud isolation rather than the other road of tending toward God, rather than humility and obedience. Supernatural beatitude he cannot receive except by God's grace, which he would share in common with men,

<sup>33</sup> In illustration, we may point to a congenital illness which remains throughout life, or the dispositions on entering into a permanent form of life. If a man enters rightly into marriage, the good disposition with which he does so becomes fixed for life. If he enters with an evil disposition, this disposition, alas, generally persists and becomes a habitual evil. In the motive on entering religion we find the same difference. See, further on, the chapter on the knowledge of the separated soul, where the doctrine we are now proposing will be confirmed.

<sup>34</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 98, a. 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ia*, q. 63, a. 3.

so far inferior to himself. The characteristic of the proud is to please themselves in their own excellence, to the point of rejecting everything that could restrain them in this complacency.

Even among men, we find those whose pride in mathematics, say, or rationalist philosophy, leads them to reject the gospel, even to the point of denying all the miracles which confirm the gospel and the Church. Some persevere all their life in this negation.<sup>37</sup> Others, like Lamennais, abandon the Church, because they wish to defend her in their own manner, not in her manner. They think their own wisdom higher than hers. Exalted, they fall by pride, as did the demon, whom they imitate.

What shall be our practical conclusion? It is this: that it is sovereignly important not to delay conversion. We can be surprised by death, and our last free act decides our eternity, happy or unhappy.

Likewise, we must pray for those who seem to be departing from God. Benedict XV urges us to have Masses celebrated for them for the grace of a good death.

I knew a man who had been reared as a good Christian, but who had wandered away from God. After having lost his wife and his only son, the son being an angel of piety, he was assailed by a terrible temptation to despair, a temptation which lasted many months. He determined to kill himself. On the day when he went to do so, at the instant when, in Tulle, he was about to throw himself into a ravine, his sister and the Carmelite nuns were praying ardently for him.

<sup>37</sup> When we point to the miracles of Christ, of modern saints, of those at Lourdes, they reply: "Yes, but anyone can claim miracles." They do not wish to see with what seriousness these miracles are examined by physicians and theologians, and what severity is shown by the Sacred Congregation, which rejects many probable miracles and retains only those that are certain.

At the very moment our Lord appeared to him, sad and sorrowful, and called him by his baptismal name: "Joseph." After this view of the mercy of God, Joseph Maisonneuve,<sup>38</sup> that was his name, understood that the redemption was meant also for him. He was converted completely. He became sweet and humble of heart. He expiated his sins by severe penance up to his last hour, dying in the odor of sanctity. He is called the holy man of Tulle. Many wonderful cures were wrought by his intercession. Even during life his prayer worked wonders. In his own village he had a friend who led a bad life. The saint prayed nightly, his arms in the form of a cross, and he performed severe penances to obtain this grace. One day he learned that his friend had shot himself, but that he was not yet dead. The saint at once went to him. The dying man had twenty-four hours to live. Joseph Maisonneuve exhorted him so well that he repented and died a most Christian death.

The important thing is to die well. For this end we must remember our Savior's words: "He that is not with Me is against Me."<sup>39</sup> But it is also true to say, and Jesus said it to His apostles: "He that is not against you is for you."<sup>40</sup> Those who seek sincerely for religious truth are already replying to the actual grace which carries them on to good. In these souls we see the beginning of that interior word, understood by St. Bernard and repeated by Pascal: "Thou wouldst not search for Me if thou hadst not already found Me." Let us recall again the word of St. John of the Cross: "In the evening of

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Maisonneuve: life written by a former superior of the Diocesan Missionaries of Tulle, 1935.

<sup>39</sup> In the actual economy of salvation, every man is necessarily either in the state of grace or in the state of sin, that is, he is either turned toward God or away from Him. Matt. 12:30.

<sup>40</sup> Mark 9:39.

our life we will be judged by love, by the sincerity of our love for God."

### An Addition

Do all men perceive before death a sweeping view of their past life? And would this view serve as sufficient grace for conversion? People who have been on the point of drowning declare that they have received this intuition.

To this question we must answer that the manner of death varies widely, from the death of saints where possibly a revelation at times announces the day and the hour, to the death of the Pharisees to whom our Lord said: "You will die in your sin."

The immobility of the soul, whether in good or in evil, commences freely in the present life, and is completed by a free act conformable to the preceding act at the first instant of separation from the body. This truth clarifies the question which occupies us now.

Obstinacy can begin long before death. Hardened sinners can be surprised by a sudden death, in which case they certainly do not have a global view of their past life, nor time to be converted. Such is the punishment of this special sin, which consists in continual delay of conversion, or, possibly, in the will not to be converted at all.

Sinners who are not hardened receive actual graces more frequently, and among these graces there may be that of a full view of their past life. If so, it is a special effect of divine mercy, to hinder them from becoming obstinate.

Others live indeed in the state of grace, but they are feeble. God, in mercy, often grants them a global view of their past life, to encourage them to persevere.

God wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted. Here we might cite those texts of Scripture <sup>41</sup> which express the universality of God's salvific will, whereby His Son gave Himself for all on the cross. This reply is in harmony with many private revelations, and with the experience of many who barely escaped sudden death.

Nevertheless, to put off conversion would be presumption. We must not forget that God, infinitely merciful, is also sovereignly just. He must render to each according to his works. Most certainly, God's providence is irreproachable, and no sinner was ever lost because he lacked divine succor. <sup>42</sup> The judgments of God are always right, perfectly just, and justice does not manifest severity except where souls have abused mercy.

<sup>41</sup> Ezech. 33:11.

<sup>42</sup> This lack could arise only from divine negligence. Now divine negligence is a contradiction in terms. Even if it happened only once, God would no longer be God, because he would not be wise. Providence would be an empty word. These negations are a very evident blasphemy, which manifests in its own manner, by contrast, the chiaroscuro of the divine mystery which we are now speaking of.

## THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT

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THE existence of the particular judgment, affirmed by the ordinary teaching of the Church, is founded on Scripture and tradition. Theological reasoning confirms this truth. It is appropriate that there be a definitive sanction as soon as the soul is capable of being judged on all its merits and demerits, that is, at the moment when the time of merit is finished, and this moment arrives at once after death. Were the case otherwise, the soul would remain in uncertainty about the general judgment, and this uncertainty would be contrary to the wisdom of God, as well as to His mercy and His justice.<sup>1</sup>

### The Nature of This Particular Judgment

The analogy between divine judgment and that of human justice brings with it resemblances, but also differences. Judgment before a human tribunal involves three steps: examination of the case, pronouncement of the sentence, and the execution of that sentence.

In the divine judgment the examination of the case is instantaneous, because it needs neither the testimony of witnesses, for or against, nor the least discussion. God knows by immediate intuition, and at the moment of separation the soul

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St. Thomas, IIIa, q. 59, a. 4 ad 1; a. 5; *Supplementum*, a. 69, a. 2; q. 88, a. 1 ad 1; *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chaps. 91, 95.

knows itself without medium. It is enlightened, decisively and inevitably, on all its merits and demerits. It sees its state without possibility of error, sees all that it has thought, desired, said, and done, both in good and in evil. It sees all the good it has omitted. Memory and conscience penetrate its entire moral and spiritual life, even to the minutest details. Only then can it see clearly all that was involved in its particular vocation, for instance, that of a mother, of a father, of an apostle.

Secondly, the pronouncement of the sentence is also instantaneous. It does not come by a voice to be heard by the ear, but in a manner entirely spiritual. Intellectual illumination awakes all acquired ideas, gives additional infused ideas, whereby the soul sees its entire past in a glance. The soul sees how God judges, and conscience makes this judgment definitive. All this takes place at the first instant of separation. When it is true to say of a person that he is dead, it is also true to say that he is judged.

Thirdly, the execution of the sentence is also immediate. There is nothing to retard it. On the part of God, omnipotence accomplishes at once the order of divine justice, and on the part of the soul merit and demerit are, as St. Thomas says, like lightness and heaviness in bodies. Where there are no obstacles, heavy bodies fall, light bodies rise. Thus separated souls go without delay, either to the recompense due to their merit (unless perhaps they have to undergo a temporary punishment in purgatory), or to the eternal punishment due to their demerits. Charity, like a living flame, ascends on high, whereas hate always descends.

Particular judgment, then, takes place at that first instant when it is true to say that the soul is separated.

Thus terminates the time of merit and demerit. Otherwise



a soul in purgatory could still be lost, and a soul condemned could still be saved. But the souls in purgatory have arrived at the goal of their merit, though not yet at eternal beatitude. These souls are still free, but this freedom is not sufficient for merit, because one of the conditions for merit is that the person meriting be still *in via*, be still a *viator*, a traveler.

At the moment of the particular judgment the soul does not see God intuitively, otherwise it would already be beatified. Neither does it, except in occasional cases, see the humanity of Christ. Rather, by an infused light, it knows God as sovereign judge, knows the Redeemer as judge of the living and the dead. Preachers, following the example of the Fathers, illustrate this doctrine by image and example. But the doctrine itself is reduced to the points we have mentioned.

Blessed are those who take their purgatory on earth, by generous acceptance of daily trials. The multiple sacrifices of daily life purify and perfect their love, and by this love they will be judged.

Love itself has many degrees. St. Peter seemed to make an act of perfect love when he protested to Jesus his readiness to die. But mingled with his act was presumption. To purify him from this presumption, Providence permitted the threefold denial, whence he came forth more humble, less trustful in himself, more trustful in God, until pure love led him to martyrdom and answered his prayer to be crucified head downward.

How do we attain pure love? Saudreau answers: "Love is not an effect of headwork, not a pushing forward of will to give to it greater force. It is the result of accepting generously all sacrifices, in accepting with a loving heart all trials."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Monsignor Auguste Saudreau, *L'Idéal de l'âme fervente*, 1920, chap. 3; *The Particular Judgment of the Perfect Soul*, pp. 49-52.

The Lord augments the infused virtue of charity, the accepting soul prepares itself for the particular judgment, where it will find in Jesus rather a friend than a judge.

While the particular judgment, then, settles for each soul its place in eternity, the general judgment still remains necessary. Man is not a mere individual person, but also a member of human society, on which he has had an influence, good or bad, of longer or shorter duration. Let us see what revelation teaches us on this matter.

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## THE LAST JUDGMENT

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CHRISTIAN faith thus expresses this truth: "I believe in Jesus Christ who will come to judge the living and the dead." The symbol of St. Athanasius makes this doctrine more precise: At the coming of the Savior all men will rise with their bodies and will render an account of all their acts. Councils <sup>1</sup> teach a general resurrection, after which Christ will judge all men, on what they have thought, desired, said, done, and omitted, and will then give to each according to his works. Let us see what Scripture says on this point, and how theology explains this doctrine.

### Scripture

Many peoples have transmitted to us their belief in a supreme justice, which will manifest itself by sanctions beyond the tomb. This conviction shows the necessity of an individual retribution, and prescribes the individual judgment which must determine this retribution. But, besides this individual judgment we find, even in pagan religions, the conviction of a judgment that is to be final and universal.<sup>2</sup>

The first books of the Old Testament, although they manifest profound faith in the justice of God, nevertheless speak

<sup>1</sup> Denz. nos. 54, 86, 87, 429, 693.

<sup>2</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Jugement."

only obscurely of sanctions beyond the grave.<sup>3</sup> Yet even in the Old Testament we find affirmations like the following: "For all these God will bring thee into judgment."<sup>4</sup>

The prophets offer us a more precise announcement of this last and eternal judgment. Isaias, speaking of the eternal restoration of Israel, with "the new heavens and the new earth," says in the name of the Lord: "All flesh shall come to adore before My face."<sup>5</sup> He goes on to announce to the wicked their eternal chastisement. Daniel speaks still more clearly: "Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always."<sup>6</sup> Joel<sup>7</sup> writes: "I will gather together all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Josaphat<sup>8</sup> and I will plead with them there."

The Book of Wisdom<sup>9</sup> speaks in this same fashion. After describing the punishments reserved for the wicked after death, it says: "But the just shall live forever more, and their reward is with the Lord."<sup>10</sup> In the Second Book of Machabees the seven brothers, martyrs, speak thus to their judge: "The King of the world will raise us up . . . in the resurrection of eternal life . . . but thou by the judgment of God shall receive just punishment for thy pride."<sup>11</sup>

In the New Testament the universal judgment is often announced by Jesus.<sup>12</sup> "Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee,

<sup>3</sup> The reason for this is that the Old Testament is subordinated to the New, that is, to the coming of the Savior, whereas the New Testament is immediately subordinated to eternal life. Hence the New Testament often speaks much more explicitly than the Old Testament.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. 66:15-24.

<sup>6</sup> Dan. 12:1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Eccles. 11:9.

<sup>7</sup> Joel 3:2.

<sup>8</sup> This denomination is symbolic. The word "Josaphat" means "Jahve is Judge." The word can be applied to any place where God chooses to execute the general judgment.

<sup>9</sup> Wisd. 5:15. (Second century before Christ.)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:6 and 15:8.

<sup>11</sup> II Mach. 7:9, 36.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 11:21, 23.

Bethsaida! . . . I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.”<sup>18</sup> “The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas here.”<sup>14</sup>

This universal judgment is presented as the work of Christ, above all in the great discourse on the end of the world, as preserved by the three Evangelists.<sup>15</sup> “When the Son of man comes in His glory and all His angels with Him, then shall He sit on the seat of His majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats.”<sup>16</sup> Jesus, speaking of His passion, says to the high priest: “Hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven.”<sup>17</sup> In St. John’s Gospel<sup>18</sup> we read: “He that despiseth Me and receiveth not My words hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last days.” “Everyone who . . . believeth in Me . . . hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day.”<sup>19</sup> “The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.”<sup>20</sup>

In the Acts of the Apostles St. Peter says: “Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is He who was appointed by God to be judge of the living and

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:41.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 10:12-14; 11:31, 32; Matt. 16:27.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 25:31-46.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:31; Mark 13:27; Luke 21:27.

<sup>17</sup> Matt. 26:64.

<sup>18</sup> John 12:48.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:40-44; 40:44, 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11:25; 5:29.

of the dead.”<sup>21</sup> St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil.”<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere<sup>23</sup> he speaks very clearly of the general resurrection and of the last judgment. “The enemy, death, shall be destroyed last. . . . Then the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”<sup>24</sup> “There is no respect of persons with God. . . . (This will be made apparent) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”<sup>25</sup> St. John says in the Apocalypse: “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne. And the books were opened . . . and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”<sup>26</sup>

The Fathers, both Latin and Greek, not only teach this dogma explicitly, but most vividly describe the last judgment. Let it suffice to cite St. Augustine: “No one denies, or puts in doubt, that Jesus Christ, as the Scriptures have announced, will pronounce the last judgment.”<sup>27</sup>

The circumstances of this universal judgment are the following: the judge will be Jesus in His humanity, because His merits have opened the gates of heaven for us. The subject matter of this judgment will be the life of each one, his thoughts, his words, his deeds, his omissions, the good and the evil which he has done. The time of this judgment is certain, but only God knows it,<sup>28</sup> although He has given in the Scriptures certain signs of its approach.<sup>29</sup> “Nation shall rise against nation . . . and there shall be earthquakes in divers

<sup>21</sup> Acts 10:43.

<sup>24</sup> Rom. 2:11-16.

<sup>26</sup> Apoc. 20:12.

<sup>28</sup> Mark 13:32.

<sup>22</sup> II Cor. 5:10.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 14:12; II Cor. 11:15; II Tim. 4:14.

<sup>27</sup> *De civitate Dei*, Bk. XX, chap. 20, no. 33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13:7-33.

<sup>23</sup> I Cor. 15:26.

places and famines. . . . And unto all nations the gospel must first be preached. . . . And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake," said Jesus to His disciples. "In those days shall be such tribulations as were not from the beginning of the creation which God created. . . . There will rise up false Christs and false prophets, and they shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. Take you heed therefore; behold, I have foretold you all things. . . . And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. . . . Watch and pray; for you know not when the time is." St. Paul <sup>30</sup> adds: "Let no man deceive you, . . . for unless there come a revolt first, and the man of sin (the Antichrist) be revealed (the judgment shall not take place)." <sup>31</sup>

St. Peter <sup>32</sup> writes: "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat. But we look for new heavens and a new earth <sup>33</sup> according to His (the Lord's) promise, in which justice dwelleth." St. Paul says: "The creature waiteth . . . in hope, because the creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." <sup>34</sup> The Apocalypse <sup>35</sup> announces the renovation of the world where once lived fallen humanity. The world will then be freed from all stain, and will be re-established by God in a state equal to, even superior to, that in which it had been created. The heavenly Jerusalem here spoken of is the triumphant Church, the society of saints, established in eternal life after the glorious coming of its Spouse. "God shall

<sup>30</sup> II Thess. 2:3.

<sup>31</sup> The apostasy of which St. Paul speaks is that referred to by St. Matthew, 24:11, 13, 22-25, by St. Luke, 18:8 and 21:28. It is the apostasy of peoples after charity has become cold.

<sup>32</sup> II Pet. 3:12.

<sup>33</sup> Isa. 65:17.

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 8:19.

<sup>35</sup> Apoc. 21:1.

wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more; nor mourning nor crying nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away."<sup>36</sup>

### Reasons for the Last Judgment

St. Thomas<sup>37</sup> explains these reasons. First, dead men live in the memory of men on earth and are often judged contrary to truth. Spirits, strong and false, like Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel, are judged as if they were great philosophers. False prophets and heresiarchs, such as Luther and Calvin, are considered by many to be masters of religious thought, whereas great saints and doctors are profoundly ignored.

Judgment Day will show how much value is to be assigned to certain histories of philosophies, to many studies on the origins of Christianity, written in a spirit absolutely rationalistic. It will show how their perpetual variations and contradictions come from their fundamental error, the negation of the supernatural. It will manifest all lying propaganda. It will unmask hypocrites who enslaved religion instead of serving religion. Universal history will no longer be seen as a mere horizontal line of time, passing from the past to the future, but as a vertical line which attaches each event to the unique moment of an immovable eternity. The secrets of the hearts will be revealed.<sup>38</sup> The Pharisees, Caiphas, Pilate, will be judged definitively. Truth will conquer all these lies. It is clear that, if God exists, truth must be the absolutely last word.

<sup>36</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 91, *De qualitate mundi post iudicium*.

<sup>37</sup> IIIa, q. 59, a. 5; *Supplementum*, q. 88, a. 1 ad 1; a. 3; q. 91, a. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Luke 2:35.



Further, the dead have had imitators, in good or in evil. Evil is easier to imitate. Truth and justice must be vindicated. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill."

Lastly, the effects of men's actions last long after their death. Arius and other heresiarchs troubled souls for some centuries, whereas, on the contrary, the teaching of the apostles will exercise its influence to the end of the world. Only a final and infallible judgment of God is here sufficient, and this cannot take place until the end of time.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent<sup>39</sup> says in substance: Divine justice wills that the good recover their reputation, often attacked by the wicked who triumph. Further, the body, as well as the soul, must receive the punishment or the reward which it merits. Hence the general judgment must follow the general resurrection. This judgment will oblige all men to render homage to the justice of God and to His providence. Finally, it is fitting that this judgment be carried on by Jesus Christ, because He is the Son of man, because men are to be judged, and because He Himself was unjustly judged by wicked judges.

The day of judgment is known by God alone, because the end of the world depends simply on the free will of God. But it will not come until the number of the elect is complete, and this number cannot be known except by Him who predestines.<sup>40</sup>

The apostles will judge with Christ, as Jesus announced; also those who are voluntarily poor, who have left everything to follow Christ. "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted. . . . He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble."

<sup>39</sup> *Catechism*, First Part, chap. 8.

<sup>40</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 91, a. 2.

## The Proud and the Humble

The author of *The Imitation* writes: "By what strange forgetfulness do you go forward without looking ahead to the day of judgment? Earth can be a grand and salutary purgatory. Look at the patient man who, more afflicted by the malice of others than by his own injury, prays sincerely for them who sadden him and pardons them from the bottom of his heart. . . . Better to purify oneself than to wait unto the next world. . . . Then every vice will have its own proper torment. Then the humble will have great confidence, and the proud man will be surprised. Then we shall see how wise was he in this world who learned to be despised for Jesus Christ. Then there will be applause for tribulation suffered with patience. Then the scorn of riches will have greater weight than all the treasures of the earth. Good works will outweigh beautiful words. All is vanity except to love God and to serve Him. He who loves God with all his heart fears neither death nor judgment nor hell, because perfect love gives us secure access to God." <sup>41</sup>

*The Imitation* continues: "We must consider the secret judgments of God, lest we be proud of what we have done. Let your peace not depend on the judgments of men. Humbly commend everything to God, who alone knows all. Reverence the secret judgments of God. Ye that are humble, rejoice; ye that are poor, dance with joy, because the kingdom of God is for you." <sup>42</sup>

Blessed those who, like Bernadette of Lourdes, hear this word: "I promise you happiness, not in this life, but in the next." This was a special revelation. She was predestined, but

<sup>41</sup> Bk. I, chap. 24.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. III, chap. 14.

she would have great crosses on earth. All genuine Christian lives are marked with the cross. Crosses well borne are a sign of predestination, says St. Thomas. A rain of afflictions is better than a rain of diamonds. This truth we shall see clearly after death.<sup>43</sup> Providence will then appear absolutely irreproachable in all its ways.

<sup>43</sup> We may note that peoples who are Christians and Catholic often undergo sacrifice, as for instance, Poland. It seems that for many of these children the Savior has said: "I have promised thee happiness, not in this life, but in the other life."

## • XII •

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### KNOWLEDGE IN THE SEPARATED SOUL

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SO FAR we have spoken, first, of soul depths in the present life, then of death, lastly of judgment. We must consider the future life, first in general, then in particular, as found in hell or in purgatory or in heaven.

To have a just idea of the future life in general we must first see what theology teaches on the knowledge possessed by the soul separated from its body, the soul which no longer has the use of its senses, not even of imagination. Next, we study the state of the will, illumined by this new knowledge beyond the tomb.

We have said above <sup>1</sup> that the soul begins to be fixed either in good or evil by the last voluntary act, meritorious or demeritorious, which it makes at the very moment when it separates from the body. We have said further, that it completes this fixation by the act of the will which it produces at that precise instant where the state of separation begins. Then, since everyone judges according to his inclination, the humble soul continues to judge and will conformably to humility during its state of separation, whereas the proud man who has died in final impenitence continues to judge and to will according to his pride.

This fixity, either in good or in evil, is mysterious. But this mysteriousness is not without an analogue in facts which we

<sup>1</sup> See above, chap. 9.

meet with in the present life. The disposition wherewith we enter upon a permanent state often lasts throughout the entire duration of that state. The infant born into good surroundings has promise of lasting good health, whereas the child born into poor surroundings may anticipate feeble health. Again, he who with Christian motives enters marriage has good hopes of perseverance, whereas he who enters with an evil intention will not be blessed by God in this state, unless he is converted. He who enters religion for a good purpose ordinarily perseveres, whereas he who enters for an evil motive does not persevere, and has no profit from the religious life. These examples, in a way, illustrate the fixity of the soul after death, a fixation which is affirmed by revelation.<sup>2</sup>

The topic we now turn to, namely, the knowledge in the separated soul, will confirm this doctrine. It is immutability in knowledge that is the source of the immutability which is characteristic of the state of separation.

The central principle is this: Human intelligence, though it is the lowest of all intelligences, is nevertheless a genuine intelligence, an immaterial and spiritual power.<sup>3</sup>

### Preternatural Knowledge

The separated soul, since it no longer has its body, no longer has sense operations, internal or external, because all these are operations of an animated organ. The separated soul retains the sensitive faculties, but only radically, since they do not exist actually anywhere except in the human composite. The human imagination, like the animal imagination,

<sup>2</sup> Many who are to be saved have done some great act which was never withdrawn, and many of those who are to be lost have done some act which is particularly evil.

<sup>3</sup> Ia, q. 89, a. 4-6.

does not exist actually after the corruption of its material organ. The same holds good for the habitudes of the sense faculties. Remembrances of the sensitive memory do not exist actually in the separated soul. The separated soul can no longer see in the sense order, no longer imagine in the sense order.

But the separated soul does retain actually its higher faculties, its purely spiritual faculties, namely, intellect and will and the habits which are found in these faculties. But here we must draw a distinction. Reprobated souls can retain certain acquired sciences, but do not have virtues, either acquired or infused. They have lost infused faith and infused hope. But the souls in purgatory preserve their knowledge and their virtues, acquired or infused: faith, hope, charity, prudence, religion, patience, justice, humility. This truth is very important.

Similarly the separated soul preserves the habits which have remained in these faculties. Nevertheless the exercise of these acts is in part impeded, because these faculties have no longer the aid of the imagination or sense memory, an aid which is most helpful. What, for instance, would be a preacher who would no longer have the use of imagination in the service of his intelligence?

Theologians, generally, teach that the mode of being of the separated soul is preternatural, because the soul is made to animate its body. Hence it has also a preternatural mode of action, which it receives from God at the moment of separation, a mode consisting in infused ideas, similar to those of the angels, ideas which can serve it without the aid of the imagination.<sup>4</sup> Thus, to illustrate, a theologian who has become blind, and is no longer able to read, becomes a man of

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 1.

prayer and receives higher inspirations. It may be that formerly he worked too much and prayed too little. Now he consecrates himself to interior prayer and thereby becomes a better theologian.

But from this notion of infused ideas received by the separated soul there arises another difficulty, quite different from the preceding. Whereas the use of abstract and acquired ideas is difficult without the imagination, the use of infused ideas is difficult because they are too high for the natural intelligence, which is the lowest of intelligences and has as its proportioned object the lowest intelligible object, namely, sense objects. These infused ideas are too elevated, just as metaphysical conceptions are too high for an unprepared spirit, or as a giant's armor is too heavy for a young fighter. David preferred his sling to the armor of Goliath.

These deficiencies are balanced by perfections. First, the soul sees itself intuitively, as does the angel.<sup>5</sup> Consequently it clearly sees its spirituality, its immortality, its liberty. Further it sees in itself, as in a mirror, with perfect certitude, God, its Author and Creator. It answers the great philosophical problems with perfect clarity. St. Thomas says: "The soul in a certain real sense is thus more free to understand." Thus separated souls naturally know one another, although less perfectly than do the angels.

Can the separated soul know, not only universal truths, but also concrete facts? Yes, where it has special ties of family, friendship, and grace. Local distance is no impediment in this kind of knowledge, since it does not arise from sense but from infused ideas.<sup>6</sup> Thus a good Christian mother may recall in purgatory the children whom she has left on earth.

Do these souls know what is happening on earth? St.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 4, 7.

Thomas replies: "In the natural order they do not know, because they are separated from the society of those who are still on the road to eternity. Nevertheless, if we restrict the question to the souls of the blessed, it is more probable to say that they, like the angels, do know what happens on earth, particularly what happens to those who are dear to them. This is a part of their accidental beatitude." <sup>†</sup> Those in purgatory too can have love of us, even though they do not know our actual state, just as we pray for them, although we do not know their actual state, their nearness, for example, to deliverance.

### Eviternity and Time

What measures the duration of separated souls? <sup>§</sup> We must distinguish three kinds of duration: time, eternity, and an intermediate kind of duration, which is called eviternity.

On earth our duration is measured by continuous time, which is itself the measure of continuous movement, especially of the apparent movement of the sun. It is thus that we distinguish hours, days, years, and centuries. When the soul is separated from the body and is not yet beatified, it has a double kind of duration: eviternity and discontinuous time. Eviternity measures what is immutable in angels and separated souls. It is the measure of their substance, of their natural knowledge of self and God. Eviternity excludes succession. It is a perpetual present. Yet it differs from eternity, because it has had a beginning, and because it is united to discontinuous time which presupposes past and future.

Discontinuous time, then, is opposed to continuous or solar

<sup>†</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 8.

<sup>§</sup> Ia, q. 10, a. 4, 6 (cf. Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, Gonet).



time. It is found in angels and separated souls, as the measure of successive thoughts and affections. One thought lasts for one spiritual instant. The following thought has its own spiritual instant. To illustrate: here on earth a person in ecstasy can remain two solar hours, or many hours, in one sole thought which represents to it one sole spiritual instant. Similarly, history characterizes different centuries, for example, the thirteenth or the seventeenth, by the ideas which predominate in each of these centuries. Thus we speak of the century of St. Louis, of the century of Louis XIV. Hence a spiritual instant, in the lives of angels and separated souls, can last many days, even many years, measured by our solar time, just as a person in ecstasy can remain thirty successive hours absorbed in one single thought.

In beatified souls there is added to this double duration (eviternity and discontinuous time) also that of participated eternity, which measures their beatific vision of the divine essence and the love which results from this vision. This is one unique instant, an immovable eternity, entirely without succession. Yet this participated eternity differs from that of essential eternity which is proper to God, just as effect differs from cause. Participated eternity had a beginning. Further, the essential eternity of God measures everything that is in God, His essence, and all His operations, whereas participated eternity measures only the beatific vision and the love which follows. Eternity is like the invisible point at the summit of a cone, whereas continuous time is pictured by the base of this cone. Eviternity and discontinuous time are between these two, the one like a circular conic section, and the other like a polygon inscribed in this circular section.

Continuous time flows without cessation. Its present flows continually from past to future. Our present life involves a

succession of hours, in work, prayer, sleep. Eternity, on the contrary, is a continual present, without past or future, a unique instant of life which is possessed entirely and simultaneously. Eternity approaches eternity. It permits us to conceive better the immutability of the life of the separated soul, not beatified, or not yet beatified: the immutability of knowledge which it has of itself, the immutability of the will fixed on its last end, good or evil.

Let us recall here the words of St. Augustine: "Unite thyself to the eternity of God, and thou thyself wilt be eternal. Unite thyself to the eternity of God. Watch with Him the events which come to pass below you."<sup>9</sup> Let us watch the successive moments of our terrestrial life, not only along the horizontal line of time which runs between the past and the future, but also on the vertical line which binds them at each instant to immovable eternity. Thus our acts will be more and more meritorious, more and more filled with love of God, and thus will pass from time into eternity, where they remain forever written in the book of life.

These different kinds of time, on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven, permit us to distinguish also in the present life two kinds of time: one corporeal, one spiritual. Corporeal time, solar time, measures the duration of our organism. Thus measured, one is eighty years of age, an old man; but, measured by spiritual time, his soul may remain very young. Thus, as we distinguish three ages of corporeal life, infancy, adult age, and old age, so in the life of the soul, we distinguish three ages, namely, the purgative life of beginners, the illuminative life of those who are progressing, the unitive way of those who are perfect.

This spiritual kind of time may explain salvation in unex-

<sup>9</sup> Commentary on psalm 91.

pected quarters. Some great act, never retracted, has borne fruit.

I knew a young Jew, the son of an Austrian banker, in Vienna. He had decided on a lawsuit against the greatest adversary of his family, a lawsuit that would have enriched him. He suddenly recalled this word of the *Pater Noster*, which he had sometimes heard: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." He said to himself: "How would it be if, instead of carrying on this lawsuit, I would pardon him?" He followed the inspiration, forgave completely, renounced the lawsuit. At that same moment he received the full gift of faith. This one word of the Our Father became his pathway up the mountain of life. He became a priest, a Dominican, and died at the age of fifty years. Though nothing particularly important appeared in the remainder of his life, his soul remained at the height where it had been elevated at the moment of his conversion. Step by step he mounted to the eternal youth which is the life of heaven. The moral runs thus: One great act of self-sacrifice may decide not only our whole spiritual life on earth but also our eternity. We judge a chain of mountains by its highest peak.

THIRD PART

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H<sub>ELL</sub>

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## • XIII •

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### THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING HELL

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THREE reasons lead us to speak at length concerning hell. First, there is today an unwillingness to preach on this subject, and therefore people often forget revealed truth that is very salutary. They do not give attention to the truth that the fear of hell is the beginning of wisdom and the beginning of conversion. They forget that, in this sense, hell has saved many souls.

Secondly, there are in the world many superficial objections to this teaching, objections that seem to some believers more true than the traditional answers. Why? Because they have never entered deeply into these answers. It is easy to fasten on some superficial objection, and it is difficult to see clearly a reply involving the depths of soul-life or the immeasurable height of God's justice. To understand these answers we need more maturity and penetration.

An illustration. A priest one day asked one of his friends, a lawyer, to aid in a dialogue conference, by offering objections against the teaching of the Church on hell. The lawyer presented the common objections in a brilliant fashion under a popular point of view which captured the imagination. Since the priest was not sufficiently prepared, the objections seemed to be stronger than the answers, and the answers themselves seemed to be merely verbal. They did not capture the imagination, nor did they lead sufficiently to

the notions of mortal sin without repentance, of obstinacy, of the state of termination, so different from the state of the way. Neither did they lead sufficiently to the notion of God's infinite justice. Hence we must insist on all these points, since the dogma about hell helps us to appreciate by contrast the value of salvation. Similarly we do not know the value of justice unless we examine what is meant by a great injustice, actual or threatened. Our Lord illumined St. Theresa on the beauty of heaven, but only after He had shown her the place which she would have had in hell had she continued on the road whereon she had already made some steps.

Hell signifies properly the state of the damned souls, of demons first, then of men who die in the state of mortal sin and are consequently condemned to suffer eternally. Secondly, it signifies also the place where condemned souls are detained.

The existence of hell was denied in the third century by Arnobius who, following the Gnostics, held that those who are reprobated are also annihilated. This error was renewed by the Socinians of the sixteenth century. In ancient times, further, the Origenists, especially in the fourth century, denied the eternity of punishment in hell, because they held that all the reprobate, angels and men, would finally be converted. This error was taken up again by liberal spirits, particularly among the Protestants. The rationalists say the eternity of suffering is in contradiction to the wisdom of God, to His mercy, and to His justice. They imagine that suffering must be proportioned to the time necessary for committing the fault, and not to the gravity of the perpetual state wherein the soul finds itself after it has left the world with grievous and unrepented sin.

The Athanasian Creed and many councils affirm as a dogma

of faith the existence of heaven, the eternity of punishment, both of loss and of pain, and likewise the inequality of suffering proportioned to the gravity of the faults committed and left unrepented.

Let us first see what Holy Scripture itself teaches on this point. Its teaching prepares us to understand better the doctrine of purgatory, where there is certitude of salvation, and further the doctrine of eternal beatitude. Darkness and evil show in their own manner the value of eternal light, of the sanctity that cannot be lost.

The Latin word *infernus* (hell) comes from *infernus*, and signifies dark places beneath the earth. In the Old Testament the corresponding term, *sheol*, signifies the place of the dead in general, good or bad.<sup>1</sup> We are not surprised at this, since before the ascension of Jesus Christ no soul could enter heaven. In this same sense we speak of the descent of Jesus into hell. But in the New Testament the hell of the damned is often called Gehenna,<sup>2</sup> which signifies the Valley of Hinnom, a ravine to the south of Jerusalem where people were accustomed to dump refuse, and even corpses. Fires burned there almost continually, to consume trash. Hence the word, after Isaias, came to express the real hell: hell which lasts forever, a worm which will not die, a fire which cannot be quenched.

### Hell in the Old Testament

In a learned article on hell, M. Richard,<sup>3</sup> has made a deep study of those texts of the Old Testament which prove the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 37:35; Num. 16:30.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 5:22, 29; 23:15, 33; also Mark and Luke.

<sup>3</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, s.v. "L'Enfer."

existence of hell in the strict sense. Before the time of the prophets, he notes, the condition of the wicked after death remained very obscure although ultramundane sanctions are often affirmed. For example, by Ecclesiastes: <sup>4</sup> "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man." "For all these God will bring thee into judgment." <sup>5</sup>

To the great prophets God began to show clear perspectives of the future life. We have already cited some of these texts when speaking of the Last Judgment. Isaiah <sup>6</sup> lays open a great prophetic vision of the world beyond. It is the restoration of Israel for all eternity, with new heavens and a new earth. "All flesh shall come to adore before My face, saith the Lord, and they shall go out and see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me. Their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a loathsome sight to all flesh." All commentators see in this text an affirmation of the last judgment, and under a symbolic form that of eternal hell. This last text is cited in St. Mark <sup>7</sup> by Jesus Himself, and in St. Luke <sup>8</sup> by St. John the Baptist.

Daniel says more clearly: "Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always." <sup>9</sup> Thus the Old Testament, for the first time, declares the resurrection of sinners to meet a judgment of condemnation.

The Book of Wisdom, after describing the sufferings reserved to the wicked after death, continues: "The just shall live for evermore." <sup>10</sup> It adds: "For to him that is little

<sup>4</sup> Eccles. 12:13 and 14.

<sup>5</sup> Eccles. 11:9.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. 66:15-24.

<sup>7</sup> Mark 9:43.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 3:17.

<sup>9</sup> Dan. 12:1-2.

<sup>10</sup> Wisd. 5:16.



mercy is granted, but the mighty shall be mightily tormented." <sup>11</sup> It says of the wicked one: "He returneth to the same out of which he was taken, when his life which was lent him shall be called for again." <sup>12</sup>

Ecclesiasticus speaks in the same sense: "Humble thy spirit very much, for the vengeance on the flesh of the ungodly is fire and worms." <sup>13</sup> In the Second Book of Machabees <sup>14</sup> we read that the seven brothers, martyrs, were sustained in their sufferings by the thought of eternal life. They say to their judge: "The King of the world will raise us up . . . in the resurrection of eternal life; . . . but thou by the judgment of God shalt receive just punishment for thy pride."

All these texts of the Old Testament speak of hell in the proper sense. Many of them affirm the inequality of punishments proportioned to the gravity of the faults committed and unrepented.

### Hell in the New Testament

The Precursor said to those who were guilty: "Ye brood of vipers, who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance." <sup>15</sup> Again: "There shall come one mightier than I, . . . whose fan is in His hand, and He will purge His floor and will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." <sup>16</sup>

Jesus announces simultaneously the eternal salvation for the good and Gehenna for the wicked. He begins by exhorting to penance. The scribes say of Him: "By the prince of

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:6.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15:8.

<sup>13</sup> Eccclus. 7:17.

<sup>14</sup> II Mach. 7:9-36.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 3:7.

<sup>16</sup> Luke 3:7-17.

devils He casteth out devils." His reply is: "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and the blasphemies wherewith they shall blaspheme. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall never have forgiveness, but shall be guilty of an everlasting sin." <sup>17</sup> Jesus <sup>18</sup> commands fraternal charity, and the avoidance of luxury and lust lest the body be cast into eternal fire. At Capharnaum, after admiring the faith of the centurion, Jesus <sup>19</sup> announces the conversion of the Gentiles, whereas certain Jews remain unbelieving and obstinate: "They shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." <sup>20</sup>

Jesus warns the apostles against the fear of martyrdom, saying: "Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell." <sup>21</sup> All this doctrine is summed up by St. Mark: "If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished." <sup>22</sup> The doctrine is taught also in the parables, that of the cockle, that of the royal marriage, that of the wise and foolish virgins, that of the talents.

The same doctrine we find in the maledictions <sup>23</sup> addressed to the hypocritical Pharisees: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, . . . blind guides, . . . you are like to whitened sepulchres, which . . . are full of . . . all filthiness; . . . you serpents, generation of vipers, how will you flee from the judgment of hell?" <sup>24</sup> Jesus speaks still more clearly in the discourse on the end of the world and the last

<sup>17</sup> Mark 3:29; Matt. 12:32; John 8:20-24, 35.

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 5:22, 29, 30.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 8:12.

<sup>20</sup> The phrase occurs six times in St. Matthew. We find it also in St. Luke 13:28.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 10:28.

<sup>22</sup> Mark 9:42-43; Matt. 18:8, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 23:15.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 23:33-33.

judgment: "Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come ye blessed of My Father, . . . for I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat. . . . Then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand: Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat: I was thirsty . . . I was a stranger . . . naked . . . sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me. . . . And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." <sup>25</sup> Such is the last sentence, without appeal, and without end. The word "eternal" in regard to fire is used in its proper sense, because it is opposed to eternal life. The parallelism in the two instances shows that "eternal" is used in the proper sense of the word. <sup>26</sup>

The Gospel of St. John speaks repeatedly of the opposition between eternal life and eternal loss. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life." <sup>27</sup> To the obstinate Pharisees Jesus says: "You shall die in your sin. Whither I go, you cannot come." <sup>28</sup> "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. Now the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth forever." <sup>29</sup> "If anyone abideth not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither; and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth." <sup>30</sup>

The epistles of St. Paul, <sup>31</sup> too, announce to the just souls eternal life and to the obstinate in evil eternal death. "Those who do the works of the flesh shall not enter the kingdom of God." These are those who perish. <sup>32</sup> There are two irreconcilable cities, that of Christ and that of Belial. <sup>33</sup> These are

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:33-46.

<sup>27</sup> John 3:36.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 15:6.

<sup>32</sup> II Cor. 2:15, 16; 4:3; 13:5.

<sup>26</sup> *De civ. Dei*, Bk. XXI, chap. 23.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 8:24.

<sup>31</sup> Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; I Cor. 6:9, 10.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 8:34.

<sup>33</sup> II Cor. 6:14-18.

those who are condemned forever.<sup>34</sup> We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."<sup>35</sup> St. Peter<sup>36</sup> announces to the false prophets that they are going to eternal loss. The Epistle of St. Jude<sup>37</sup> speaks of eternal chains. The Epistle of St. James<sup>38</sup> threatens judgment without mercy on him who does not do mercy. Wicked men, without heart for the poor, amass treasures of anger for the last day.<sup>39</sup>

Lastly, the Apocalypse<sup>40</sup> contrasts the victory of Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem with the damnation of all those who will be thrown into the abyss of fire and sulphur.<sup>41</sup> This eternal damnation is called second death. It is the privation of divine life, of the vision of God, in a place of eternal punishment, where those will be tormented by fire who wear the sign of the beast, and hence are excluded from the book of life.<sup>42</sup>

This is the doctrine already announced by the great prophets and in particular by Isaias.<sup>43</sup> From the time of these prophets to the Apocalypse the revelation about eternal hell-fire never ceased to become more precise, just as the doctrine of eternal life became more precise. Among these punishments we find those of loss, of fire, of inequality in pain, of eternal duration. Mortal sin unrepented has left the soul in a habitual state of rebellion against an infinite good.

We must be brief on the testimony of tradition. Before the third century, before the controversy with the Origenists, the Fathers teach the existence and the eternity of the pains of

<sup>34</sup> I Tim. 5:6, 11-15; II Tim. 2:12-20.

<sup>36</sup> II Pet. 2:1-4, 12, 14; 3:7.

<sup>38</sup> Jas. 2:13.

<sup>40</sup> Apoc. 21:8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 13:18; 14:10, 11; 20:6, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Heb. 10:31.

<sup>37</sup> Jude 6:13.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:4-8; 5:3.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 21:27; 22:15.

<sup>43</sup> Isa. 66:15-24.

hell.<sup>44</sup> The martyrs often say they do not fear temporal fire, but only the eternal fire.

From the third century to the fifth most of the Fathers combat the error of the Origenists on the non-eternity of the pains of hell. Among them we may cite particularly St. Methodius, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Epiphanius, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, St. Ephrem, St. Cyprian, St. Jerome, and especially St. Augustine.<sup>45</sup> In the mind of all these Fathers the affirmation of the final conversion of demons and of reprobated man is contrary to revelation. In their minds a converted demon is an impossibility. The same holds good of a condemned soul. In the fifth century the controversy ended with the condemnation of this error of Origen at the synod of Constantinople,<sup>46</sup> confirmed by Pope Vigilius. The Fathers often cite the words of Isaias, recalled by Jesus: "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished." The Origenist controversy served to make precise the meaning of these words of the Gospel.<sup>47</sup> St. Augustine<sup>48</sup> in particular shows that the word "eternal" is not to be taken here in a wide sense, because of its opposition to "eternal life" where the word "eternal" is used in the proper sense of the word.

<sup>44</sup> *Enchir. patr.*, *Index theologicus*, no. 594.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, cf. *Dict. théol. cath.*, "L'Enfer."

<sup>46</sup> Denz., no. 211.

<sup>47</sup> Matt. 25:41-46.

<sup>48</sup> *De civ. Dei*, Bk. XXI, chap. 23.

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## THEOLOGICAL REASONS <sup>1</sup>

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WE HAVE seen the progress in revelation on the doctrine of the sufferings in hell. According to many theologians it is very probable that only the souls of obstinate and inveterate sinners go into hell. "The Lord," says St. Peter, "dealeth patiently for your sake."<sup>2</sup>

We must first consider the reasons for sufferings after death, then those for an eternity of pain in hell.

First of all, the justice of God demands that sins which have not been expiated in this life be punished in the other. As sovereign Judge of the living and the dead, God owes it to Himself to render to each one according to his works. This is often affirmed in Scripture.<sup>3</sup> Further, as sovereign Legislator, Ruler, and Remunerator of human society, God must add to His laws an efficacious sanction.

St. Thomas <sup>4</sup> argues thus: One who rises up unjustly against justly established order must be repressed by the ruler, by the same prince, who has given the order, since he also must watch over its maintenance. Here we find extended to the moral and social order the natural law of action and

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas has treated this question in many places. Note especially Ia IIae, q. 87, a. 1, 3-7; IIIa, q. 86, a. 4; *Supplementum*, q. 99, a. 1; *Contra Gentes*, Bk. III, chaps. 144, 145; Bk. IV, chap. 95.

<sup>2</sup> II Pet. 3:9.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclus. 16:15; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6.

<sup>4</sup> Ia IIae, q. 87, a. 1.

reaction which repairs the damage caused. He who freely acts against conscience merits the remorse from that conscience. He who acts against the social order merits sufferings at the hand of the magistrate who is guardian of that order. He who acts against the divine law must be punished by the divine Legislator. One and the same principle runs through all these orders.

Plato in one of his most beautiful dialogues, the *Gorgias*, says that the greatest evil which could befall a criminal would be to go unpunished. If he knew his own happiness he would say to the judges: "I have committed this crime: inflict on me the punishment I have merited: only by voluntary acceptance of this pain can I re-enter into the order of justice which I have violated." This sublime view is perfectly realized in the supernatural order, both in the tribunal of penance and in purgatory, in which souls are happy to pay their debt to divine justice, to expiate in fullest measure the wrong they have done.

Thus we explain suffering in the world. But why should these pains be eternal?

First of all, we admit that this eternity of suffering cannot be demonstrated apodictically. Why? Because it is a revealed mystery, a mystery of justice which is the consequence of a mystery of iniquity, namely, of mortal sin that remains without repentance. Now the mysteries of iniquity and wickedness, and their consequences, are more obscure than the mysteries of grace. They are obscure, not only to us, but even in themselves. The mysteries of grace in themselves are very luminous. They are obscure only by reason of our feebleness of spirit, which resembles the eye of the owl in the presence of the sun. On the contrary, the mysteries of iniquity are obscure in themselves, not only for us. And final im-

penitence, of which hell is a consequence, is the darkest of all mysteries. Just as we cannot demonstrate apodictically either the possibility or the existence of the Holy Trinity, of the redemptive Incarnation, of eternal life, so similarly we are unable to demonstrate apodictically the eternity of the sufferings in hell.

Nevertheless, though we cannot give apodictic reasons for this truth, we can still find reasons of appropriateness, reasons which are deep and fertile. To illustrate: the sides of a polygon inscribed in a circle may be multiplied indefinitely though they never coalesce with the circumference.

The chief reasons of appropriateness for the eternity of these sufferings are thus given by St. Thomas.<sup>5</sup> Mortal sin without repentance is an irreparable disorder, an offense with an immeasurable gravity. Sin merits punishment because it upsets an order justly established. As long as this disorder lasts, the sinner merits the punishment due to the sin which caused the disorder. Disorder is irreparable if the vital principle of order has been violated. The eye cannot be cured if the principle of sight has been destroyed. No organism is curable if it has been mortally wounded. But mortal sin turns man from God, his last end, and robs him of grace, the principle and germ of eternal life. Hence the disorder in this case is irreparable, and must therefore of its nature last forever. By special mercy God sometimes converts the sinner before death, but if the sinner resists and dies in final impenitence, mortal sin remains as a habitual disorder which can have no end. Hence it merits punishments which have no end.

A second reason is founded on the nature of mortal sin. Mortal sin, as offense against God, has a gravity that is unmeasured, since it denies to God the infinite dignity of being

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 3, 4.



our last end and our sovereign good, to whom the sinner prefers a finite good. He loves himself more than he loves God, though the Most High is infinitely better than he.<sup>6</sup>

Offense is more grave as the dignity of the offended person is higher. It is more grave to insult a magistrate, or a bishop, than to offend the first man we meet in the street. But the dignity of the sovereign good is infinite. Mortal sin, which denies to God this supreme dignity, has therefore a gravity without limits, which can be repaired only by the love of the Son of God, the theandric act of a divine incarnate person. But if the immense benefit, the redemptive Incarnation, is unrecognized and scorned, as happens in mortal sin without repentance, then the sinner merits, for offense of a gravity without measure, also punishment without measure. This punishment is the privation of God, of infinite good, a suffering, a pain, which is itself infinite in its duration.<sup>7</sup> Anyone with such sin on his soul has definitively turned away from God, has deprived himself of God eternally.

As regards the disordered love of finite good preferred to God, it merits the pain of sense, a pain which is finite, being the privation of finite good. But, according to revelation, this pain too will last eternally, because the sinner is fixed and settled on this wretched good. He remains captive to his sin, and judges always according to his evil inclination. He is like a man who jumps into a well. His act, as foreseen, is eternal, leaving no hope of escape.

We must add a third reason. We said above that God, sovereign Legislator, and judge of the living and the dead, owes it to Himself to give to His laws an efficacious sanction.

<sup>6</sup> Ia IIac, q. 87, a. 4; IIIa, q. 1, a. 2 ad 2; *Supplementum*, q. 99, a. 1.

<sup>7</sup> It cannot be thus in its intensity, because the creature is not capable of such infinity.

God cannot allow Himself to be scorned with impunity. Now if the pains of hell were not eternal, the obstinate sinner could persevere in his revolt, since no adequate sanction would repress his pride. His rebellion, we may say, would have the last word, would be the triumph of iniquity. To quote Father Monsabré: "If we deny to the moral order an eternity of suffering, we obscure the notion of good and evil, which becomes clear only under the light of this dogma."<sup>8</sup>

Finally, if beatitude, the recompense of the just, is eternal, it is surely right that the suffering due to obstinate malice should also be eternal. One is the recompense for merit, the other the punishment for demerit. As eternal mercy shines forth on one side, so the splendor of eternal justice shines on the other. St. Paul says: "What if God willing to show His wrath (or to avenge His justice) and to make His power known, endured (or permitted) with much patience vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, that He might show the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He has prepared unto glory?"<sup>9</sup> Since justice, like mercy, is infinite, each demands to be manifested in a duration without limit.

Such, then, are the principal reasons of congruity for this revealed dogma. These arguments differ from an ordinary argument of probability, which may be false. Reasons of congruity for a revealed mystery are true, but they are not apodictic or demonstrative. They tend toward the truth, which they incline us to admit, but they do not show it absolutely. Thus a polygon inscribed in a circle, when its sides are multiplied, tends continually to identify itself with the circumference, but never becomes completely identified. Thus also, sufficient grace, which gives the proximate power to per-

<sup>8</sup> *Conferences in Notre Dame*, 1889, Conference 98.

<sup>9</sup> *Rom.* 9:22.

form a salutary act, approaches efficacious grace which makes us do this act, but it is never identified with it. Thus, too, the certitude of hope is a certitude of tendency. It approaches the certitude of salvation, but is never perfectly identified with it, apart from a special revelation, and apart from the assurance given by particular judgment to souls in purgatory. We see by the precision of these terms that theology is a true branch of knowledge.

Theology reaches sure conclusions, but does not reach the evidence whereon these conclusions rest. Why? Because the theologian does not have here on earth evidence of his principles, that is, of the articles of faith. His theology is a subalternated branch of knowledge, subordinated to the knowledge which God has, just as optics is subalternated to geometry. Only the theologian who sees God face to face will have evidence of the principles of theology, and consequently also evidence on certain conclusions of his science. Thus, to illustrate, a man who knows optics practically, may in studying geometry see the evidence for his conclusions, which were heretofore obscure. Theology is thus a true science, a true branch of knowledge, but here below it remains in an imperfect state.

## ETERNAL HELL AND DIVINE PERFECTIONS

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OBJECTION has often been made that perpetuity of suffering, perpetuity of divine punishments, is opposed to the perfection of divine justice, because suffering should be proportioned to faults. If sin lasts only a moment, how shall it merit eternal punishment? Further, punishments, which should vary with the sins punished, would be equal, because all would be eternal. Finally, all punishment would be much greater than the joy found in the sin.

St. Thomas<sup>1</sup> answers: "Suffering is proportioned, not to the duration of sin, but to its gravity. A deed of assassination, which lasts a few minutes, merits death or life imprisonment. A momentary act of betrayal merits permanent exile. But mortal sin has a gravity without measure. Further, it remains as a habitual disorder, in itself irreparable, which merits punishment without end."<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, inequality in punishment remains. Though equal in duration, pains are eternally proportioned to their gravity.

Thirdly, punishment is proportioned, not to the false joy found in sin, but to the offense against God.

The objection continues: But, if what religion tells us is true, then divine justice demands the annihilation of the sinner, whose ingratitude cancels the benefit of existence.

<sup>1</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 99, a. 1 ad 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ia IIae, q. 87, a. 3, 5, 6. Note the replies to the objections.

Divine revelation alone can enlighten us here. Revelation says, not that the damned are to be annihilated, but that they are to be punished eternally. God could of course annihilate, but He does not. What He created, He also preserves. He raises the body to life. Further, if every mortal sin were punished by annihilation, all sins would be equally punished. St. Thomas says: "He that sins against God who gives him existence merits indeed to lose that existence. Nevertheless, if we consider the disorder, more or less grave, of the fault committed, and then the affliction due to it, we find that the proper punishment is not the loss of existence, because this is presupposed for merit or demerit, and therefore is not to be corrupted by the disorder of sin."<sup>3</sup>

Let us listen to these admirable words of Father Lacordaire: "The obstinate sinner wishes his own annihilation, because annihilation would deliver him from God, the just judge. God would be thus constrained to undo what He has done, and that which He has made to last forever. The universe is not meant to perish. Shall, then, a soul perish simply because it does not wish to acknowledge God? No. A soul, the most precious work of the Creator, will live on forever. You can soil that soul, but you cannot destroy it. God, whose justice you have challenged, turns even lost souls into images of His law, into heralds of His justice."<sup>4</sup>

The Origenists maintained that the eternity of suffering is opposed to infinite mercy, always ready to pardon.

Let us listen to St. Thomas' reply. "God in Himself is mercy without bounds, but this mercy is regulated by wisdom, which forbids mercy to demons and to demonized men. Yet even on these mercy is still exercised, not to put an end to

<sup>3</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 99, a. 1 ad 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Conferences in Notre Dame*, 72nd conference.

their sufferings, but to punish them less than their merits demand.”<sup>5</sup>

Again: “If mercy were not mingled with justice, the damned would suffer still more. All God’s ways are mercy and justice. Certain souls exalt God’s mercy, others manifest His justice. And justice enters in the second place, when divine mercy has been scorned. Even then it intervenes, not to remove the suffering, but to render it less heavy and painful.”<sup>6</sup>

Further, this objection supposes that the damned implore the mercy of God and cannot obtain it. The truth is that the condemned soul does not ask pardon, judges always according to its culpable inclination. The only road to God is that of humility and obedience, and such a soul, proud and obstinate, refuses this road.

But, insists the unbeliever, God cannot will suffering for its own sake, because it is an evil. And if He wills it as correction, the pain inflicted should not be eternal, it should have an end. And suffering, since it is not founded on the nature of things, is accidental, and hence should not be eternal.

The Angelic Doctor<sup>7</sup> examines also this objection. Medicinal suffering ordained for the correction of those who are guilty, is indeed temporary. But death and lifelong imprisonment are punitive sufferings, not meant for the correction of him who is thus punished. They become medicinal, indeed, but only for others, who are thus turned away from crime. In this sense hell has saved many souls. The fear of hell is the beginning of wisdom.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 99, a. 2 ad 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ia, q. 21, a. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 99, a. 1 ad 3 et 4.

<sup>8</sup> IIa IIae, q. 19, a. 7. “Servile fear is like an external principle of wisdom, be-

An objection: Pain, being contrary to nature, cannot be eternal. St. Thomas answers: "Pain is contrary to the soul's nature, but it is in harmony with the soul as soiled by unrepented mortal sin. As this sin, being a permanent disorder, lasts forever, the pain due to the sin will also last forever." <sup>9</sup>

St. Thomas <sup>10</sup> proceeds: Eternal punishment manifests God's inalienable right to be loved above all else. God, good and merciful, has His delight, not in the suffering of the damned, but in His own unequaled goodness. The elect, beholding the radiance of God's supreme justice, are thereby led to thank Him for their own salvation. "God,<sup>11</sup> willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, that He might show the riches of His glory in the vessels of mercy which He hath prepared unto glory." <sup>12</sup>

Infinite goodness is the source both of mercy and of justice: of mercy, because it is essentially self-communicative, of justice, because it has an inalienable right to be loved by all creatures.

What created hell? God's justice, God's power, God's wisdom, God's love. Such is Dante's inscription on the gate of hell:

Through me the way into the doleful City,  
through me the way into the pain eternal,  
through me the way to people lost to pity.  
Justice did move Creator mine supernal,  
made me that power divine by evil hated,  
wisdom supreme and first love sempiternal.<sup>13</sup>

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cause fear of punishment keeps us from sin. Filial fear is the beginning of wisdom, because it is the first effect of wisdom." Cf. Ia IIae, q. 87, a. 3 ad 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Supplementum*, loc. cit., ad 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, ad 4.

<sup>11</sup> Rom. 9:22.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ia, q. 23, a. 5 ad 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Inferno*, canto 3.

Let Lacordaire conclude: "Had justice alone created the abyss, there might be remedy. But it is love, the first love sempiternal, which made hell. This it is which banishes hope. Were I condemned by justice, I might flee to love. But if I am condemned by love, whither can I turn?

"Such is the fate of the damned. Love, that gave His blood for them—this Love, this same Love, must now curse them.

"Just think! 'Tis God who came down to you, who took on your own nature, who spoke your language, healed your wounds, raised your dead to life. 'Tis God who died for you on a cross. And shall you still be permitted to blaspheme and mock, to enjoy to the full your voluptuousness? No. Deceive not yourselves: love is not a farce. It is God's love which punishes, God's crucified love. It is not justice that is without mercy; it is love. Love is life or death. And if that love is God's love, then love is either eternal life or eternal death."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Conferences in Notre Dame*, 72nd conference, *in fine*.



## • XVI •

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### THE PAIN OF LOSS

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THE dogma of hell shows us the immense depths of the human soul, absolute distinction between evil and good, against all the lies invented to suppress this distinction. It shows us also, by contrast, the joys of conversion and eternal beatitude.

The Latin word, *damnum*, which we translate by "loss," signifies damage. The pain of loss means the essential and principal suffering due to unrepented sin. This pain of loss is the privation of the possession of God, whereas that of sense is the effect of the afflictive action of God. The first corresponds to guilt as turning away from God, whereas the second corresponds to guilt as turning toward something created.<sup>1</sup>

We note, in passing, that infants who die without baptism do not feel the absence of the beatific vision as a loss, because they do not know that they were supernaturally destined to the immediate possession of God. We speak here only of that pain of loss which is conscious, which is inflicted on adults condemned for personal sin, for mortal sin unrepented. Let us see in what it consists, and what is its rigor.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ia IIae, q. 87, a. 4; *Supplementum*, q. 97, a. 2; q. 99, a. 1. Cf. *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Enfer et Dam."

### The Nature of Loss

It consists essentially, as we have said, in the privation of the beatific vision and of all good that flows therefrom. Man supernaturally destined to see God face to face, to possess Him eternally, loses that right when he turns from God by mortal sin unrepented. He remains eternally separated from God, not only as his last supernatural end, but also as his natural end, because each mortal sin is indirectly against the natural law, which obliges us to obey every command which God lays on us.

The pain of loss brings with it the privation of all good which arises from the beatific vision: that is, the privation of charity, of the love of God, of the immeasurable joys of heaven, of the company of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the angels and the saints, of souls that live in God, of all virtues, and of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which remain in heaven.

The Council of Florence <sup>2</sup> teaches clearly that, whereas the blessed enjoy the immediate vision of the divine essence, the damned are deprived of this vision. Scripture <sup>3</sup> too affirms the same truth explicitly: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." <sup>4</sup> "Amen, I say to you, I know you not." These words <sup>5</sup> express eternal separation from God and the privation of all the good that accompanies God's presence. We may listen likewise to the reproaches addressed to the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus <sup>6</sup> calls them a generation of vipers, and

<sup>2</sup> Denz., no. 693.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 25:41.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ps. 6:9; Matt. 7:23; Luke 13:27.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 25:12.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 23:14, 15, 25, 29.

threatens them with hell where the obstinate sinner is separated eternally from God.

Theological reasoning, as we have seen, explains these assertions of Scripture by the very nature of mortal sin followed by final impenitence. A man who dies in this state is turned away from God. After death, such a sin cannot be remitted. The soul of the sinner who freely and definitively has turned away from God stays eternally in that state. Refusal fixed by obstinacy, refusal of sovereign good which contains eminently all other goods, is punished by the loss of all good.

### The Severity of This Pain

The pain of loss, the consequence of final impenitence, consists in an immense void which will never be filled, in an eternal contradiction which is the fruit of the hatred of God, in despair, in perpetual remorse without repentance, in hate of one's neighbor, in envy, in a grudge against God which is expressed by blasphemy.

First, an immense void which will never be filled. Eternal privation of God is hard for us to conceive here on earth. Why? Because the soul here on earth has not a sufficient consciousness of its own immeasurable depth, a depth which only God can fill. Sense goods, on the contrary, captivate us successively, one after the other. Gluttony and pride hinder us from understanding, practically and really, that God is our last end, that He is sovereign good. Our inclination to truth, goodness, and beauty supreme is often offset by inferior attractions. We do not as yet have a burning hunger for the only bread that can sate the soul.

But when the soul is separated from the body, it loses all

these inferior goods which hindered it from understanding its own spirituality and destiny. It sees itself now as the angel does, as a spiritual substance, incorruptible and immortal. It sees that its intelligence was made for truth, above all for the supreme truth, that its will was made to love and will the good, especially the sovereign good which is God, source of all beatitude, foundation of all duty.

The obstinate soul now attains full consciousness of its own immeasurable depth, realizes that God alone, seen face to face, can fill it, sees also that this void will never be filled. Father Monsabré vividly expresses this awful truth: "The damned soul, arrived at the term of its road, should repose in the harmonious plenitude of its being, but it is turned away from God, is fixed upon creatures. It refused the supreme good, even in the last moment of its state of trial. Hence supreme good says to it: 'Begone' at the very moment when, having no other good, its nature springs up to seize this supreme good. Hence it departs from its light, from infinite love, from the Father, from the divine Spouse of souls. The sinner, having denied all this on earth, is now in the night, in the void. He is in exile, repudiated, condemned. And justice can but approve."<sup>7</sup>

### Interior Contradiction

The obstinate soul is still, by its very nature, inclined to love God more than itself, just as the hand loves the body more than itself, and hence exposes itself naturally to preserve that body.<sup>8</sup> This natural inclination has indeed been weakened by sin, but it continues to exist in the condemned

<sup>7</sup> *Conferences in Notre Dame*, 1889, 99th Conference.

<sup>8</sup> Ia, a. 60, a. 5 ad 5; IIa IIae, q. 26, a. 3.

soul. Father Monsabré says: "The condemned soul loves God, has hunger for God. It loves Him in order to satisfy itself."

On the other hand, the soul has a horror of God, an aversion which comes from unrepented sin which still holds it captive. Continuing to judge according to its unregulated inclination, it has not only lost charity, but it has acquired a hatred of God. Thus it is lacerated by an interior contradiction. It is carried toward the source of its natural life, but it detests the just judge, and expresses its rage by blasphemy. Often the Gospel repeats: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."<sup>9</sup>

The damned, knowing by a continual experience the effects of divine justice, as a consequence have hatred of God. St. Theresa defines the demon "he who does not love." We can say the same of those obstinate Pharisees, to whom Jesus says: "You shall die in your sin." This hatred of God manifests the total depravity of the will.<sup>10</sup> The damned are continually in the act of sin, though these acts are no longer demeritorious, because the end of merit and demerit has come.

Utter despair is the terrible consequence of the eternal loss of all good. And the damned fully understand they have lost all these goods, and that by their own fault. In the Book of Wisdom we read: "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them. . . . (The wicked) seeing it shall be troubled with terrible fear and shall be amazed . . . saying within themselves . . . : 'These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach. . . . Behold how they are numbered among the children of God and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; Luke 13:18.

<sup>10</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "L'Enfer,"

of justice hath not shined unto us. . . . We wearied ourselves in the way of destruction. . . . What hath pride profited us?" <sup>11</sup>

The extent of despair in the damned souls arises from their full knowledge of a good which can never be realized. If they could but hope to see the end of their evils! But this end will never come. If a mountain lost daily one tiny stone, a day would come when the mountain would no longer exist, since its size is limited. But the succession of centuries has no limit.

Perpetual remorse comes from the voice of conscience, which repeats that they refused to listen while there was yet time. They cannot indeed erase from their mind the first principles of the moral order, a distinction between good and evil.<sup>12</sup> But conscience recalls sin after sin: "I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink." <sup>13</sup>

But the soul is incapable of changing its remorse into penance, its tortures into expiation. St. Thomas explains: <sup>14</sup> It regrets its sin, not as guilt, but only as the cause of its suffering. It remains captive to its sin and judges practically according to an inclination which is forever distorted.

Hence the condemned soul is incapable of contrition, even attrition, because even attrition supposes hope, and enters upon the road of obedience and humility. The blood of Christ

<sup>11</sup> Wisd. 5:1-16.

<sup>12</sup> Ia IIae, q. 85, a. 2 ad 3. "Even in the reprobate there remains the natural inclination to virtue. Otherwise they would not have remorse of conscience."

<sup>13</sup> St. Thomas thus explains the gnawing worm of Scripture (Mark 9:42) and tradition. Cf. *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 89; *De veritate*, q. 16, a. 3. "Synderesis is not extinguished. It is impossible that the judgment of synderesis be entirely extinguished, but in one or the other particular deed it is extinguished, whenever man chooses what is sinful."

<sup>14</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 98, a. 2.

no longer descends into the condemned soul to make his heart contrite and humble. As the liturgy of the office of the dead says: "In hell there is no redemption." Repentance rises above remorse, as the repentant thief rises above Judas. Remorse tortures, penance delivers. "The obstinate soul," says Father Lacordaire,<sup>15</sup> "no longer turns toward God. It scorns forgiveness even in the abyss into which it has fallen. It throws itself against God, with all that it sees, all that it knows, all that it feels. Can God come to it in spite of its will? Can hate and blasphemy embrace divine love? Would this be justice? Shall heaven open for Nero as it did for St. Louis? Impenitence before death, crowned by impenitence after death—this should be the passport to eternal bliss!"<sup>16</sup>

Hatred of God involves hatred of neighbor. As the blessed love one another, the damned hate one another. In hell there

<sup>15</sup> *Conferences in Notre Dame*, 72nd Conference.

<sup>16</sup> In the works of Father Cormier, who was general of the Dominicans and died in the odor of sanctity, we read the following reflections on the religious who has missed the goal of his life. He calls it "the hell of the religious." "This unfortunate man had acquired and kept a capacity, an inclination, greater than ordinary Christians have, of possessing God. God had put into his nature certain aptitudes, in view of his foreseen religious vocation. Now these aptitudes in the condemned religious turn necessarily and implacably against God. His heart feels an emptiness deeper than others, an emptiness that torments him inexorably. What a devouring hunger, which nothing can satisfy!

"He recalls the days and years of fervor, which were a foretaste of heaven. What contrasts! What regrets! He must say: 'Beautiful heaven, of which I was sure, thou art now lost to me.'

"He will feel more shame than other reprobates, but he will not be able to hide his degradation by lies and sacrileges. His duplicity will appear in a most striking fashion.

"In regard to God he will have more terrible hate than others. For the heart that is most carried on to love is also the most capable of hate, since hate is only love turned to its contrary, to aversion. This hate will be expressed by blasphemy against everything which he formerly loved."

This terrible contrast shows the price of salvation.

is no love, only envy and isolation. Condemned souls wish their own condemnation to be universal.<sup>17</sup>

Eternally rebellious against everything, they long for annihilation, not in itself, but as cessation of suffering. In this sense Jesus says of Judas: "It were better for him if that man had not been born."<sup>18</sup>

Buried in boundless miscry, the condemned soul has no desire of relief. Inexpressible anger finds vent in blasphemy. "He shall gnash with his teeth and pine away, the desire of the wicked shall perish."<sup>19</sup> Tradition applies to him these words of the psalm: "The pride of them that hate Thee ascendeth continually."<sup>20</sup> Such a soul has refused supreme good and has found extreme sorrow. It has found despair without hope. Each and every condemned soul repeats, each on his own level: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."<sup>21</sup> "The lost soul does not live. It is not dead. It dies without cessation,"<sup>22</sup> because it is forever far away from God, the author of life.

The condemned, says St. Thomas,<sup>23</sup> suffer unchangeably the highest possible evil. They cannot in hell even demerit, much less merit. They are no longer voyagers. They sin indeed, but they do not demerit, just as the blessed perform acts of virtue, but no longer merit. Their state, if we consider only the pain of loss, is an abyss of misery, just as inexpressible as the glory of which it is the privation, as great as the possession of God which they have lost forever.

This condition, by its abysmal contrast, illumines the measureless value of the beatific vision and of all benefits that fol-

<sup>17</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 98, a. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ps. 111:10.

<sup>21</sup> Heb. 10:31.

<sup>23</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 98, a. 6 ad 3.

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 26:24.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 73:23.

<sup>22</sup> *De civ. Dei*, Bk. XIII, chap. 4.



low therefrom. But on earth we do not understand perfectly what the damned have lost. This perfect understanding is reserved to those who have unmediated vision of the divine essence, and the measureless joy which follows that vision. Yet faith too furnishes a parallel. Those who have a firm faith, and are continually faithful to it—they, and they alone, realize what measureless good is lost when faith is lost.

## • XVII •

### THE PAIN OF SENSE

BESIDES the pain of loss hell inflicts also a pain of sense. We shall speak here of the existence of this pain, of what it is according to Scripture, of the nature of the fire in hell, and of its mode of action.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Testimony of Scripture

The pain of loss is clearly affirmed in the Gospel: "Rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell."<sup>2</sup> The existence of this pain follows, as St. Thomas<sup>3</sup> says, from the truth that mortal sin not only turns man away from God, but turns him also to a created good preferred to God. Mortal sin, therefore, deserves a double suffering, first, the privation of God, secondly, the affliction which comes from creatures. The body, too, which has taken part in sin and has found in sin a forbidden joy, must share the suffering of the soul.

In what does the pain of sense consist? Scripture<sup>4</sup> tells us by describing hell as a dark prison, as a place of tears and gnashing of teeth. Further, it speaks of fire and sulphur.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *IV Sent.*, dist. 44, q. 3, a. 3; *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 90; *De anima*, q. 2, a. 21; *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 1; *Supplementum*, q. 70, a. 3; q. 97, a. 5; *Tabula aurea (Anima)*, no. 140; John of St. Thomas, *De angelis*, disp. 24, a. 3. Cf. Gonet, Billuart, *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Feu de l'Enfer."

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 5:29; 10:28; 18:19; Mark 9:42, 46; Luke 12:5.

<sup>3</sup> Ia IIac, q. 87, a. 4.

<sup>4</sup> II Pet. 2:4, 6; 3:7.

<sup>5</sup> Apoc. 20:14.

In these descriptions two connected ideas always recur; that of imprisonment, and the pain of fire. Theologians insist as much on the one as on the other, because each explains the other. We read: <sup>6</sup> "The king said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet and cast him into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. . . . The hell of unquenchable fire." <sup>7</sup>

### The Fire of Hell: Real or Metaphorical?

The common doctrine is that the fire of hell is a real fire. This view is based on the accepted position in the interpreting of Scripture, that is, we are to admit metaphorical language only when comparison with other passages excludes the literal sense, or when literal sense involves an impossibility.<sup>8</sup> Neither of these two conditions is here realized. In this sentence, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels,"<sup>9</sup> the entire context demands a realistic interpretation. As the good go to eternal life, so you go to the fire prepared for the demon and his angels. This fire punishes,<sup>10</sup> not only souls, but also bodies.<sup>11</sup> The apostles <sup>12</sup> too speak with the same realism. St. Peter <sup>13</sup> takes as type of punishment in hell that fire which fell from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah. The metaphorical interpretation, wherein the fire is a figure of chagrin or remorse, is contrary to the obvious sense of Scripture and tradition.

The Fathers generally, with the exception of Origen and

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 22:13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:22; 18:9, 40, 50. Further Matt. 18:8; Mark 9:42.

<sup>8</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Feu de l'Enfer."

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 25:41.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 10:28.

<sup>11</sup> Mark 9:42-48; Matt. 5:22; 18:9.

<sup>12</sup> II Thess. 1:8; Jas. 3:6; Jude 7:23.

<sup>13</sup> II Pet. 2:6; Jude 7.

his disciples, speak of a real fire, which they compare to terrestrial fire, or even to corporeal fire. Thus St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great.<sup>14</sup> A. Michel,<sup>15</sup> after a long examination of these texts, concludes: "When the Fathers simply affirm traditional belief, they speak without hesitation of a hell of fire. But when they discuss the difficult question of this fire's mode of action, we can notice some hesitation in their thought."

This fire, says St. Thomas,<sup>16</sup> is a corporeal fire, of the same nature as fire on earth, differing from it only accidentally, since it has no need of terrestrial fuel. It is dark, without flame, lasts forever, burns bodies without destroying them.<sup>17</sup>

### Its Mode of Action

How can corporeal fire cause pain in a soul separated from its body, or in pure spirits like the demons? Theologians answer in general: "It can do this as an instrument of divine justice, just as the sacraments, for example, the water of baptism, produce in the soul that spiritual effect which is grace. Those who have scorned the sacraments, instruments of God's mercy, suffer the instruments of divine justice.

Theologians here divide into two camps, as they do for the sacraments, some maintaining a physical causality, others only a moral causality. A moral cause, like prayer, which we address to someone to persuade him to act, does not produce directly the effect desired, it only inclines the agent capable

<sup>14</sup> *Enchir. patr.*, *Index theologicus*, nos. 592 ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, col. 2207.

<sup>16</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 97, a. 5, 6.

<sup>17</sup> St. Catherine de Ricci was allowed, in the place of one who had died, to suffer the fire of purgatory for forty days. No one could see this externally, but a novice, touching her hand, said to her: "But, mother, you are burning." "Yes, my daughter," she replied.

of producing the act to realize it. If it be thus with the fire of hell, it would not produce effectively that which is attributed to it. The effect would be simply and solely produced by God.

Thomists, on the other hand, and with them many other theologians, maintain here, as in the case of the sacraments, a physical, instrumental causality, exercised by the fire of hell on the souls of the condemned. It is difficult indeed to explain its mode of action. St. Thomas<sup>18</sup> and his best commentators hold that the fire of hell receives from God power to afflict the condemned spirits. The fire ties and binds them, hinders their activity, somewhat like paralysis or intoxication. This subjection to a corporeal element is a great humiliation for immaterial beings. This explanation is in harmony with the texts of Scripture<sup>19</sup> which describe hell as a prison where the damned are retained against their will.

But how can this fire, after the general resurrection, burn the bodies of the damned without consuming them? That it does so is affirmed by tradition and Scripture.<sup>20</sup> St. Thomas<sup>21</sup> holds that the bodies of the damned, though they are incorruptible and unalterable, still suffer in some special fashion, as, for example, the sense of hearing suffers from hearing a high, strident voice, or as the taste suffers from a bitter flavor.<sup>22</sup>

Difficulty in explaining how this fire acts, is not a reason for denying the reality of that action. Even in the natural order it is difficult to explain how exterior objects produce in

<sup>18</sup> *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 90; *Supplementum*, q. 70, a. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Jude 6; II Pet. 2:4; Apoc. 20:2.

<sup>20</sup> Dan. 12:2; Matt. 18:8, 9; Mark 9:29, 49.

<sup>21</sup> *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 89; *De potentia*, q. 5, a. 8.

<sup>22</sup> These sufferings arise from their relation to the object of sense, independent of alteration on the part of the subject.

our senses an impression, a representation in the psychological order, which surpasses brute matter. Hence it is not surprising that preternatural effects should be still more difficult to explain.

The pain of sense, as all tradition affirms, is not the principal pain. That which is essential in the state of damnation is the privation of God Himself, and the immense void which this privation causes in the soul, a void which manifests by contrast the plenitude of life everlasting, of which the present meritorious life is the prelude.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *La vie spirituelle*, December, 1942, p. 435. The author, Father Thomas Dehau, is commenting on the words of the rich man, "I am tortured in this flame" (Luke 16:24). "The wicked rich man at the bottom of hell is, we may say, crucified to the world of heaven. This world of beatitude and peace is for him inaccessible. This idea of crucifixion in hell is found expressed in the *Divine Comedy*. Dante, passing through the shades, perceives Caiphas, crucified on the ground by three nails, and enveloped with flames. There you have the picture of the soul in hell crucified in this flame. And this fire is at the same time ice, because the reprobate have no love. Satan, at the very bottom of hell, is buried in ice. He is the one who has no love.

At the other pole of the world we find the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. Infinitely removed from the scenes we have been describing, at the height of the regions there beyond, this heart too appears enveloped in flames, crowned with thorns, down below tears of blood and on high the flame; always the flame: "I am crucified in this flame." Our Lord, from the moment when he entered the world, had this flame in the midst of His heart, the flame and the wound of love."

Thus this mysterious word, *Crucior in hac flamma*, which resounds at the bottom of hell from the reprobate, is pronounced in a sense directly opposite by the adorable heart of our Lord. He no longer suffers, but all perfection which His love and His suffering had on earth continues to exist eminently in heaven.

## • XVIII •

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### D E G R E E S   O F   P A I N

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THE pains of the damned are equal as far as duration is concerned, since they are eternal, but they differ very much in degrees of rigor. God will render to each one according to his works.<sup>1</sup> "It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city" (which had refused to receive the apostles).<sup>2</sup> "Woe to thee, Corozain."<sup>3</sup> The wicked servant, who knew the will of his master and has not done it, will receive a greater number of stripes. He who did not know that will, and has done things worthy of chastisement, will receive fewer stripes.<sup>4</sup>

We read in the Apocalypse: "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her."<sup>5</sup> Already the Book of Wisdom had said: "The mighty shall be mightily tormented."<sup>6</sup>

Further, it is clear that punishment must be proportioned to the gravity of the fault. Faults differ in gravity and in number, hence the sufferings of hell must be unequal in their rigor.<sup>7</sup> The avaricious will not be punished in the same manner as the voluptuous. We may say that the most guilty are at the bottom of hell, though we can but conjecture the place of hell.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11:21-24.

<sup>3</sup> Wisd. 6:6.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 12:47, 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 69, a. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 10:15.

<sup>7</sup> Apoc. 18:7.

Can there be mitigation of the accidental pain due to venial sins, and of that due to the mortal sins, forgiven but not expiated? Many theologians admit this position as probable, because this accidental pain is in itself temporary. Thus St. Thomas says: "It is not improper to say that the pains of hell, so far as they are accidental, may diminish up to the day of the last judgment."<sup>8</sup>

We saw above that, by divine mercy, the damned suffer less than they merit.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the pain of loss, even the smallest, surpasses immensely all the sufferings of this world. Theologians commonly admit this also for the pain of sense, since it is eternal, without consolation, and in a soul which has already the pain of loss.

A very probable position, upheld by many theologians, is that God will not let die in sin those who have committed only one mortal sin, especially if there is a question of a sin of frailty. Final impenitence would thus be restricted to inveterate sinners. As St. Peter says: "God dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that anyone should perish, but that all should return to penance."<sup>10</sup> God moves men to conversion. Hell is the pain of obstinacy.<sup>11</sup>

Here we may dwell on the great promise of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary. We quote Father T. J. Bainvel, S.J.,<sup>12</sup> who has made a long study of this question. The promise runs thus: "On Friday, during Holy Communion, our Lord spoke these words to his unworthy slave, if she does not deceive herself; 'I promise thee, in the excessive mercy of My heart, that its omnipotent love will accord to all those

<sup>8</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 23, q. 1, a. 1 ad 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ia*, q. 21, a. 4 ad 1.

<sup>10</sup> *II Pet.* 3:9.

<sup>11</sup> Father Lacordaire, *Conferences in Notre Dame*, 72nd conference; *Dict. théol. cath.*, "L'Enfer." <sup>12</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Cœur-sacré de Jésus."



who shall receive Communion on nine successive First Fridays the grace of final penance. They shall not die in disfavor with God, nor without the sacraments, since My divine heart is their assured refuge in this last moment.' " <sup>13</sup>

Father Bainvel adds these words: "The promise is absolute, supposing only that the Communions have been made and have been well made. The grace promised is not the grace of perseverance in good throughout life, nor the reception of the last sacraments under every hypothesis, but that perseverance which brings with it penance, and the last sacraments so far as they are necessary." This promise is addressed to sinners more directly than to pious souls. The promise supposes that the grace of making good Communions on nine successive First Fridays is a gift reserved to the elect. If they are in sin, they will repent before they die.

<sup>13</sup> *Vie et œuvres*, II, 159; lettre 83, p. 176.

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## HELL AND OUR OWN AGE

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CERTAIN authors, attempting to propose a modern conception of hell, have departed from traditional doctrine. They hold that the damned are not all absolutely perverted, that not all are guilty of hating God. In these cases, then, pain of loss and of sense would not be as severe as theologians generally affirm.

Such authors have not reflected sufficiently on the distinction between the road and the goal. They do not reflect that these separated souls undergo a total privation of God, of all goods which flow from the beatific vision, and also of those created goods given as means to reach God.

These authors, further, have not reflected sufficiently on the nature of obstinacy, and its relation to infinite justice. They lose sight of what the greatest doctors have said on the finality of hell. They ignore the imprescriptible rights of the sovereign good to be loved above all things: rights which are emphasized in the visions granted to saints.<sup>1</sup>

Question: Is it proper in our own age to preach on hell? We answer thus: first, it is certainly better to go to God by the way of love than that of fear. The redemptive Incarnation invites us continually to the way of love. But fear is to-day a necessary element of salvation, just as surely as it was when the Fathers preached the gospel. We conclude, with

<sup>1</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "L'Enfer."

the author of the article on hell in the *Dictionnaire de théologie*: "Preachers must indeed omit all purely imaginary descriptions. The simple truth is sufficient. But to keep systematic silence on any portion of Christian teaching, particularly on forethought for our last end, is to ignore radically the spirit of Christianity. This life is a road, which ends inevitably either in hell or in heaven."<sup>2</sup>

Further, our Lord deigns frequently to give privileged souls a higher knowledge of hell, by contemplation, or by vision, imaginary or intellectual, in order to carry them on to greater hatred of sin, to growth in charity, to more burning zeal for the salvation of souls. It is sufficient here to recall the visions. Like St. Theresa, many saints were thus illumined by contrast, on the infinite greatness of God and the value of eternal life.

St. Theresa speaks thus: "I often ask myself how it came that pictures of hell did not lead me to fear these pains as they deserve. Now I feel a killing pain at sight of the multitudes who are lost. This vision was one of the greatest graces the Lord has given me. From it arise also these vehement desires to be useful to souls. Yes, I say it with all truth: to deliver one soul from these terrible torments, I would gladly, it seems to me, endure death a thousand times."<sup>3</sup>

Our Lord said to St. Catherine of Siena:<sup>4</sup> "The first suffering which the damned endure is that they are deprived of seeing Me. This suffering is so great that,<sup>5</sup> if it were possible, they would choose to endure fire and torments, if they could in the meantime enjoy My vision, rather than to be

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 119.

<sup>3</sup> *Autobiography*, chap. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Dialogue of St. Catherine of Siena*, chaps. 38-40.

<sup>5</sup> The pain here spoken of is that of not possessing the supreme Good, source of joy; a pain that is more severe because the soul has already lost other joys.

delivered from other sufferings without being able to see Me. This pain is increased by a second, that of the worm of conscience, which torments them without cessation. Thirdly, the view of the demon redoubles their sufferings, because, seeing him in all his ugliness, they see what they themselves are, and thus see clearly that they themselves have merited these chastisements. The fourth torment which the damned endure is that of fire, a fire which burns but does not consume. Further, so great is the hate which possesses them that they cannot will anything good. Continually they blaspheme Me. They can no longer merit. Those who die in hate, guilty of mortal sin, enter a state which lasts forever.”

These vivid descriptions confirm the traditional doctrines. They show by contrast the value of eternal life, and the value of the time of merit, which is given to us to attain that life.<sup>9</sup>

Fear of God's chastisements is salutary, though it diminishes with the growth of charity. The more the saints love God, the more they fear to be separated from Him. This filial fear is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It makes hope perfect. It spurs us on to desire God still more strongly, and at the same time it bridles presumption.

A good theologian, Father Gardeil, O.P., in his book, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit among the Dominican Saints*, speaks as follows: “Christianity has the honor of transfiguring human passions. Now is there any passion more difficult to rehabilitate than fear? Who dares to defend it? Who would

<sup>9</sup> We refer to a recent book: *Un appel à l'amour*, Toulouse, Apostolate of Prayer, 1944. As is shown by Father Vinard, S.J., in the introduction to this book, and by Father Charmot, S.J., in its conclusion, the visions of hell and purgatory reported in this book are in harmony with the teachings of theology. The diabolical nature of these sufferings may frighten the imagination, but does not destroy poise and peace in the souls of God's servants; it rather gives them new zeal to suffer for the salvation of souls.

undertake this task in our own time, ruled by a moral code which is founded on human respect? Mere human philosophy has but one fear, not to elevate itself enough.”<sup>7</sup>

For these moralists, nothing will do except a doctrine completely filled with disinterestedness. Disinterestedness is the watchword. What! Admit that man sometimes suffers fear? That with this passion he spurns himself to good? Oh what shame! No! Let us conceal this misery. Let it not soil our serene ordinances. Let us suppress its very name.

“Only the divine Spirit will rehabilitate fear. The fear adopted by the Holy Spirit has nothing in common with mundane fear. It is not a fear of man; it is the fear of God. ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’ And the Council of Trent, underlining a long tradition of Christian centuries, declares that even the fear of divine punishments is good and salutary.” But filial fear, the fear of sin, the fear of being separated from God, is evidently still higher in nature. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It grows with charity. The saints, who know not how to tremble before men, have this holy fear of God. As Father Gardeil says: “The Stoic, fearing nothing, is but an infant beside the saint who fears God alone. The saint represents human morality made divine by God’s revelation.” St. Louis Bertrand, missionary, who defied the stones and arrows, who ardently desired martyrdom, still feared God: “Lord, burn me here, cut me here, spare me not here, that Thou mayest spare me in eternity.”<sup>8</sup>

God speaks by the prophet: “Turn to Me, . . . and I will turn to you.” The soul answers him with Jeremias: “Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted.”<sup>9</sup> We can find no better words to express the sweetness of conver-

<sup>7</sup> *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, Paris, 1903, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Zach. 1:3; Isa. 45:22; Lament. 5:21.

sion. The response of the soul is more beautiful than the divine exhortation, because the divine voice was heard in order to obtain this response, just as the word of Jesus to the Cananean woman was meant to inspire her answer. The sweetness of conversion balances the rigor of the dogma.

### The Three Species of Fear

Before we begin the treatise on purgatory, we must dwell briefly on the three kinds of fear. One kind is bad. The two others are good, but so distinct, one from the other, that growth in charity reduces the one and augments the other.

Fear, in general, is a shrinking of the soul faced by grave danger. When fear is a mere emotion, it must be dominated by the virtue of fortitude. But fear can exist also in the spiritual will, and can be either good or evil.

Hence theologians distinguish three kinds of fear. First, there is mundane fear, which fears the opposition of the world and turns the soul away from God. Secondly, servile fear, fear of the punishments which God many inflict. This fear is useful for salvation. Thirdly, there is filial fear, a fear of sin, which grows with love of God, and which continues to exist in heaven under the form of reverential fear. Let us see what St. Thomas<sup>10</sup> teaches us on these three kinds of fear.

In mundane fear, the fear of temporal evils which the world may bring upon us, the soul is ready to offend God in order to escape these evils. This fear appears in many forms: human respect, culpable timidity, slavery to the judgments of the world. Under this fear the soul may neglect Mass on Sunday, Communion at Easter, the duty of confession. Loss

<sup>10</sup> IIa IIae, q. 19.

of situation may follow faithfulness. Under the form of cowardice, it can lead a man to deny his faith, to avoid the loss of exterior good or of personal liberty or of life itself. Jesus says: "Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell." <sup>11</sup> Again He says: "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world and lose himself and cast away himself? For he that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty and that of His Father and of the holy angels." <sup>12</sup>

Mundane fear, then, is always bad. We must pray God to deliver us from it. Those who regard the fear of God as an ignoble sentiment are ruled by mundane fear. Fear which shrinks from Holy Mass reverses all values, because the Mass perpetuates sacramentally the sacrifice of the cross, which has infinite value. Assistance at Mass is great honor and great profit, both for time and for eternity.

Servile fear differs very much from mundane fear. It is not fear of persecution by the world, but the fear of punishment by God. This fear is good, since it leads the soul to fulfill the divine commandments. This fear is meant when the Old Testament is called the Law of Fear, whereas the New Testament is called the Law of Love. But this fear, in itself good, can still become bad, if the soul avoids sin only to escape punishment. Such a soul would sin, if it did not fear eternal punishment. In this last case fear is servilely servile. It has mere fear of God, no love. It is evil. It cannot exist with charity, the love of God above all things. <sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 10:28.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 9:26.

<sup>13</sup> Servile fear is in its essence good, but its mode is bad, since it fears the chastisements of God more than sin and separation from God. The soul loves itself

But when this fear is not servilely servile, it is good, it aids the sinner to approach God. But even thus it is not a virtue, not a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is, says St. Catherine of Siena,<sup>14</sup> like a storm which strikes the sinner down. It is insufficient for salvation, but it can lead to virtue. Thus, during a tempest at sea, the sailor may remember to pray. Even if he is in mortal sin, he prays as well as he can, moved by the actual grace, which is given under all such circumstances.

In the just man, servile fear can continue throughout life, but it grows less with the progress of charity. The more we love God, the more does selfishness diminish. The more we love God, the more do we hope to be recompensed by God. But servile fear, fear of divine punishment, can certainly not exist in heaven.

Filial fear differs very much from the two preceding kinds. It is the fear of a son, not that of a hireling or a servant. It is a fear, not of the punishments of God, but of sin which separates us from God. It differs therefore essentially from servile fear, and still more from mundane fear.

This filial fear is not only good, like servile fear: rather it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. "Pierce Thou my flesh," says the Psalmist, "with Thy fear, O Lord."<sup>15</sup> This filial fear, though it is the least elevated of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, is nevertheless the beginning of wisdom. It is true wisdom to fear sin, which drives us far from God. Filial fear corresponds to the beatitude of the poor in spirit, of those who fear the Lord and therefore already possess Him.

Whereas servile fear diminishes with progress in charity,

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more than God. It retains affection for mortal sin, which it would commit if it did not fear eternal punishment. <sup>14</sup> *Dialogue*, chap. 94.

<sup>15</sup> This fear is called initial fear. It is still united with servile fear, until charity has grown strong enough to expel all servility. Ps. 118:120.



filial fear grows continually, because the more we love God, the more we fear sin and separation from Him. The seven gifts are connected with charity and all other infused virtues. These gifts are the varied functions of our spiritual organism. Hence they all grow simultaneously just as "the five fingers of the hand develop simultaneously."<sup>16</sup>

St. Catherine of Siena says that, with progress in charity, filial fear grows until mundane fear disappears completely. The apostles, after Pentecost, began to glory in their tribulations. They rejoiced in being judged worthy to suffer for our Lord. Before the Ascension, feeling acutely their own impotency, they feared the persecutions our Lord had foretold. On Pentecost they were clarified, fortified, confirmed in grace.

Filial fear in heaven is called reverential fear. "The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring forever and ever."<sup>17</sup> Thus the psalm. It will no longer be fear of sin, fear of being separated from God, but deep reverence. Seeing the infinite grandeur of the Most High, the soul sees its own nothingness and fragility. God is reality itself. "Ego sum qui sum." In this sense, as we sing in the preface, even the Powers tremble. This gift of reverential fear exists even in the holy soul of our Savior, just as do the other gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Reverential fear appears in the saints even in the present life. When St. Peter, after the first miraculous catch of fishes, came to Jesus, he said: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."<sup>18</sup> It is then that Jesus said to him: "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." And Peter, James, and John left everything to follow Him.

We see how different these three kinds of fear are one from the other. Mundane fear is always bad. The fear of

<sup>16</sup> 1a IIae, q. 61, a. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ps. 118:110.

<sup>18</sup> Luke 5:8.

suffering is good, if it does not become servilely servile, if it does not dispose us to sin. Filial fear is always good. It grows with charity as do the other gifts of the Holy Spirit and continues to exist in heaven as reverential fear. Lord, deliver us from mundane fear, diminish in us servile fear, augment in us filial fear.

This distinction is not owing to human psychology. To arrive at these distinctions we need revelation, expression of divine wisdom.

Certain authors, as we have seen, teach a moral system based completely on disinterestedness, which neither fears divine punishment nor desires recompense. They blush to admit that at times they suffer this passion of fear, for such admission would upset their doctrine.<sup>19</sup>

It belongs to the Holy Spirit to rehabilitate fear.<sup>20</sup> And this in three ways: in condemning human respect; in showing that fear of punishment is good; and especially in showing that filial fear is a fear of separation from God, and consequently a supernatural gift which grows simultaneously with charity. This last species of fear inspired the saints' lives

<sup>19</sup> The position here described is that of Kant. The rationalists gave great importance to his doctrine, since it includes the negation of revealed truth. But if we take the standpoint of revelation, many who are ordinarily called great philosophers appear as strong spirits, but false, who have special ingenuity in presenting error. They are great Sophists. Many of them are like intellectual monsters, false in fundamental conceptions of God, of man, of our destiny. This is particularly true in the case of Spinoza, Hume, and Hegel. The thought of the Catholic theologian agrees with what St. Augustine said of the great Sophists: "*Magni passus sed extra viam*" ("Long steps but aside from the road"). We shall see this clearly in eternity, when the horizontal view, where error seems to be on the same level as truth, yields to the vertical view. The vertical view judges everything from on high in the manner of God, the supreme cause and the last end. Perspectives given us by histories of philosophy will then be wonderfully changed. Superficial judgments will emphasize the value of definitive judgments.

<sup>20</sup> *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, 1903, p. 60.

of reparation to obtain the conversion of sinners. St. Dominic nightly scourged himself to blood, in favor of sinners to whom he was preaching. This same holy fear inspired the mortifications of St. Catherine of Siena, of St. Rose of Lima, and of many other saints. But there is something higher than filial fear, even in its highest forms in heaven. Christian doctrine recognizes the pre-eminent place of charity, of love for God and for neighbor, that corresponds to the divine precepts. Read the description of this love in *The Imitation of Christ*.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III, chap. 5.

FOURTH PART

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P  
URGATORY

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## TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

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ACCORDING to the doctrine of the Church, purgatory is the place of those souls that have died under obligation to suffer still some temporary pain, due to venial sins not yet forgiven, or to sins already forgiven but not yet expiated. They remain in purgatory until the debt which they owe to divine justice has been fully paid. They pay this debt progressively, not by merit and satisfaction, for the time of merit is gone by, but by satisfaction, that is, by enduring voluntarily the satisfactory suffering inflicted on them. Their sufferings may be shortened by suffrages made for them and especially by Masses in their favor.

We find this doctrine of the Church in the Second Council of Lyons, in that of Florence,<sup>1</sup> in that of Trent,<sup>2</sup> and in the condemnation of many errors of Luther.<sup>3</sup> Among the errors condemned by the Church we may notice especially such sentences as these: "The existence of purgatory cannot be established by Scripture."<sup>4</sup> "The souls in purgatory suffer by impatience."<sup>5</sup> "The souls in purgatory are not sure of their salvation." The Church, on the contrary, teaches as her common doctrine that these souls suffer the punishment of fire.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Denz., nos. 464, 693, 840, 983.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 777, 3047.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 779.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 744, 777, 778, 780.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 778.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 3047, 3050.

## The Protestant Error

The doctrine of purgatory was denied by the Albigenses, the Hussites, and the Protestants.<sup>7</sup> Luther began, in 1517, by denying the value of indulgences, saying that they had no value before God for the remission of the punishment due to our sins.<sup>8</sup> Then he went on to maintain that purgatory cannot be proved by Holy Scripture; that the souls in purgatory are not sure of their salvation; that we cannot prove the impossibility of merit in purgatory; that the souls in purgatory may sin by attempting to escape the sufferings they are undergoing.

Later on, Luther reached the doctrinal root of all his negations, namely, justification by faith alone. Then he affirmed the uselessness of good works and hence the uselessness of purgatory. Supported by popular favor, he became more and more audacious. In 1524 he published his book on the abrogation of Mass. In this work he says that the denial of purgatory is not an error.

Finally, in 1530, he denied absolutely any necessity of satisfaction for our sins. To uphold this, he said, would be an injury to Christ, who has satisfied superabundantly for all sin. For the same reason he denied that the Mass is a true sacrifice, particularly a propitiatory sacrifice. We have here the radical denial of a life of reparation, as if the sufferings of the saints for the expiation of sin would be an injury to the Redeemer.

Now the first and universal cause does not exclude second causes, but grants them the dignity of causality, somewhat like a sculptor who should make statues which live. Thus the satisfactory merits of Christ do not exclude our own,

<sup>7</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Purgatoire."

<sup>8</sup> Denz., no. 758.

but rather create them. Christ causes us to work with Him and in Him. St. Paul said: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ."<sup>9</sup> Again: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church." Certainly nothing was lacking to the sufferings of Christ in themselves, but they lacked fulfillment in our own flesh.

Calvin<sup>10</sup> and Zwingli<sup>11</sup> followed Luther in denying indulgences, in denying the sacrifice of the Mass, and purgatory.

Protestants of the present day have separated from their masters on this subject. Many of them admit an intermediate state between hell and heaven. They will not call it purgatory, but do say that the souls there can still merit and satisfy. Some hold that the sufferings of hell are not eternal. Now this temporary hell does not at all resemble the purgatory taught by the Catholic Church, according to which all souls in purgatory are in the state of grace and can no longer sin.

This is but one more example of the variations and contradictions to be found among Protestant Churches.

The chief Catholic theologians who wrote against this Protestant error are Cajetan, Sylvester Ferrariensis, St. John Fisher, John Eck, and St. Robert Bellarmine. St. John Fisher speaks thus to the Lutherans: "In suppressing the sacrifice of the Mass you have excluded the sun which illumines and warms each day of our life, and makes its influence felt even in purgatory."

The Church condemned this Protestant error. The Council of Trent declares: "If anyone says that the man who has repented and received the grace of justification is forgiven

<sup>9</sup> Gal. 6:2; Col. 1:24.

<sup>10</sup> *Institutiones Christianae*, Bk. III, chap. 4, no. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Opera, thesis ann.* 1523, th. 57.

and released from obligation to eternal punishment, in such fashion that he no longer has any obligation to temporal punishment, whether in this world or in purgatory, before he can be given entrance into heaven: let him be anathema." <sup>12</sup>

In the fourteenth chapter, which corresponds to this canon, the Council affirms the necessity of satisfaction for sins committed after baptism: satisfaction in the form of fasting, of almsgiving, of prayer, and of other exercises of the spiritual life. These satisfactions are not meant for the eternal punishment, which was remitted by the sacrament of penance or by the desire of the sacrament, but for the remission of temporal punishment, which is not always remitted entirely, as it is in baptism. <sup>13</sup> The Council quotes these words of Scripture: "Be mindful therefore from whence thou art fallen, and do penance and do the first works." <sup>14</sup> "For the sorrow that is according to God worketh penance." <sup>15</sup> "Do penance." <sup>16</sup> "Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of penance." <sup>17</sup> And if this reparation, this satisfaction, has not been paid in this world, the soul will have to undergo the satisfactorial punishment of purgatory.

### Purgatory in Scripture

In the Old Testament we read that Judas Machabeus "making a gathering sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the . . . dead, . . . who had fallen asleep with godliness, . . . that they may be loosed from sins." <sup>18</sup> This passage shows that according to the faith of Israel the just, after death, could be aided by the sacrifices offered on earth. In that same passage we

<sup>12</sup> Denz., no. 840.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 807.

<sup>14</sup> Apoc. 2:5.

<sup>15</sup> II Cor. 7:10.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 3:2, 4:17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:8.

<sup>18</sup> II Mach. 12:43-46.



read: "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead."

St. Thomas remarks: "We are not taught to pray for the souls of the dead who are in heaven, nor for those who are in hell, hence there must be a purgatory after death, where the souls of the just pay the debts which they did not pay on earth."<sup>19</sup>

In the New Testament we read: "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come."<sup>20</sup> Now these words presuppose, according to tradition, that certain sins can be forgiven after death, but certainly these are not mortal sins. Hence these words deal with venial sin, or with suffering due to mortal sins, remitted but not entirely expiated.

The text becomes clearer when we read in St. Paul: "You are God's building. . . . The foundation . . . is Christ Jesus. Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be manifest." "And the fire shall try every man's work."<sup>21</sup> If the work which each one added to the building subsists, he will receive recompense (for this part of his work) yet he will be saved, but only as through fire. This means that if upon this foundation he has built with wood or hay or stubble, his work will be devoured by the fire. These works which will be devoured are, for example, good works done in vanity, good accomplished in order to advance oneself, or by a spirit of opposition to adversaries, rather than by love of truth and of God.

Many Fathers have seen in this text the doctrine of purgatory: Origen, Basil, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Ambrose,

<sup>19</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 21, q. 1, a. 1, and Appendix to the *Supplementum, De purgatorio*, a. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Matt. 12:32.

<sup>21</sup> I Cor. 3:10-15.

Augustine, Gregory the Great. These last two understand the text to speak also of the fire of persecution and of the last judgment.

St. Thomas,<sup>22</sup> in commenting on this passage, speaks as follows: "In the building constructed upon Christ, good works are compared to gold, to silver, to precious stone. Venial sins are compared to wood, to hay, to stubble. The day of the Lord is that on which He manifests His judgment, first of all during tribulation on earth, then at the particular judgment after death, finally at the last judgment. The fire which tests and purifies is that of tribulation on earth, then that of purgatory, lastly that of universal conflagration at the last judgment. In truth, many texts of Scripture speak of the purifying fire under these three different forms."<sup>23</sup>

This unifying interpretation, which admits diverse purifications, is held today, both by exegetes like Father Allo, Father Prat, and by theologians like Father Pesch. Father Allo<sup>24</sup> speaks as follows: "There are faults which are not grave enough to close heaven and to open hell, which never-

<sup>22</sup> Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

<sup>23</sup> Ecclus. 2:5 and 27:6; Wisd. 3:6; Ps. 96:3.

<sup>24</sup> In his Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians Father Allo speaks thus: "Jesus has spoken in Luke 17:22 of one of the days of the Son of man (a day whereon He will exercise judgment), as if there could be many such days. Thus we may believe with St. Thomas that in this verse there is question of a triple judgment of God." *Ibid.*, p. 66. "We have interpreted the fire in the widest sense, as including the ensemble of the judgments and of the trials to which Christ will submit the worth of those who have labored or intended to do so. But (v. 15) He shows that it is not only the work taken by itself, but also the workman who will be reached by the flame, although he is destined to salvation. As nothing indicates that these trials must all have place during this present life, we must recognize that St. Paul envisages, also for the elect soul that has left this world, the possibility of a debt still to be paid to God. When shall this debt be claimed? We can see no moment except that wherein they will appear before the tribunal of Christ (II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10). The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks thus: 'It is reserved for men once to die and after that the judgment.'" Heb. 9:27.

theless must have their own proportionate punishment. The Catholic dogma of venial sin and purgatory finds in our text a very solid support.”<sup>25</sup> Father Pesch<sup>26</sup> defends the same conclusion.

### Purgatory in Tradition

On this subject we must distinguish two periods. During the first four centuries the existence of purgatory is affirmed, at least implicitly, by the universal practice of prayer and sacrifice offered for the dead. Tertullian speaks thus: “We make oblations for the dead one year after their death.”<sup>27</sup> St. Ephrem<sup>28</sup> demands remembrance on the thirtieth day after death. St. Cyril of Alexandria believes that prayers made for the dead obtain succor for them. St. Epiphanius and St. John Chrysostom speak in the same sense.<sup>29</sup> And the most ancient liturgies show that this usage was common.<sup>30</sup>

This view is confirmed by inscriptions in the catacombs, as early as the third century. These inscriptions, which pray that God may refresh the soul of the dead, contain manifest allusions to the sufferings which the souls in purgatory must undergo.<sup>31</sup>

This universal practice, found in the Orient and the Occident, proves that there was general belief in the existence of

<sup>25</sup> *The Theology of St. Paul*, I, 112.

<sup>26</sup> *Praelectiones theologicae*, IX, no. 590.

<sup>27</sup> *De corona*, chap. 4. Cf. de Journal, *Enchir. patrist.*, no. 382.

<sup>28</sup> Journal, no. 741.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 852, 853, 1109, 1206.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Martigny, *Dict. des antiquités chrétiennes*, “Purgatoire”; cf. also *Didascalia apostolorum*, Bk. VI, chap. 22, no. 2. “Offer without ceasing prayers to God, offer the Eucharist you have accepted, offer it for those who sleep.” Similarly in the Liturgy of St. Basil and of St. John Chrysostom.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Marucchi, *Elements of Christian Archeology*, I, 191. In the catacombs we find inscriptions like the following: Victoria, may thy spirit find refreshment in good. Calemira, may God refresh thy spirit, together with that of thy sister, Hilaria. Eternal light be to thee, Timothea, in Christ.

a place and state where souls, not yet entirely purified, undergo punishment due to their sins. The Church never prays for the damned, and does not offer for them the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Thus we see the faith of the early Church in purgatory, just as her faith in the existence of original sin is expressed by the practice of baptizing infants.

Further, during these first four centuries, we have explicit testimonies regarding the sufferings of purgatory. Tertullian <sup>82</sup> speaks of a woman who prays for the soul of her husband and asks for him "refreshment," that is, attenuation or cessation of the punishment of fire. St. Ephrem <sup>83</sup> speaks of expiation of sins after death. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, speak of prayers for the dead.<sup>84</sup>

During the second period, beginning with St. Augustine, we find texts which speak explicitly of purgatory, of the fiery punishments undergone by the just who have not sufficiently expiated their sins during life. The Fathers, St. Augustine, St. Caesarius of Arles, St. Gregory the Great, affirm four truths which contain the entire doctrine of purgatory. First, after death there is no longer a possibility of merit or demerit.<sup>85</sup> Secondly, purgatory exists, a place where souls undergo temporary pains for their sins.<sup>86</sup> Thirdly, these souls can be aided by the prayers of those who live, especially by the Eucharistic Sacrifice.<sup>87</sup> Fourth, purgatory will end on the day of judgment.<sup>88</sup> St. Augustine expounds this doctrine.<sup>89</sup> The same holds good of St. Caesarius,<sup>40</sup> and of St. Gregory the Great.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Journal, no. 382.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 741.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 1061.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, *Index. theol.*, no. 584.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 587.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 588.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 589.

<sup>89</sup> *Enchiridion*, chaps. 69, 109 ff. Also in the Commentary on Psalm 37.

<sup>40</sup> Caesarius of Arles, Sermon 105, no. 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Dialogues*, 593, 4, 39. Cf. Journal, *op. cit.*, 1467, 1544, 2233, 2321.

During the following centuries the liturgy for the dead was gradually developed. The doctrine of the Church on purgatory was defined in the Second Council of Lyons, in that of Florence, and that of Trent.<sup>42</sup>

This retrospect shows that the faith of the Church passes from a less distinct concept to a concept which is distinct. This development is seen in the doctrine on baptism, on the sacrament of penance, on the Sacrifice of the Mass, and in many other revealed truths. Let us recall here that good Christians, particularly the saints, even when they do not have a distinct theoretical concept of a mystery, as do theologians, can still have a very deep and living concept.

Many saints, although they cannot explain theologically the difference between venial sin and mortal sin, have the virtue of contrition much more profoundly than many theologians. Unable to tell you what is formally the essence of the Sacrifice of the Mass, they are penetrated with its grandeur and fruitfulness. Thus Christians in the catacombs, preparing for martyrdom, sacrificing for their dead, had a deep and living concept of purgatory, though they could not speak of it as did theologians after the Council of Trent. Uneducated saints have a living concept of sin, of the punishment due to sin, of repentance, of satisfaction, of judgment, of hell, of purgatory, and of heaven. This science of the saints, in last analysis, is the most real, the one that counts for eternity.

This living concept is expressed by *The Imitation of Christ*.<sup>43</sup> We must be willing to suffer everything for eternal life, even what is most painful.

<sup>42</sup> Denz., nos. 494, 693, 840, 983.

<sup>43</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III, chap. 47.

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## ARGUMENTS OF APPROPRIATENESS

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HERE we meet, first of all, a reason of appropriateness open even to non-believers. The order of justice, if violated, demands reparation. Now this reparation, if not made before death, must be undergone after death, and payment by him who has died without repentance must differ by far from payment by him who has repented.

This argument differs from strict theological reasoning because it rests on the principles of natural reason which can be known without revelation.

This argument is confirmed by the religious convictions of many peoples, Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, who speak of various sanctions after death. Plato <sup>1</sup> speaks as follows: "Separated from their bodies, souls come at once before the judge who examines them with care. If he finds one disfigured by faults, he sends it to the place where it will suffer the punishments it has merited. Some among these souls profit by the punishments which they endure since their faults can be expiated. Pain alone delivers them from injustice. But those who committed great crimes and whose perversity is incurable, can serve only as examples." <sup>2</sup>

Believers, too, can find special reasons of appropriateness. The doctrine of purgatory is one of wisdom and consolation.

<sup>1</sup> *Gorgias*, 522 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Phaedo*, 113 ff.

It emphasizes the sanctity and majesty of God, since nothing soiled can appear before Him. It fortifies our sense of justice. It manifests the disorder, often unperceived, of venial faults. Faith in purgatory purifies us here on earth.

Further, faith shows us the relations between ourselves and the dead. It urges us to aid them. It gives us a special viewpoint on the mysterious communion of saints, the unity between the Church militant and the Church suffering. It consoles us when death bereaves us.

These reasons of appropriateness become still stronger when united with the theological reasons which make the existence of purgatory certain. Revelation is like a luminous window, which can be seen in two fashions. First, from without, and under this view we can scarcely discern the figures. Or from within, and then we distinguish details, behold the very features of the persons there depicted. The prophecies of the Old Testament are such windows, seen first by the mere light of reason, seen secondly in the full light of revelation.

## DEMONSTRATIVE ARGUMENTS

THE dogma of purgatory, founded in Scripture and tradition, can be deduced with certitude from revealed truths wherein it is implicitly contained. We must not confound these arguments with the reasons of appropriateness, which we have just spoken of and which are open even to non-believers. We are now to speak of reasons which arise from revealed principles.

St. Thomas <sup>1</sup> expounds these theological reasons in his commentary on the *Sentences*.<sup>2</sup>

The first question is posed as follows: Is there a purgatory after death? St. Thomas gives two arguments of authority: the classic text from the Second Book of Machabees,<sup>3</sup> and a text of St. Gregory of Nyssa. Then he expounds the theological reason for the existence of purgatory.

According to divine justice he who dies a contrite death, but has not undergone the temporal punishment due to his sins, must endure this punishment in the other life. But at

<sup>1</sup> *Sentences*, Bk. IV, dist. 21, q. 1, a. 1; subquestion 1.

<sup>2</sup> In certain edition of the *Summa* this Appendix is found in the Supplement after question 72, where it comprises only two articles. But in the better editions, like the Leonine (Rome, 1906), the Appendix is put at the end of the Supplement and contains eight articles. In this latter case it contains all that is said on the subject in the Commentary on the *Sentences*. For the sake of simplicity we shall cite the Supplement under the name of "Appendix Complete" or "Supplement."

<sup>3</sup> II Mach. 12:45.



the moment of death, even when contrition has forgiven mortal sins and destroyed eternal punishment, it often happens that the temporary punishment due to these sins remains to be endured. It happens also that there remain in the soul venial sins. Divine justice therefore must insist on a temporal punishment in the other life. St. Thomas adds: "Those who deny purgatory speak therefore against divine justice and fall into heresy, as St. Gregory of Nyssa has said."

This theological reason, founded on the necessity of satisfaction, is demonstrative. It destroys the foundation of the Protestant negation.<sup>4</sup> It is thus formulated by the Council of Trent: <sup>5</sup> "It is absolutely false and contrary to the word of God to maintain that sin is never forgiven by God unless there be remitted at the same time all the punishment due to sin." <sup>6</sup> "This position <sup>7</sup> is true only of those sins forgiven by baptism. But it is not true of sins committed, with still greater ingratitude, after baptism, even when these sins were forgiven by contrition and the sacrament of penance." That baptism brings with it remission of all punishment due to sin is the reason why, in ancient times, some people put off their baptism as long as possible.

This theological reason is founded on what Scripture says concerning penance.<sup>8</sup> Already in the Old Testament we see that, even after the remission of sins, there often remains a temporal punishment to be endured. The Book of Wisdom says that God "brought Adam out of his sin." <sup>9</sup> Nevertheless he had to continue cultivating the soil in the sweat of his

<sup>4</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.* "Purgatoire," col. 1179 ff., 1285. This theological reasoning has been preserved by Suarez in his treatise *De purgatorio*, XXII, 879. It has been too little considered by recent theologians.

<sup>5</sup> Denz., no. 904.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, canons 12 and 15, nos. 922, 925.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 904.

<sup>8</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Bk. I, chap. 24, 11, Necessity of Satisfaction.

<sup>9</sup> *Wisd.* 10:11.

brow.<sup>10</sup> Moses,<sup>11</sup> in punishment of a fault already pardoned, could not enter the promised land. David<sup>12</sup> repented of his adultery and received pardon for it, yet he was punished by the death of his son. Jesus and His apostles preached the necessity of penance and of good works to satisfy for sins already forgiven. St. Paul<sup>13</sup> speaks of labors, of watchings, of fasting, which the Church has always considered as worthy fruits of penance, according to the word of the Precursor.<sup>14</sup> We often read in Scripture<sup>15</sup> that almsgiving delivers from the pain and suffering due to sin. These good works are satisfactory and at the same time meritorious. They suppose therefore the state of grace, that is, the remission of sin.<sup>16</sup> In the natural order it is not sufficient that one who has, for instance, kidnaped the daughter of a king simply restores her to her father. To repair the injury he must undergo a proportionate punishment.

It is not sufficient to cease sinning, not even to repent. The order of justice, if violated, must be re-established by voluntary acceptance of a compensating punishment.<sup>17</sup> The created will which has arisen against the divine order is bound, even after repentance, to undergo punishment. Because it has turned away from God, it is deprived of His possession for a time. Because it has preferred to Him a created good, it has to undergo a punishment called pain of sense.

But, says the Protestant objection, Christ the Redeemer has already satisfied superabundantly for all our sins. Tradi-

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 3:17.

<sup>11</sup> Num. 20:11; Deut. 34:4.

<sup>12</sup> II Kings 12:14.

<sup>13</sup> II Cor. 6:5.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 3:8; cf. Council of Trent, Denz., nos. 806, 807.

<sup>15</sup> Tob. 4:11; 12:9; Eccles. 3:33; Dan. 4:24; Luke 11:41.

<sup>16</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 14, a. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Ia IIae, q. 87, a. 6. Also Appendix of the Supplement, a. 7.

tion has always replied: The satisfactory merits of Christ are certainly sufficient to redeem all men, and yet they must be applied to each individual in order to be efficacious.<sup>18</sup> They are applied to us in baptism, and then, after our fall, by the sacrament of penance, of which satisfaction is a part. Just as the first cause does not render useless second causes but gives to them the dignity of causality, so the merits of Christ do not render our merits useless, but arouse our own wills to make us work with Him, through Him, and in Him for the salvation of souls, and in particular for our own soul. Thus St. Paul says: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh, for His body, which is the church."<sup>19</sup>

To deny the necessity of satisfaction in this world and of satisfaction in purgatory amounts to denying the value of a life of reparation. Such denial involves the Lutheran negation of the necessity of good works, as if faith without works could suffice for justification and salvation.

At the end of a conference which I gave in Geneva, a Protestant, intelligent and well-instructed, came to see me. I said to him: "How could Luther come to the conclusion that faith alone and the merits of Christ suffice for salvation: that it is not necessary to observe the precepts, not even the precepts of the love of God and neighbor?" He answered me: "It is very simple." "How very simple?" "Yes," he said, "it is diabolical." "I would not dare to say that to you," I answered, "but how is it that you are a Lutheran?" "My family," he answered, "has been Lutheran for generations, but in the near future I shall enter the Catholic Church."

Father Monsabré wrote the following words: "Its princi-

<sup>18</sup> Bellarmine, *De purgatorio*, chap. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Col. 1:24.

ples regarding justification led Protestantism to deny the dogma of purgatory. Man, saved by faith alone, by the merits of Christ, without relation to his own deeds, need fear nothing from divine justice. Divine justice must acknowledge his audacious and imperturbable conscience in the redemptive virtue of Him whose merits he exploits, even though he himself may have violated all the commandments. The negation which follows from these principles, invented to shield the wicked, is as odious as it is absurd. It is unintelligent and barbarous, for nothing is more conformable to reason than the doctrine of the Church on purgatory, and nothing is more consoling for the heart. Protestantism, at the last hour, faces the terrible perspective: everything or nothing. How count on heaven when a man looks back on a life of sin, sees that he is offering to God only a late repentance, without reparation for so many offenses? Hence there remains only the perspective of malediction.”<sup>20</sup>

The chief reason for the existence of purgatory is the one we have now expounded, namely, the necessity of satisfaction for sins, mortal or venial, already forgiven. Purgatory is a place of satisfaction, which applies what was lacking on earth in the line of satisfaction.

But there are two other theological reasons for the necessity of purgatory. First, the just soul, separating from the body, often has venial sins. Secondly, sins already remitted have consequences which are called the remains of sin. Since nothing soiled can enter heaven, the soul must be purified before it can see God face to face.

That venial sins do remain is not doubtful. St. Thomas says: “A man lies in sleep, in the state of grace indeed, but with venial sin, which will not be remitted without contrition.

<sup>20</sup> *Conferences in Notre Dame*, 1889, 97th conference, pp. 30, 35.

Many souls in the state of grace retain numerous venial sins at the moment of death.”<sup>21</sup>

On the “remains of sin” St. Thomas<sup>22</sup> speaks as follows: “Mortal guilt is forgiven when grace turns the soul to God, the soul which had been turned away from Him. But there may remain an inclination toward created good. This inclination, this disposition caused by preceding acts, is called the remains of sin. These dispositions grow weaker in a soul that lives in the state of grace. They do not have the upper hand. But they do solicit the soul to fall back into sin.

Take a man who has sinned by drunkenness, and who has confessed at Easter with sufficient attrition. He has received absolution, sanctifying grace, and the infused virtue of temperance. But, not having as yet the acquired virtue of temperance, he retains the inclination to sin again. Or take the case of antipathy. If we confess with sufficient attrition, the sin is remitted, but we retain its consequences in the form of an inclination to sin again in the same way. Purgatory must erase these consequences if they are found in the soul at death.

But does not extreme unction remove these consequences? We answer: first, some die without this sacrament; secondly, some do not receive it with full dispositions. Extreme unction,<sup>23</sup> fortifying the soul for the last struggle, hinders disordered habitudes from harming us at the supreme moment. But these habitudes still remain, like rust. And nothing soiled can enter into glory.

Such are the theological reasons for the necessity and the existence of purgatory. First, sins already forgiven often demand a temporal suffering. Secondly, venial sins may still

<sup>21</sup> Appendix of the Supplement, a. 6; also *De malo*, q. 7, a. 11.

<sup>22</sup> *De malo*, loc. cit., ad 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 30, a. 1 ad 2.

remain. Thirdly, defective dispositions, although their corporeal element disappears, remain as inordinate dispositions of the will. Of these three reasons, the chief is the first. It is, we think, demonstrative, because of the revealed principles on which it rests.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. I, chap. 24.

## PURGATORY'S CHIEF PAIN

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ACCORDING to common doctrine, the chief pain is the delay of the beatific vision. This delay is sometimes called temporary pain of loss. But, in the proper sense, the pain of loss is eternal, and hence found only in hell.

These two pains of loss differ immensely in rigor, in duration, and in consequences. The damned have lost hope and charity; they blaspheme without ceasing; they have a will obstinate in evil; they never repent; they desire universal damnation. The souls in purgatory have assured hope and inamissible charity; they love God; they adore divine justice; they are confirmed in good; they repent profoundly; they love all God's children.

This delay of the beatific vision differs notably from that which existed in limbo before the death of our Lord. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and the prophets, saw in this delay a punishment inflicted, not, properly speaking, on their person, but on human nature not yet perfectly regenerated. The time for deliverance by Christ the Redeemer had not yet arrived. This time has now arrived. Hence the delay in purgatory is truly a suffering, the chief of purgatorial sufferings.

### Suffering in Purgatory and Suffering on Earth

Suffering in purgatory is greater than all suffering on earth. Such is the doctrine of tradition, supported by theological reasoning.<sup>1</sup>

Tradition is expressed by St. Augustine: "That fire will be more painful than anything man can suffer in the present life."<sup>2</sup> St. Isidore<sup>3</sup> speaks in the same sense. According to these testimonies and others similar to them, the least pain in purgatory surpasses the greatest sufferings of the present life.

St. Bonaventure speaks somewhat differently: "In the next life, by reason of the state of the souls there retained, the purifying purgatorial suffering will be, in its kind, more severe than the greatest trials on earth."<sup>4</sup> We must understand him thus: For one and the same sin, the smallest suffering in purgatory is greater than any corresponding suffering on earth. But it does not follow that the least pain in purgatory surpasses the greatest terrestrial suffering. On this point St. Bonaventure is followed by St. Robert Bellarmine.<sup>5</sup> According to this last author, the privation of God is without doubt a very great suffering, but it is sweetened and consoled by the assured hope of once possessing Him. From this hope there arises an incredible joy, which grows in measure as the soul approaches the end of its exile.<sup>6</sup>

Many theologians, notably Suarez,<sup>7</sup> rightly remark that

<sup>1</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 21, q. 1, a. 3; also Appendix of the Supplement, a. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Comment on Ps. 37:3. *Journel*, no. 1467.

<sup>3</sup> *De ordine creatur.*, chap. 14, no. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 21, q. 4; also dist. 20, a. 2, q. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, cols. 1240, 1292.

<sup>6</sup> *De purgatorio*, chap. 14, p. 121.

<sup>7</sup> *Disputatio* 46, section 1, nos. 2, 5, 6.



the sufferings in purgatory, especially the delay of the beatific vision, are of a higher order than our terrestrial sufferings, and in this sense we may say that the smallest suffering in purgatory is more severe than the greatest suffering on earth. The joy they have in the hope of deliverance cannot diminish the suffering they feel from deprivation of the beatific vision. We see this truth in Jesus crucified: supreme beatitude, love of God and of souls, far from diminishing His pains, augmented them. St. Catherine of Genoa speaks thus: "Souls in purgatory unite great joy with great suffering. One does not diminish the other."<sup>8</sup> She continues: "No peace is comparable to that of the souls in purgatory, except that of the saints in heaven. On the other hand, the souls in purgatory endure torments which no tongue can describe and no intelligence comprehend, without special revelation." This saint, we recall, experienced on earth the pains of purgatory.

This testimony of tradition is illustrated by the character of great saints. While they are more severe than ordinary preachers, they also have much greater love of God and souls. They show forth, not only the justice of God, but also His boundless love. A good Christian illustrates the same truth. A Christian mother, for instance, is severe in order to correct her children, but the element that predominates is sweetness and maternal goodness. Today, on the contrary, it often happens that many parents lack both severity and love. Those persons who do not undergo purgatory on earth will have it later on. Nor must we make too sharp a distinction between sanctification and salvation. If we neglect sanctification, we may miss salvation itself.

Privation of the beatific vision is painful in the same degree as the desire of that vision is vivid. Two reasons, one

<sup>8</sup> *Treatise on Purgatory*, chap. 14; chaps. 2 and 3.

negative, the other positive, show the vividness of this desire.

Negatively, its desire for God is no longer retarded by the weight of the body, by the distractions and occupations of this terrestrial life. Created goods cannot distract it from the suffering it has in the privation of God.

Positively, its desire of God is very intense, because the hour has arrived when it would be in the enjoyment of God if it had not placed thereunto an obstacle by the faults which it must expiate.

The souls in purgatory grasp much more clearly than we do, by reason of their infused ideas, the measureless value of the immediate vision of God, of His inamissible possession. Further, they have intuition of themselves. Sure of their own salvation, they know with absolute certainty that they are predestined to see God, face to face. Without this delay for expiation, the moment of separation from the body would coincide with that of entrance into heaven.

In the radical order of spiritual life, then, the separated soul ought already to enjoy the beatific vision. Hence it has a hunger for God which it cannot experience here on earth. It has failed to prepare for its rendezvous with God. Since it failed to search for Him, He now hides Himself.

Analogies may be helpful. We are awaiting, with great anxiety, a friend with whom to discuss an important matter at a determined hour. If our friend is delayed, inquietude supervenes. The longer the delay, the more does inquietude grow. In the physical order, if our meal is retarded, say six hours or more, hunger grows ever more painful. If we have not eaten for three days, hunger becomes very severe.

Thus, in the spiritual domain, the separated soul has an insatiable hunger for God. It understands much better than

it did on earth that its will has a depth without measure, that only God seen face to face can fill this will and draw it irresistibly. This immense void renders it more avid to see the sovereign good.<sup>9</sup>

This desire surpasses by far the natural desire, conditional and inefficacious, to see God.<sup>10</sup> The desire of which we speak now is a supernatural desire, which proceeds from infused hope and infused charity. It is an efficacious desire, which will be infallibly fulfilled, but later. For the moment God refuses to fulfill this desire. The soul, having sought itself instead of God, cannot now find Him.

Joy follows perfect activity. The greatest joy, then, follows the act of seeing God. The absence of this vision, when its hour has arrived, causes the greatest pain. Souls in purgatory feel most vividly their impotence and poverty. A parallel on earth appears in the saints. Like St. Paul,<sup>11</sup> saints desire to die and to be with Christ.

We often hear it said that in the souls in purgatory there is an ebb and flood. Strongly drawn toward God, they are held back by the "remains of sin," which they have to expiate. They cannot rush to the goal which they so ardently desire. Love of God does not diminish their pain, but increases it. And this love is no longer meritorious. How eloquent is their title: the suffering Church!

St. Catherine of Genoa speaks as follows: "Let us suppose in the entire world only one loaf of bread. Further, even the sight of this one loaf would satisfy the hunger of every creature. Now man, in good health, has by nature the instinct of

<sup>9</sup> *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 91, no. 2. "By the very fact that the soul is separated from the body it becomes capable of the divine vision for which it was unable while united to the corruptible body. Hence immediately after death souls gain either punishment or reward, if there be no impediment."

<sup>10</sup> Ia, q. 12, a. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Phil. 1:23.

nourishment and hence the pain of hunger. If he could abstain from eating without losing health and life, his hunger would cause an ever more intolerable pain. If therefore man were certain he would never see this unique loaf of which we have spoken, his hell would be something like that of the damned. Now the souls in purgatory have the certain hope of seeing this unique loaf and of being entirely sated by it. But they endure an ever increasing pain of hunger until they enter into the eternal possession of this bread of life, which is Jesus Christ, our Lord."<sup>12</sup>

This analogy of hunger is developed by Father Faber.<sup>13</sup>

Scripture is eloquent on this. "I will send forth famine into the land, not a famine of bread . . . but of hearing the word of the Lord, . . . they shall go about seeking the word of the Lord and shall not find it."<sup>14</sup> "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice."<sup>15</sup> "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."<sup>16</sup> "My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God. When shall I come and appear before the face of the Lord?"<sup>17</sup> "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day; for Thee my soul hath thirsted, for Thee my

<sup>12</sup> St. Catherine of Genoa received very early great graces of consolation during five years, but during the next five years she suffered great aridity, became discouraged and during five further years neglected her religious duties. One day her sister said to her: "Tomorrow is a great feast. I hope you will go to confession." She did go and in the confessional received a very great grace of contrition. She commenced from that hour a life of heroic penance, until the Lord let her understand that she had satisfied divine justice. Then she said: "If now I would turn back I would wish someone to tear out my eyes in punishment. Even this I feel were not enough."

<sup>13</sup> *All for Jesus*, p. 388. See *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Dam" (the Pain of Loss in Purgatory), cols. 17 ff.; also Monsabré, *Conferences at Notre Dame*, 97th Conference, Purgatory; and Monsignor Gay, *Life and Christian Virtues*, chap. 17, On the Suffering Church.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 5:6.

<sup>16</sup> John 7:37.

<sup>14</sup> Amos 8:11.

<sup>17</sup> Ps. 41:3.

flesh, Oh, how many ways, in a desert land, and where there is no way and no water.”<sup>18</sup>

If purgatory is less severe for souls who have sinned only by feebleness, it must be more rigorous for those who have for a long time failed in confession and Communion. “Child of nothing, what hast thou to lament? Sinner covered with ignominy, what canst thou reply? What reproaches must one address to thee, who hast so often offended God and so often merited hell? My goodness has spared thee, that thou mightest know My love.”<sup>19</sup>

### Two Difficulties

Many souls are in purgatory who have sinned only venially. Can punishment so severe be proportioned to venial sins? St. Thomas replies: “Pain corresponds less to the gravity of the sin than to the disposition of the suffering soul. One and the same sin is punished more severely in purgatory than it is on earth. To illustrate. A man of delicate constitution suffers more than does another from a legal scourging.

Why is one and the same sin punished more rigorously in purgatory than on earth? Because in the absence of merit, reparation becomes satisfaction. Further, the separated soul knows much better than it did before that God is the one thing necessary.

These souls can no longer do anything for themselves. They can only suffer. Hence we, who can still merit and satisfy, should offer our merits and satisfactions for them. Such offerings will never be lost. These souls incapable of sin can lose nothing of what we obtain for them.

A second difficulty appears. The more saintly a soul is, the

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 62:1.

<sup>19</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III, chap. 13, no. 3.

more it desires to see God. And pain corresponds to desire. Is this just?

Our reply follows Suarez and St. Catherine of Genoa. Souls in purgatory, desiring the beatific vision, suffer from its delay, just as on earth the saints desire to die and to be with God. This normal consequence of intense love is a very noble suffering, pleasing to God who tries us. But this great pain is compensated by their greater abandonment to Providence and their greater love of divine justice. And less perfect souls suffer more from another point of view. They have lost for eternity a higher degree of glory, which would have been theirs had they been more perfect.

Think of the sufferings of Jesus and of His Mother. These sufferings were undoubtedly proportioned to reparation for our sins, but also to the intensity of their love. Suffering for sin grows with love of God.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> What a world separates the true idea of heaven from heaven as conceived by naturalism, by pantheism, a heaven which would be married to hell beyond good and bad, a heaven where without renouncing anything men would find supreme beatitude. This is the heaven defended by the secret doctrines of the counter-Church which begins with the Gnostics of old and continues in present-day occult doctrines that produce universal confusion. In the second part of *Faust*, Goethe is inspired by this naturalism, so distant from Christian faith.

## THE PAIN OF SENSE

PRIVATION of God punishes man for having turned away from Him. The pain of sense, on the contrary, punishes the soul for having turned toward creatures without reference to God. In venial sin this second disorder exists without the first.

Both the Greeks and the Latins maintain this pain of sense: a positive affliction, sorrow, chagrin, shame of conscience. And most theologians admit that all souls in purgatory suffer this pain to the end.<sup>1</sup>

But the schismatic Greeks, although they admit the existence of this punishment of sense, deny the existence of fire in purgatory, whereas they recognize that fire exists in hell. The Council of Florence did not condemn this opinion of the Greeks. The Latins, on the contrary, hold that the pain of sense is nothing else but the purgatorial fire.<sup>2</sup> After long discussions and wide historical researches on this particular point, it seems wise to conclude with St. Robert Bellarmine and Suarez as follows: "Although the existence of fire in purgatory is less certain than that of fire in hell, the doctrine which admits a real fire in purgatory must be classified as a

<sup>1</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Purgatoire."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 2258-2261; Denz. 3047, 3050.

*sententia probabilissima*. Hence the contrary opinion is improbable.”<sup>3</sup>

This view rests on seven reasons: first, the consent of scholastic theologians. Second, the authority of St. Gregory the Great.<sup>4</sup> Third, the authority of St. Augustine.<sup>5</sup> Fourth, the concordant testimonies of St. Cyprian, St. Basil, St. Caesarius, of the liturgy, which begs refreshment for these souls. Fifth, the unanimous decision of the Latin fathers at the Council of Florence. Sixth, the very probable foundation found in First Corinthians.<sup>6</sup> Seventh, particular revelations, for example, those of St. Catherine of Ricci. She suffered forty days to deliver a soul from purgatory. A novice, touching her hand, said: “But, my mother, you are burning.” “Yes, my daughter,” she replied, “this fire is not seen, but it consumes like a burning fever.”

How can fire cause suffering in souls separated from their bodies? As we said above,<sup>7</sup> fire is an instrument of justice, as baptismal water is an instrument of grace. A soul which has refused the instruments of mercy must suffer from the instruments of justice.

The mode of this action remains mysterious. This fire has the power to bind the soul,<sup>8</sup> that is, to hinder it from acting as it would and where it would. It inflicts on the soul the humiliation of depending on a material creature. An analogy is seen in paralyzed persons who cannot act as they would.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 2260; Hugon, O.P., *Tractatus dogmatici, de novissimis*, 1927, p. 824.

<sup>4</sup> *Dialogues*, Bk. IV, chaps. 39 and 45.

<sup>5</sup> *Enchir.*, chap. 69; *De civ. Dei*, XXI, 26.

<sup>6</sup> I Cor. 3:13-15.

<sup>7</sup> See above, chap. 16.

<sup>8</sup> *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 90; *IIIa Supplementum*, q. 70, a. 3.



## Are These Pains Voluntary?

St. Thomas replies: "Yes, in the sense that the soul wills to bear them, as benefits imposed upon it by divine justice. It realizes the suitableness of this vivid pain, to purify the depths of the soul, to erase all egoism and self-seeking. The soul, though it had not courage during life to impose upon itself this deep interior suffering, now accepts that suffering voluntarily."<sup>9</sup>

Do souls in purgatory suffer also from the demons? St. Thomas gives a profound answer.<sup>10</sup> They suffer only from divine justice. They do not suffer from the demons, because they have carried away the victory over these demons. And God does not use good angels as instruments for this purification. The suffering is inflicted by divine justice, which is always united with divine mercy.

Where is purgatory? The place cannot be determined with certitude. As revelation is not explicit, we can only make conjectures. What we know is that the poor souls, separated from their bodies, no longer deal with those on earth, though exceptionally they may appear to instruct us or to ask our prayers.

Do the sufferings of purgatory diminish progressively? <sup>11</sup> Yes and No. As "the remains of sin" disappear, little by little, the pain also diminishes. But as the desire to see God grows more vehement, the consequent pain grows too. Purgatory, we recall, is measured by discontinuous time.<sup>12</sup> One spiritual instant in purgatory may last several days of our solar time.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Appendix to the Supplement, a. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Purgatoire," col. 1295.

<sup>13</sup> Ia, a. 10, a. 5 et ad 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 5.

<sup>12</sup> See above, chap. 12.

### How Long Must Souls Remain in Purgatory? <sup>14</sup>

Purgatory itself will last until the last judgment.<sup>15</sup> "And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."<sup>16</sup> Purgatory will then be no longer. The last of the elect will find, before dying, sufficient purification. "There will arise false Christs and false prophets, and they will perform great prodigies, even so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect."<sup>17</sup> A little before this text we read: "Unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved, but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened."<sup>18</sup> The end of the world will come when the number of the elect is complete. Then purgatory will have an end.

But if the question regards the duration of purgatory for a particular soul, we can but answer that the punishment will be longer and more intense according to the expiation required.<sup>19</sup> Suffering corresponds to guilt, and its duration corresponds to the rootedness of sin. Thus one soul may suffer long, but with less affliction than another, whose more intense affliction brings earlier deliverance.

Let us illustrate by an analogy. Punishment on earth, say scourging, may be severe and brief, whereas imprisonment may be long and less severe. In the spiritual order, too, penance for a grave sin may be brief and severe, while for faults less grave but more deeply rooted, it may be long and mild.

Dominic Soto<sup>20</sup> and Maldonatus say that purgatory is so severe, and the suffrages of the Church so efficacious, that no

<sup>14</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Purgatoire," col. 1289.

<sup>15</sup> Denz., nos. 464, 693, 3035, 3047, 3050.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 25:46.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 24:24.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 22.

<sup>19</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 21, q. 1, a. 3; Appendix of the Supplement, a. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *In IV Sent.*, dist. 19, q. 3, a. 2.

soul remains there more than ten or twenty years. Theologians, all but unanimously, reject this view. Souls converted at the last moment, after a life of grave disorder, remain in purgatory much longer than ten or twenty years. Theological opinion, in general, favors long duration of purgatorial purification.<sup>21</sup> Private revelations mention three or four centuries, or even more, especially for those who have had high office and great responsibility.

To escape false imagining, let us again recall that purgatory is not measured by solar time, but by eviternity and discontinuous time. Discontinuous time, we have seen is composed of successive spiritual instants, and each of these instants may correspond to ten, twenty, thirty, sixty hours of our solar time, just as a person can remain thirty hours in ecstasy absorbed by one sole thought. Hence there is no proportion between our solar time and the discontinuous time of purgatory. But if it be revealed that a soul has been delivered from purgatory at a definite instant of our time, it means that this instant corresponds to the spiritual instant of its deliverance.

<sup>21</sup> *De gemitu colombae*, Bk. II, chap. 9.

## THEIR STATE OF SOUL

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WE MUST now recall briefly, first what we have said above on the nature of knowledge in the separated soul; secondly, on particular judgment.<sup>1</sup>

These souls, since they have their bodies no longer, cannot exercise the operations of sense-life. But they do retain and can exercise the superior faculties of intellect and will. They carry with them all their knowledge and all their virtues, theological and moral, but they must exercise these possessions without the support of the imagination.

This preternatural mode of being is accompanied by a preternatural mode of acting. Infused ideas enable them to know the singular in the universal, in particular to know persons remaining on earth with whom they have a special relation.

Further, they see themselves intuitively, as the angels do. Hence they know very clearly their own spirituality, immortality, liberty. In themselves, as in a mirror, they have perfect natural knowledge of God, the author of their nature. And they know one another.

The particular judgment, we have said, comes at the very instant of separation from the body. This instant terminates merit and demerit. The sentence of judgment, in the form

<sup>1</sup> See above, chaps. 10 and 12.

of an intellectual illumination, covers their entire terrestrial life, and is therefore definitive. The state of the souls in purgatory follows from these principles.

### Certitude of Salvation and Confirmation in Grace

Particular judgment gives to the souls in purgatory assurance of salvation. Their hope is no longer, like ours, the certitude of tendency.<sup>2</sup> It is the certitude of arrival, a certitude which can be had on earth only by a special revelation.<sup>8</sup> The particular judgment contains this special revelation. The soul is certain of its predestination. Further, it knows that it is not in heaven, where one sees God, nor in hell, where one blasphemes God. It lives in a transitory state of purification, where it loves God above all things.

Further, these souls are confirmed in grace. This, too, is a consequence of the particular judgment. Theologians teach this truth generally, recalling that the Church has condemned the following proposition of Luther: "The souls in purgatory sin continually and endeavor to escape their sufferings."<sup>4</sup> Confirmation in grace is our reason for calling them the holy souls.

But how can they be confirmed in grace before they have received the beatific vision, which has as a consequence impeccability? Suarez explains this by a special protection of God, which preserves the souls from sin, mortal or venial, in order that their entrance into heaven shall not be delayed longer than necessary. Thomists add an intrinsic reason. These souls, being pure spirits, judge in immovable fashion con-

<sup>2</sup> IIa IIae, q. 18, a. 4. "Hope tends with certainty toward its goal, with a certitude that participates in the certitude of faith."

<sup>8</sup> Denz. nos. 805, 826, 806.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 779.

cerning their last end, and adhere to that last end immovably. They are fixed in good. This is the teaching of St. Thomas.<sup>5</sup> This immutable adherence to the last end, we must repeat, is in a higher order than our solar time. It is measured by eviternity, though, in regions of thought less elevated, separated souls have a succession of thoughts and sentiments which are measured by discontinuous time, by spiritual instants.<sup>6</sup> We find something similar on earth in saints who are confirmed in grace. Their turning toward God is immutable, but below this they have a succession of thoughts and sentiments, subordinated to God loved above all things.

All that we are now saying follows clearly from principles enunciated above. But difficulties still face us. First, these souls, confirmed in grace, may still have died in venial sins. When are these venial sins forgiven? Further, those converted just before death, after a life of grave disorder, have carried with them very defective dispositions. Are these dispositions taken away at once upon entrance into purgatory, or only gradually? Theology explains.

### The Remission of Venial Sins

Just souls surprised by death, for example, during sleep, or at a moment when they do not have sufficient control of reason, were not able at the last moment to make an act of contrition, a meritorious act which would have obtained the remission of venial sins. Such sins are remitted to them by the act of charity and contrition which they make immediately

<sup>5</sup> Ia, q. 64, a. 2. "The angel apprehends unchangeably by his intellect, just as we apprehend unchangeably first principles, and the will of the angel adheres fixed and unchangeably, after it has chosen." We have here a reflex of the immutability of the free decrees of God. Cf. also *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 11 ad 4; also *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 95.

<sup>6</sup> Ia, q. 10, a. 5 ad 1.

after death, at the moment of the particular judgment. This act indeed is no longer meritorious. But it is an act of charity and contrition which suffices to remit venial sins, though the soul must still endure the suffering due to these faults. Such is the teaching of St. Thomas,<sup>7</sup> admitted also by Suarez,<sup>8</sup> and by the generality of theologians.<sup>9</sup>

This doctrine is very probable. Nothing prevents the separated soul from making at once an act of repentance. It is no longer hindered by the passions. General contrition would suffice for the remission of these sins. But, under the light of the particular judgment, the soul sees all its sins singly and consequently repents of each singly. This is a wonderful complement of the act of contrition made on earth, although that complement is not meritorious. Certainly it is better to make this act of contrition before death. To sacrifice life in union with the Masses celebrated at the moment of death would have been meritorious. But, while it is not now meritorious, it obtains the remission of venial sins. Such a soul is a saint, because all its venial sins are at once remitted, and it can no longer sin. This is truly a beautiful doctrine.

### The Defective Dispositions

When sin is remitted by grace, the soul is no longer turned away from God,<sup>10</sup> but it can retain a defective disposition which carries it toward created good. These defective dispositions, while they no longer have predominance, remain as the fuel of concupiscence. The drunkard or the backbiter,

<sup>7</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 21, q. 1, a. 3; Appendix of the Supplement, a. 6; *De malo*, q. 7, a. 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Disputatio XI*, sectio 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Purgatoire," col. 1294; Hugon, *Tractatus dogmatici, de novissimis*, p. 825.

<sup>10</sup> IIIa, q. 86, a. 5.

even after absolution, retains a disposition to fall back into his old sin.

Do these dispositions remain in the separated soul? Yes. They are like rust, penetrating at times to the depths of the intelligence and the will. Does this rust disappear suddenly upon entrance into purgatory? Some theologians think so, because an intense act of charity can immediately take away these evil dispositions.<sup>11</sup>

Now we do not find this answer in St. Thomas, but rather its contrary. He says, as we have seen: "The rigor of suffering corresponds properly speaking to the gravity of the fault, and the duration of the suffering corresponds to the rootedness which the sin has in the subject."<sup>12</sup> Now uprooting is generally a long process, demanding a long affliction or a long penance.

St. Catherine of Genoa<sup>13</sup> speaks as follows: "No peace is comparable to that of the souls in purgatory except that of the saints in heaven. This peace grows as hindrances disappear. As the rust disappears, the soul reflects more and more perfectly the true sun, which is God. And its happiness grows in the same measure."<sup>14</sup>

Hence we are inclined to think that, although venial sins are immediately remitted on entrance into purgatory, evil dispositions, as a rule, disappear progressively. We say, as a rule. Exceptions may occur, as on earth, so in purgatory.<sup>15</sup>

### Voluntary Satisfaction

We are here in the heart of our subject. Sin merits suffering. The divine order, like the social order, must be re-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hugon, *op. cit.*, p. 826, and *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Purgatoire," col. 1298.

<sup>12</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 21, q. 1, a. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Treatise on Purgatory*, chap. 2.

<sup>14</sup> The saint is speaking from her own experience.

<sup>15</sup> IIIa, q. 86, a. 5.



established by a penal compensation. If the soul accepts this penalty, it re-enters the order which it has violated.

This thought, adumbrated by Plato, is developed by St. Thomas.<sup>16</sup> Voluntary acceptance of the pains of purgatory obtains for the poor souls the remission of their debt to divine justice. But, whereas on earth the satisfaction is meritorious, the satisfaction in purgatory is no longer meritorious.<sup>17</sup>

Purgatorial satisfaction is not only accepted by the will, but it is offered, with ardent charity, as an act of adoration. Here we have one of the most beautiful views of purgatory. The soul clearly recognizes the imprescriptible rights of God, author of nature and grace. It now sees the infinite value of redemption, of the sacrifice of the cross, of Mass, of the sacraments, which on earth it treated with negligence. It also sees much more profoundly, without possible distraction, the value of eternal life, of the possession of God. What joy in purgatory when Mass is celebrated on anniversary days!

These souls love their suffering. On earth they were not generous enough to impose on themselves a condign punishment. Now that punishment becomes an expiatory sacrifice. And the more this suffering penetrates the depth of their will, the more lovingly they accept it. Egoism, selfishness, the rust of sin, is burned away, and charity reigns without rival in the depths, rooted there forever.

We on earth see events along the horizontal line, where it is hard to distinguish good from evil, since great criminals often have statues in public places. The souls in purgatory, on the contrary, have rather the vertical view, where God's infinite holiness penetrates the most profound depths of

<sup>16</sup> 1a IIae, q. 87, a. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix to the Supplement, *De purgatorio*, articles 4, 7, 8.

perversity. Adoration of this holiness constitutes the purgatorial liturgy.

"Joy from pain, how can it come?" Purgatorial pain is accepted and offered, not only with peace, but with the joy which comes from the certitude of grace and salvation. Joy does not diminish pain, because both proceed from thirst for God.

Of this ebb and flow, the ebb and flow of the sea is a feeble image. On the one side, attraction toward God; on the other, a soul held back by the vestiges of sin.<sup>18</sup>

Purgatorial love of God, far from diminishing pain, rather augments it. Purgatorial purification makes us think of the dark night described by St. John of the Cross. The poor souls are spiritually crucified. They may say: "I am crucified in this flame." But the sense of the word is contrary to the sense it has for the damned. Here it means the living flame of love, which ceases not to mount up to God.<sup>19</sup>

Mutual love governs purgatory. All have perfect peace, perfect abandonment into the hands of the Lord. They find sweetness in their sufferings. In the book called *De paenitentia*, attributed to St. Augustine, we read: "Let the penitent al-

<sup>18</sup> Monsignor Gay (*De la vie et des vertus Chret.*, II, 570 ff.) speaks thus: "After death it is no longer God who keeps the creature at a distance. On the contrary, He waits for it, calls for it, draws it. The soul knows this although it does not see Him. It feels it. All that is in the soul attempts to rush toward God with a necessity that remains unchangeable. Their helplessness is the source of this immobility. Like the paralytic beside the pond, they are unable to help themselves. They cannot do penance, cannot merit, cannot satisfy, cannot gain indulgences. They are deprived of the sacraments. In one sense the souls love these chains which bind them to their present state. But their love, although it is more ardent, finds itself the more unable to help itself.

How small on earth is the number of those who in reality are seized by the idea of divine justice! In purgatory the souls have an inexpressible devotion to divine sanctity, and this is the most fundamental characteristic of their state."

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *La vie spirituelle*, December 1, 1942. Father Dechau, O.P.; *Les deux flammes*, pp. 434 ff.

ways feel pain for his sin, and always feel joy for his pain.”<sup>20</sup> In the words of the Psalmist: “Justice and peace have kissed.”<sup>21</sup> Such is the liturgy of the Church suffering.

### Freedom Regained

Can the poor souls suffer anxiety? No. It is excluded by their certainty of salvation. Terror is excluded by adoration of divine justice. And perfect union with the divine will excludes impatience, and includes gratitude. Absence of sense faculties excludes all emotional disturbance. And their spiritual sadness is completely subject to God.

St. Francis de Sales<sup>22</sup> speaks thus: “The souls in purgatory are most certainly there on account of their sins, sins which they have detested and still do detest above all things. Their pain arises from delay, from deprivation for a time of the blessed joys and love of paradise. But this pain they endure with the loving song: ‘Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right.’”<sup>23</sup>

St. Catherine of Genoa speaks in similar fashion: “They choose to remain where they are, since God has justly arranged it so. They have no envy. They do not say, ‘This soul will be delivered before me’; or ‘I will be delivered before it.’ They are so satisfied with the divine dispositions that they love everything that pleases God.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus the soul, as many mystics have said, in purgatory regains full personal liberty, full mastery of self. It truly possesses itself, in the order willed by God, in that peace which is the tranquillity of order.

<sup>20</sup> *De paenitentia*, chap. 13.

<sup>22</sup> *Love of God*, Bk. IX, chap. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Treatise on Purgatory*, chap. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ps. 84:11.

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 118:137.

This full liberty is incapable of evil, capable only of good, and in this it is the image of the liberty of God, who is simultaneously sovereignly free and absolutely impeccable. Liberty harmonized with immutability is the fruit of confirmation in grace. From this point of view the life of the suffering souls is very noble, very beautiful, although it is not yet the life of heaven.

### Growth of Virtue in Purgatory

If we restrict the question to acquired virtues, the answer cannot be doubtful. Souls in purgatory can grow in virtue by repetition of natural acts. On earth these virtues, justice, say, or fortitude, grow even in the state of mortal sin, wherein man cannot merit. Further, defective habitudes, the "remains of sin," disappear step by step. They are replaced by acquired virtues. This seems reasonable, above all for such souls as have entered purgatory only by absolution at the moment of death, souls which before, we may say, had acquired no virtue. Acquired virtue, we have seen, prepares for infused virtue, as finger agility subserves the art of the musician. Hence acquired virtues can grow in purgatory, at least those which are in the faculties purely spiritual, as, for instance, prudence and justice. But virtues which involve sense powers, chastity, say, cannot thus grow.

What of the infused virtues and the seven gifts? An answer is difficult. There are serious arguments for both sides.

First, the negative view. If infused virtues grow in purgatory, then charity too would grow, and thus the final degree of glory would be proportioned, not to the degree of charity at the moment of death, but to the degree of charity at the end of purgatorial punishment. Now this conclusion seems

contrary to the general belief, that the degree of glory is proportioned to the merits which the soul has at the instant of death.

Now the positive view. The souls in purgatory do perform intense acts of faith, hope, charity, religion, and hence it seems that infused virtues, too, would increase, not indeed by repetition of acts, because these virtues are infused and not acquired, but because God, in mercy, would grant this growth without any new merit. This opinion has been defended by Palmieri,<sup>25</sup> and before him by Lessius.<sup>26</sup> According to Lessius, growth in infused virtue does not absolutely require new merit. What suffices is a good disposition. Thus a Christian in mortal sin, who from time to time makes acts of faith and hope, could, by divine mercy, grow in these virtues.

But this view, too, makes the degree of glory correspond, not to the degree of charity at the moment of death, but to the degree of charity at the end of purgatory. This is not in harmony with the traditional doctrine. St. Thomas says: "After death there is no way to acquire grace or to increase it."<sup>27</sup>

Many Thomists nevertheless defend an increase of charity in purgatory, an increase based on imperfectly meritorious acts, acts which on earth would not have obtained an increase of charity. They quote St. Thomas: "On earth, each act of charity merits increase of this virtue, but it does not always obtain this augmentation at once. This augmentation is obtained only when the soul makes an act of charity intense

<sup>25</sup> *De novissimis*, II, nos. 2, 3.

<sup>26</sup> *De summo bono*, Bk. II, chap. 29; cf. *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Purgatoire," col. 1298.

<sup>27</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 71, a. 12; *Quodlibet* II, q. 7, a. 2; *Quodlibet* VIII, q. 5, a. 2.

enough to dispose it to receive this augmentation.”<sup>28</sup> Take, for example, a man who has a charity corresponding to five talents. Let him act as if he had only two talents. His charity, for the moment, remains where it was. It will not grow until he disposes himself by an act sufficiently intense to receive growth. Now the merit due to these feeble meritorious acts, imperfect and remiss, may lie dormant until death.<sup>29</sup> May this increase in virtue not be granted to them in purgatory? We see here a serious probability, but no more.

Under this view, it would still be true that the degree of charity is proportioned to the degree of merits gathered on earth. But it would not be proportioned to the degree of charity at the moment of death. It would correspond to the degree of charity at the end of purgatory.

Souls that have entered purgatory by death-bed absolution, not preceded even by feeble merits, would naturally have glory corresponding to the degree of charity at the moment of death. But, solve this mysterious question as we may, the principle remains:<sup>30</sup> the degree of glory is proportioned to that of the merit acquired on earth. Hence the importance of learning to love God while we are still on earth. Life everlasting is the standard whereby to judge of life here below.

### Ultimate Disposition for Heaven

Ultimate disposition, in its strictest sense, is realized only at the instant of the soul's entrance into glory, just as the last disposition for the creation of the human soul is not produced except at the very instant of the creation of this soul,

<sup>28</sup> IIa IIae, q. 24, a. 6 ad 1.

<sup>29</sup> John of St. Thomas, Gonet, Billuart, *De caritate*, diss. II, a. 3, dico 40.

<sup>30</sup> Denz., no. 692.

or as the last disposition for justification does not exist except at the moment when sanctifying grace is infused.<sup>31</sup> The reason is that the disposition properly called ultimate precedes the form only in the order of material dispositive causality, but follows the form in all other orders of causality: formal, efficient, and final.

This ultimate disposition to the beatific vision, then, is realized only in the instant when the soul is glorified, and this instant is the one unique instant of participated eternity.

But may we find in the poor souls a disposition quasi-ultimate? In what would it consist? We may characterize it negatively and positively.

Negatively, this disposition excludes all sin, all defective disposition, all "remains of sin." The soul is completely purified, approaches definitive sanctity.

Positively this disposition is realized in different degrees: "In my Father's house there are many mansions." It includes firm faith and assured hope and, above all, ardent charity, an intense desire of God. The sublime gift of the beatific vision cannot be granted to one who does not have this burning desire. Without this desire the soul would be still unprepared for the vision. In illustration, think of the teacher who reserves a sublime doctrine for those who appreciate its value, and thus are disposed to profit by it.

This intense desire is proportioned to charity. Some have twenty talents, others ten, others five, others still less, but each has an intense desire, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ."<sup>32</sup> Each in his own manner reaches full age in Christ.<sup>33</sup>

This quasi-ultimate disposition to glory supposes high per-

<sup>31</sup> Ia IIae, q. 112, a. 2 ad 1; q. 113, a. 6-8; IIIa, q. 7, a. 13 ad 2. Cf. Billuart, *De gratia*, diss. VII, a. 4, § 4.

<sup>32</sup> Eph. 4:7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:13.

fection in infused virtue, and in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in particular a vivid faith which is penetrating and savorous, the infused contemplation of the mysteries of salvation. We find here then a confirmation of the doctrine we have often expounded. Infused contemplation belongs to the normal road of sanctity. If not learned on earth, it must be learned in purgatory. Better learn it now with merit, than wait to learn it, in pain and without merit, after death.

### Doctrine of St. Catherine of Genoa

St. Catherine's treatise,<sup>84</sup> dictated in ecstasy, has always been highly esteemed by theologians, who find therein a supplement of theological science.<sup>85</sup> We give here an outline of her teachings.

<sup>84</sup> *Treatise on Purgatory*. Cf. *Dict. de spiritualité*, "St. Catherine of Genoa," cols. 304 ff.

<sup>85</sup> St. Catherine of Genoa, born in 1447, of the illustrious family of the Fieschi, received great graces at a very early age. At the age of eight she began to sleep on straw, placing her head on a piece of hard wood. At twelve years she received the gift of prayer. At thirteen, feeling a strong vocation for the religious life, she attempted to enter among the Canonesses of the Lateran, in the convent where her sister Limbania had already been received. She was rejected on account of her youth, although her confessor interceded for her. At the age of sixteen, yielding to the will of her parents, she married Julian Adorno. The choice was unhappy. He was a violent man, of bad morals, whereas she was pious and recollected.

During five years of deep aridity Catherine suffered sadness without remedy. In the meantime her husband dissipated her patrimony and brought the family into financial distress. She who was called to be a great saint began to feel discouragement. To forget this discouragement she gave herself to exterior affairs, and began to take pleasure in the delights and vanities of the world. It is probable that she never sinned mortally, but a great tepidity ruled her heart.

One day in great dejection, after praying to St. Benedict in the church which bears his name, she listened to her religious sister, and went to confession. This confession became her conversion.

Paulo de Savone relates the manner of this conversion. As she knelt down in the confessional, she received suddenly a wound in her heart, the wound of an



Chapter 1. The souls in purgatory willingly remain where they are because God so wills it. They cannot sin. But neither do they merit by abstaining from sin.

Chapter 2. No peace can be compared to the peace of purgatory, unless it be the peace of heaven. Purgatorial peace grows continually as obstacles disappear. These obstacles are like rust. Excellence grows as the rust diminishes.

Chapter 3. God increases in them the desire to see Him. He enkindles in their heart a fire so strong that obstacles become insupportable.

Chapter 4. After life on earth the soul remains confirmed, either in good or in evil. Hence the souls in purgatory are confirmed in grace.

Chapter 5. God punishes the reprobate less than they merit.

Chapter 6. The souls in purgatory have perfect conformity with the will of God.

Chapter 7. Comparisons are weak. Yet we may think of one loaf of bread, capable, merely by being seen, of satisfying the hunger of all human creatures.

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immense love of God, with deep insight into her own misery, but also into God's goodness. In sentiments of contrition, love, recognition, she was purified, nearly fell to earth, had to suspend her confession, which she finished on the morrow. Jesus appeared to her carrying His cross. She did heroic penance, until God revealed to her that she had satisfied divine justice. She then spoke these words: "If I should go back, I would wish in punishment to have someone tear out my eyes, and this itself would be too small a punishment, because to turn back would be to lose the eyes of my soul, incomparably more precious than those of the body." She obtained the conversion of her husband and gave herself with him to care for the sick in the chief hospital of Genoa. She led at that time a life of intense union with God, and suffered much for the deliverance of souls from purgatory. A fire, mysterious and supernatural, tortured her frame and made her feel a hunger and thirst quite abnormal. During this time she had ecstasies of pain, during which she dictated her treatise on purgatory, which is as pithy as it is brief.

Chapter 8. Hell and purgatory manifest the wonderful wisdom of God. The separated soul goes naturally to its own place. The soul in the state of sin, finding no place more suitable, throws itself of its own accord into hell. And the soul which is not yet ready for divine union, casts itself voluntarily into purgatory.

Chapter 9. Heaven has no gates. Whoever will can enter there, because God is all goodness. But the divine essence is so pure that the soul, finding in itself obstacles, prefers to enter purgatory, and there to find in mercy the removal of the impediment.

Chapter 10. Their greatest suffering is that of having sinned against divine goodness, still finding those rusty "remains of sin."

Chapter 11. The soul feels God's loving attraction. But it feels also its own inability to follow this attraction. If it could find a purgatory still more excruciating, where it could more quickly be purified, it would at once plunge into it.

Chapter 12. I see the rays of faith which purify the soul, as fire in a crucible cleanses gold from dregs. When the soul is entirely purified, the fire can no longer cause pain.

Chapter 13. The soul's desire of God is itself a torment. God's mercy hides certain consequences of sin until they are destroyed, that the soul may understand the divine action which has restored its purity.

Chapter 14. These souls enjoy inexpressible peace, compounded of joy and pain, neither diminishing the other.

Chapter 15. If these souls could still merit, one single act of repentance would pay their debt, by reason of the intensity of this act. But they know that not one penny will be remitted. Such is the decree of divine justice. If prayers are offered

for them by the living, they rejoice therein only according to the will of God, without any selfishness.

Chapter 16. As long as the process of purification lasts, these souls understand that the beatific vision is not for them. They would suffer more from that vision than they suffer in purgatory.

Chapter 17. Illumined on the necessity of reparation, they would cry out to men on earth: "O wretched creatures, why so blindly attached to things that pass? Why not make provision for the future? You say perhaps: 'I will go to confession, I will gain a plenary indulgence, I will be saved.' But remember that the adequate confession and the perfect contrition, required for gaining a plenary indulgence, are not easily attained."

Chapter 18. These souls would not in any way lessen their sufferings they have merited.

Chapter 19. These purgatorial pains, the saint adds, I have myself experienced these last two years. All consolation, corporal and spiritual, has gradually been taken from me. To conclude, only God's omnipotent mercy can cure human deficiency. This transformation is the work of purgatory.

Another mystic, Mother Mary of St. Austin,<sup>36</sup> compares the souls in purgatory with Mary Magdalen at the foot of the cross. She writes as follows: "Mary Magdalen, the penitent, at the foot of the cross: was she not penetrated by that light which reveals to souls in purgatory the malice of sin? She stood before the cross like a living mirror, without movement, her eyes lifted to Him. The sublimity of the revelation she received there surpasses all word, all thought, all sentiment. Christ's unspeakable holiness, His measureless

<sup>36</sup> *The Divine Crucible of Purgatory*, by Mother Mary of St. Austin, Helper of the Poor Souls, New York, 1940, p. 61.

pain, His radiating peace, wrapped her round. These three hours on Calvary were her purgatory. But she would not have given one moment of this pain for all the joys of Thabor. In our Lord and through Him she expiated her own faults, while all thought of herself disappeared. She was immersed in the contemplation of the Word made flesh, suffering for the sins of the world. In Him rather than in herself, she understood what sin means for God and for man. Surely here we have an image of the souls in purgatory. Calvary shows how divine light penetrates purgatorial darkness. It shows divine light radiating these silent souls with all the pains of Jesus crucified. Purgatorial pain and peace are found also on earth, beneath the holiness of Him who takes away the sins of the world."

These reflections lead us to think that passive purification, described by St. John of the Cross, should be undergone as far as possible during the present life, by generous acceptance of all contrarities. Reparation is thus made with merit, and with growth in charity, and hence with a claim for a vision of God more penetrating, and a love of God more strong and intense. But souls that completely escape all purgatory are probably rather rare. Among the good religious whom St. Theresa knew, only three had completed their purgatory on earth.

### The Purgatory of Perfect Souls

Monsignor A. Saudreau speaks thus of perfect souls: "The Lord leads even His friends through purifying pains, but He seems to regret that He must do so. He cannot refrain from consolations which sweeten their sufferings."<sup>37</sup> Moses

<sup>37</sup> *L'Idéal de l'âme fervente*, 1920, p. 53.

was punished for a lack of confidence, dying before he could enter the promised land. But, on Mount Nebo, in the twinkling of an eye, God showed him the entire country which for forty years had been the object of his desires.<sup>38</sup>

"The Lord, for example, shows to generous souls how agreeable their generosity has been to Him, how fruitful it has been for others, how eternally profitable to themselves. These consolations enable them to suffer with great love. St. Lawrence on his gridiron suffered awful pains, but the ardor of his love let him find them very light. This truth illumines purgatory. Purification reveals God's ineffable goodness, His wisdom, His holiness, a holiness opposed even to the least spot. These souls, like the saints on earth, exercise submission, profound adoration. They accept with a courageous heart the sufferings which His holy will imposes on them, and which they deserve."<sup>39</sup>

Divine providence is irreproachable. It permits evils, which it might prevent, in view of a greater good, the manifestation of divine mercy and justice. This greater good becomes more and more clear to the soul as it approaches heaven. It understands the words of St. Paul: "All things work together unto good for those who love God."<sup>40</sup> Even the faults of these souls, says St. Augustine, work together unto good, as St. Peter's fall taught him humility.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Deut. 3:23 ff.

<sup>39</sup> See note 37.

<sup>40</sup> Rom. 8:28.

<sup>41</sup> See also the *Visions of Purgatory*, described in the book already cited, *Un Appel à l'Amour*.

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## CHARITY FOR THE POOR SOULS

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LET us consider the foundation of this charity, then how it can be exercised, and thirdly, what are its fruits. What is the foundation of this charity? St. Thomas announces the principle: "All the faithful in the state of grace are united with one another by charity. They are all members of one sole body, that is, of the Church. Now in an organism each member is aided by all others. Thus every Christian is aided by the merits of all other Christians."<sup>1</sup> Without doubt, he adds, Jesus Christ alone, as the head of humanity, can merit by title of strict justice. But every just soul can aid its neighbor, by the merit of congruity.<sup>2</sup> Hence we can aid the souls in purgatory, since they also belong to the body of Christ.

Charity loves God, loves all who are now children of God, and all who are called to be His children. But the suffering souls are children of God and will be His children forever. The Blessed Trinity dwells in them, Jesus lives in them intimately. And whereas we love them all, we have special duties to the souls of our dead relatives.

The poor souls can do nothing for themselves. They can no longer merit or give satisfaction or receive the sacraments or gain indulgences. They can only accept and offer their

<sup>1</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 25, q. 2, a. 1; *Supplementum*, q. 71, a. 1.

<sup>2</sup> This merit of congruity is founded not on justice but on charity. God by reason of our charity grants relief to those whom we love. Ia IIae, q. 114, a. 6,

own suffering of satisfaction. Hence they have a special right to be aided by others. The foundress of the Helpers of the Poor Souls, while still a child, said to her friends: "If one of us were in a fiery prison and we could deliver him by a word, would we not say that word quickly? The poor souls are in a fiery prison, and our good God, to open that prison, asks only a prayer from us.<sup>3</sup> Can we refuse this prayer?"

Little by little this same child reached the following intuition: "Deliverance from purgatory means the greater glory of God. We must give Him these souls whom He is calling." Some years later the Curé of Ars said of this young girl: "She will found an order for the souls in purgatory. It is God who has given her the idea of such sublime devotion. This order will have rapid extension in the Church."<sup>4</sup>

Father Faber<sup>5</sup> remarks that work for the suffering souls is sure of success. As they cannot be lost, our work for them must bear fruit. To obtain for these souls the greatest of all gifts, God seen face to face, will, at the same time, increase the accidental joy of our Lord, of His blessed Mother, and of the saints.

### How Shall We Exercise This Charity

We exercise this charity by praying for the dead, that is, by offering our merits, our prayers, our satisfactions, our deeds of almsgiving, by gaining indulgences, and above all by offering Holy Mass for their repose.

The Church herself gives us the example. During each Mass she prays for them in the Memento of the Dead. Further, she opens her treasures, the merits of Christ and of the saints, in the form of indulgences applicable to the poor souls.

<sup>3</sup> *La Révérende Mère Marie de Providence*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *All for Jesus*, chap. 9.

Indulgences, says St. Thomas,<sup>6</sup> offer chief value to him who accomplishes the good work. But they have a secondary value, for those for whom this work is done. Nothing hinders the Church from applying indulgences to the souls in purgatory.

Can suffrages offered for one soul be profitable also for others? The answer runs thus: <sup>7</sup> By intention, they have a special value for the one. But, by reason of charity which cannot exclude anyone, they are more profitable to those who have the greater charity and are thus better disposed to receive greater consolation. Thus, as regards Holy Mass, we distinguish the special fruit, granted to the soul for whom the Mass is said, from the general fruit, in which all the faithful, however numerous, participate, each in the measure of his own disposition.

St. Thomas asks a second question: <sup>8</sup> Are suffrages offered for many souls together more profitable than if they were offered for one? His answer runs thus: By reason of the charity which inspires them, these suffrages are just as profitable for many as if they were offered for one. One Mass gives joy to ten thousand souls in purgatory as if they were but one. Nevertheless these same suffrages, considered as satisfaction, are more useful to those to whom they are applied singly.

This at least was the thought of St. Thomas, when, as a young priest, he wrote his commentary on the *Fourth Book of Sentences*.<sup>9</sup> But at the end of his life when he was composing the *Summa*,<sup>10</sup> he says regarding the sacrifice of the Mass: "Although one sacrifice of Mass is in itself sufficient to

<sup>6</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 71, a. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 72.

<sup>8</sup> *IV Sent.*, dist. 45, q. 2, a. 4; *Supplementum*, q. 71, a. 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, dist. 45, q. 2, a. 4.

<sup>10</sup> *IIa*, q. 79, a. 5.



satisfy for all suffering, nevertheless its value, both for those for whom it is offered and for those who offer, is measured by their devotion. This measure of devotion depends, in the case of the poor souls, on the dispositions they had at the moment of death."

Here the only limit assigned to the satisfactory power of the Mass is the devotion of those who offer and of those for whom it is offered. Thus it is generally admitted that the parochial Mass in a large parish is just as profitable to each member, according to his devotion, as it would be for each member of a small parish.

The great Thomistic commentators,<sup>11</sup> Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, Gonet, the Carmelites of Salamanca, insist on the infinite value of the Mass, by reason of the victim offered, of the chief priest who offers. One Mass said for many persons can be just as profitable to each, according to the measure of his devotion, as if it were offered for one alone. The sun illuminates ten thousand people as easily as if they were but one person.

The effect of a universal cause is limited only by the capacity of its subjects to receive the influence of that cause.

Thus that Mass on All Souls Day, which is said for all the souls in purgatory, has special value for forgotten souls, for whom no one now offers a special Mass.<sup>12</sup>

### Fruits of This Charity

Each soul in purgatory is, as it were, a spiritual universe gravitating toward God. We can accelerate the process. Mass

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Likewise the pope often asks that priests celebrate Mass to pay those debts, very numerous, which have been established by legacies and foundations, of which after a revolution there remains no trace.

celebrated for these dear ones, indulgences gained for them, increase likewise our own store of merit. Perseverance, too, is necessary. Many believe too easily in the prompt deliverance of their dear ones, and after a period, say of a month, no longer pray for them.

We can aid the poor souls, not only by offering prayers, but by other acts of virtue: by almsgiving, by accepting a cross. Let us remember particularly the souls most abandoned, who are sometimes the most holy.

God is pleased to reward our least service. And these souls, too, will not fail to aid us by their own gratitude in heaven. Even before their deliverance they pray for all benefactors. They have charity, which indeed excludes no one but which imposes on them a special duty toward those friends. Their prayers are efficacious even if they do not know in detail our condition, just as our prayers for them are efficacious though we do not know their condition.<sup>13</sup>

May we also pray to the poor souls? The liturgy does not pray to them. But we are not forbidden to pray to them, though we must give preference to prayer for them. Here is a sentence from St. Thomas: "The souls in purgatory are not in the state of praying, but in the state of being prayed for."<sup>14</sup>

Certain fervent Christians offer, in favor of the souls in purgatory, all their acts of satisfaction, including those to be made for them after death. This act is called the heroic act. It should not be made lightly, but only after serious reflection. St. Louis Marie de Montfort urges this act as devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Her wisdom will perform this task much better than we can. This act is not a vow. But it may bet-

<sup>13</sup> Hugon, Vol. IV, *de novissimis*, p. 828.

<sup>14</sup> IIa IIae, q. 83, a. 11 ad 33. Cf. *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Purgatoire," cols. 1315-18.

ter be made first for a year or so, before it is made for life.

Charity to the suffering souls leads us into the mystery of the communion of saints: Christ, the head of men and of angels, head of the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant. Each member shares in the merits of Christ and of all His members. The Church is not a mere visible, hierarchical society, but also the mystical body of the Savior.

The Church is the kingdom of God announced in the Gospel, the kingdom where charity reigns as queen, which makes of all the faithful and of all the blessed one true family of which God is the Father. Thus are realized the words of the Savior: "I am the vine; you are the branches." Thus is realized His desire "that they be one, as Thou, Father, and I are one." The mystical body is a favorite doctrine of St. Paul, who is followed by early Fathers, by St. Augustine, and by the medieval doctors.

From the triune God, through Christ, the life of grace descends, like a spiritual river, upon the souls on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven, and then returns to God under the form of adoration, supplication, reparation, thanksgiving.

The parable of the Good Samaritan may serve as summary. He is moved by the misery of his neighbor, and reacts in the most efficacious manner. Hence he, too, merits the mercy of God. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy."<sup>15</sup>

Genuine compassion will never cease to pour in oil and wine: prayer, patience, Holy Mass, the Way of the Cross. Mercy on the poor souls will bring us also the crowning mercy of a holy death.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 5:7.

## FIFTH PART

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HEAVEN

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## THE EXISTENCE OF HEAVEN

HEAVEN means the place, and especially the condition, of supreme beatitude. Had God created no bodies, but only pure spirits, heaven would not need to be a place; it would signify merely the state of the angels who rejoice in the possession of God. But in fact heaven is also a place. There we find the humanity of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, and the souls of the saints. Though we cannot say with certitude where this place is to be found, or what its relation is to the whole universe, revelation does not allow us to doubt of its existence. (A pure spirit can be in place only so far as it exercises an action on a body in that place, but of itself the spirit lives in an order higher than that of space.)

We shall speak first of the existence of heaven, then we shall see what is the nature of this beatitude: beatific vision, beatific love, and accidental beatitude.

The Church teaches as a doctrine of faith, defined by Benedict XII: "The souls of all the saints are in heaven before the resurrection of the body and the general judgment. They see the divine essence by a vision which is intuitive and facial, without the intermediation of any creature in that view. By this vision they enjoy the divine essence, they are truly blessed, they have eternal life and repose."<sup>1</sup> The Council of

<sup>1</sup> Denz., no. 530.

Florence <sup>2</sup> says that souls in the state of grace, after being purified, enter into heaven, see God the triune as He is in Himself, but with a degree more or less perfect, according to the diversity of their merits.

### The Testimony of Scripture

In the Old Testament we find a progressive revelation regarding the remuneration of the just after death.<sup>3</sup> This revelation is still obscure in the first books of the Old Testament, because the Old Testament itself was given, not immediately as preparation for eternal life, but as preparation for the coming of the promised Savior, who after His death would open to the just the gates of heaven. Here lies a very great difference between the Old Testament and the New. In the New Testament the expression "eternal life" is frequent, whereas it is rare in the Old Testament.

Before the time of the prophets Scripture speaks of the souls of the dead which descend into Sheol, where they can no longer merit. But the recompense reserved for the good becomes in time more precise in opposition to the suffering of the wicked. Thus we read in Genesis <sup>4</sup> that Abraham, after his death, "was gathered to his people." The Lord is called "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Again we read often that Jahve "bringeth down to hell and bringeth back again."<sup>5</sup> We read that He "killeth and maketh alive." Moses,<sup>6</sup> after death, "was gathered to his people."

The prophets speak more clearly of the recompense re-

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 693.    <sup>3</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Ciel," and "Intuitive" (A. Michel).

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 25:9. Also 26:24; 46:1-3; Exodus 3:6; 4:5.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. 32:39; I Kings 2:6; IV Kings 5:7.

<sup>6</sup> Deut. 30:11, 50.

served for the just after death. Isaias speaks thus: "The new heavens and the new earth . . . , a rejoicing, and the people thereof, joy." <sup>7</sup> In Daniel we read: "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed." <sup>8</sup> "The saints of the most high God shall take the kingdom and they shall possess the kingdom forever and ever." <sup>9</sup> "And all kings shall serve Him and obey Him." <sup>10</sup> In the Book of Wisdom we read: "The souls of the just are in the hand of God, . . . they are in peace. . . . God hath tried them and found them worthy of Himself. . . . They that are faithful in love shall rest in Him, for grace and peace is to His elect." <sup>11</sup>

In the psalms we read: "The Lord is just and hath loved justice; His countenance hath beheld righteousness." <sup>12</sup> "Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance, at Thy right hand are delights even to the end." <sup>13</sup> "But as for me I will appear before Thy sight in justice; I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear." <sup>14</sup> "God will redeem my soul from the hand of hell, when He shall receive me." <sup>15</sup>

In the New Testament <sup>16</sup> we read of the kingdom of heaven, where those who have a pure heart will see God, and will resemble the angels who "see the face of My Father." Only the just will have part in this kingdom and will reign with Jesus Christ who has already ascended into heaven. <sup>17</sup>

St. Paul speaks as follows: "Charity never falleth away. . . . We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know even

<sup>7</sup> Isa. 65:17; 30:10.

<sup>8</sup> Dan. 2:44.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:18.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:27.

<sup>11</sup> Wisd. 3:1-9.

<sup>12</sup> Ps. 10:7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 15:11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 48:16.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 5:3, 8, 12; 16:27; 12:30; 18:10, 43; 25:24; Mark 12:25; Luke 16:22-25; 19:12-27.

<sup>17</sup> Acts 1:2, 9, 11; Heb. 7:26.

as I am known.”<sup>18</sup> God knows us without a medium, hence we shall also know Him without any medium. Again St. Paul<sup>19</sup> says that the object of this vision surpasses all that the ear can hear, that the eye can see, and that the heart can desire.<sup>20</sup> And again he speaks as follows: “Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor.”<sup>21</sup> St. John speaks as follows: “This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>22</sup> In his First Epistle he says: “We shall be like to Him (God), because we shall see Him as He is.”<sup>23</sup> In the heavenly Jerusalem we shall see the throne of God and of the Lamb “and His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus we see that, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, from the first book of Scripture to the last, there is a continuity of revelation. Revelation is like a river. At its source we cannot see what it will be in the future. But, little by little, it becomes wider, more majestic, more powerful. The sense of the divine words manifests itself more and more to the contemplation of interior souls, but will not appear in its fullness until the moment of entrance into heaven.

### Witness of Tradition

The existence of the beatific vision is affirmed in clear and explicit fashion by the Fathers of the apostolic age.<sup>25</sup> St. Ignatius<sup>26</sup> is penetrated by this thought, the possession of

<sup>18</sup> I Cor. 13:8-12.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:9.

<sup>20</sup> II Cor. 5:6-8.

<sup>21</sup> I Cor. 3:8.

<sup>22</sup> John 17:3.

<sup>23</sup> I John 3:2.

<sup>24</sup> Apoc. 22:1-4.

<sup>25</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, “Ciel,” cols. 2478-2503. Also “Intuitive,” cols. 2369 ff. De Journal, *Enchir. patr.*, *Index theologicus*, nos. 606-12.

<sup>26</sup> Rom. 2:2, 4:1, 6:2. Eph. 10:1. Smyrn., 9:2.



God in pure light. St. Polycarp<sup>27</sup> expects the recompense promised to the martyrs, namely, reunion with Christ at the right hand of God. It is true that the millenaristic error is accepted by St. Justin and Tertullian, since they think that the entrance of the just into the kingdom of heaven will be retarded until the time of the general resurrection and the last judgment. Nevertheless these early writers defend the existence of heaven, even the most millenaristic among them. And many of these early Fathers affirm that the souls of the martyrs enjoy the possession of God immediately after death, before the general resurrection. In the fourth century this doctrine is the one commonly received.<sup>28</sup> Among the ante-Nicean Fathers who most firmly declare the existence of the beatific vision we must signalize St. Irenaeus.<sup>29</sup> He writes: "That which God gives to those who love Him is the gift of seeing Him, as the prophets have announced. Man of himself cannot see God, but God wills to be seen by us and He grants to us what He wills, when He wills and as He wills." St. Hippolytus speaks in the same manner.

Clement of Alexandria<sup>30</sup> says that to the elect is reserved the vision of God by the grace of Christ. Also Origen<sup>31</sup> affirms that they have a clear vision of God.

St. John Chrysostom<sup>32</sup> is less clear, but he repeats the

<sup>27</sup> Phil. 2:11; 5:2; 9:2.

<sup>28</sup> The millenarians believed that Christ would reign a thousand years on earth, either before or after the last judgment. This view is contrary to one entire chapter (25) of St. Matthew and to chapter 16 verse 27 in St. Matthew. These two texts say that the second coming of Christ will take place just before the last judgment. Now after this event there is no place for a reign of a thousand years on earth. The millenarian error was refuted by Origen, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and the Scholastics.

<sup>29</sup> *Adversus haereses*, Bk. IV, 20, 5 (Journal, no. 236). Cf. *Ibid.* Bk. V, 31, 2, and Bk. III, 12, 3.

<sup>30</sup> *Stromata*, Bk. V, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *De principiis*, Bk. II, chap. 11.

<sup>32</sup> Ep. V, *ad Theodorum lapsum*, chap. 7.

words of St. Paul: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face."

St. Cyprian writes: "What glory and what joy to be admitted to see God, to be honored with Christ our Lord! This is the joy of salvation, this is eternal life: to live with the just, with all the friends of God in the kingdom of immortality. When God shall shine upon us we will rejoice with inexpressible gladness, sharing forever the kingdom of Christ."<sup>33</sup>

St. Augustine<sup>34</sup> often emphasizes the thought that all the saints in heaven, like the angels, rejoice with Christ in the vision of God.

### Reasons of Appropriateness

In the Middle Ages, certain heretics, Amaury de Bène, for instance, held that no created intelligence, even when aided by supernatural light, can ever see God without medium. Created intelligence, they say, can see only the created radiance of the divine essence, just as the eye of the owl is too feeble to see the sun. Others, on the contrary, like the Beguards, said that the beatific vision is due our nature and needs no supernatural light.<sup>35</sup> The teaching of the Church is here again a summit, elevated above these contrary positions. In other words, the beatific vision is a vision of God without medium, but it is an essentially supernatural vision.<sup>36</sup> What does this mean for the question which now occupies us?

<sup>33</sup> Ep. LVI, *ad Thibaritanos*, 10 (Journal, no. 579).

<sup>34</sup> *De civ. Dei*, Bk. XX, chap. 9, note. Cf. also *Enarrationes in psalmos*, in psalmum 30, sermo III, 8, also Ep. 112.

<sup>35</sup> Denz., no. 475.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 475, 530.

Reason, left to itself, cannot demonstrate even the existence of the beatific vision, because this vision is a gratuitous gift, which depends upon the free will of God. It is a gift, not due to our nature, not even to that of the angels. This truth is affirmed by the Church against Baius.<sup>37</sup> The object of the beatific vision is nothing less than the object of the uncreated vision of God. Hence it surpasses the natural object of every created or creatable intelligence, since every created intelligence is infinitely inferior to God.

Reason, left to itself, according to the greater number of theologians, especially Thomistic theologians, cannot prove positively and apodictically the possibility of the beatific vision, because this vision is not only gratuitous, as are miracles, but it is essentially supernatural just as is the grace which it presupposes. It is a mystery, as are the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption.<sup>38</sup> Hence it lies beyond the sphere of demonstration.<sup>39</sup> A miracle is naturally knowable, since it is supernatural only in the mode of its production, for example, in the restoration of life to a corpse. But the beatific vision, just like grace and the light of glory, is supernatural in its very essence.

Nevertheless theologians, and in particular St. Thomas, have given reasons of appropriateness for the possibility and the existence of the beatific vision. We shall dwell on one reason which constitutes a very serious probability, and which can ever be scrutinized anew with advantage, though it can never furnish a rigorous demonstration, just as the sides of a polygon inscribed in the circumference can never be identified with that circumference.

The argument runs thus: <sup>40</sup> There is in man a natural de-

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 1001-4; 1021-24.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 1816.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. our work, *De Deo uno*, 1938, pp. 264-69.

<sup>40</sup> Ia, q. 12, a. 1.

sire to know the cause when he sees an effect. From this natural desire arises wonderment, which lasts as long as the cause is not known. If therefore man's intelligence cannot arrive at a knowledge of the first cause of all things, his natural desire would be in vain.

St. Thomas <sup>41</sup> says more explicitly: "The object of the intelligence is the essence or nature of things, and this faculty grows more perfect the more it knows the essence of things. When we know an effect there arises in us a natural desire to know the essence or nature of its cause."<sup>42</sup> If, therefore, we know, not the essence of the first cause, but only its existence, this natural desire would not be completely satisfied and man would not be completely happy."<sup>43</sup>

This natural desire cannot be an efficacious desire, a necessitating desire, because the beatific vision is a gratuitous gift, as the Church has defined against Baius.<sup>44</sup> But it is a conditional and inefficacious desire: If it pleases God to grant us this gratuitous gift. Thus, in illustration, the farmer desires rain if Providence wills to give it to him. Now this desire supports a serious argument of appropriateness in favor of the existence of the beatific vision. But it does not prove positively and apodictically even the simple possibility of such a vision. This vision is essentially supernatural, as is grace and the light of glory which it presupposes and requires. To prove its possibility would be the same thing as proving apodictically the possibility of grace and the light of glory, and these two truths are beyond the sphere of demonstration. But at least our argument shows that it is not possible to prove the impossibility of the beatific vision. Further, it enables us to refute the contrary reasons, and this is a great gain.

<sup>41</sup> Ia IIae, q. 3, a. 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Contra Gentes*, Bk. III, chap. 50.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. our work. *De revelatione*, 1925, I, 384-403.

<sup>44</sup> Denz., no. 1021.

We may understand this argument better if we note that philosophy, reason alone, can prove with certitude the existence of God and of His chief attributes. But there remains for reason a great obscurity in the intimate harmonizing of these attributes, in particular in the harmonizing of absolute immutability and sovereign liberty, of infinite justice and infinite mercy, especially of omnipotent goodness and the divine permission of the greatest evils, physical and moral. Hence arises the natural desire, conditional and inefficacious, to see the very existence of the first cause, because this vision, without medium, would show the intimate reconciliation between these attributes, which flow from the essence of God.

This natural desire to see God is admirably expressed by Plato.<sup>45</sup> He says that we must rise from the love of sensible beauty to the love of intellectual and moral beauty, to the love of the supreme beauty existing eternally in itself. He concludes: "What would we think of a mortal to whom it would be given to contemplate pure beauty, simple, without any mixture, and not garbed in flesh and human colors and other perishable vanities, but the very divine beauty itself? Do you not think that this man, being the only one who sees the beautiful by the faculty to which beauty is perceptible, could bring forth, not mere images of virtues, but veritable virtues, since he is attached and united to truth? Now man who brings forth and nourishes true virtue is deserving of being cherished by God. If any man can be immortal, it is this man."

These words of Plato are confirmed by the aspirations of the human soul, which are found, even though in an enfeebled state, in many religions.

This argument of appropriateness in favor of the possibility and existence of the beatific vision can be proposed inde-

<sup>45</sup> *Banquet*, chap. 29 (211, c).

pendently of divine revelation, without supposing that we have been called to the life of grace. Further, this argument shows the suitableness of our elevation to supernatural life.

But, supposing this elevation, we can also say that we now have a connatural desire to see God, a desire which proceeds from grace, as from a second nature. Grace is indeed the seed of glory, and this seed tends of its own accord to its final development. From this viewpoint our desire is not now a conditional and inefficacious desire, but a desire which is intended to reach its goal, and does in fact reach it, even if many refuse to respond to the divine appeal.

This reason becomes stronger if we recall what Jesus Himself has said in the Gospel of St. John: "He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life."<sup>46</sup> He has eternal life already in its commencement. Infused faith tends of its own accord to the vision which we await. Further, sanctifying grace and charity are of their own nature everlasting, and will in fact last always, unless the fragile vase in which they are received be broken, when the will turns away from God by mortal sin, sometimes forever. But whatever we think of these falls, the life of grace here below is of the same essence as the life of heaven, just as the germ contained in the acorn is of the same nature as the oak fully developed from the germ. Faith will give place to vision, and hope to possession. But sanctifying grace and charity will last forever. "Charity never falleth away."<sup>47</sup>

This desire, connatural and supernatural, proceeding from grace, which is the second nature of the soul, is continually renovated in us by the word of the Savior: "Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find."<sup>48</sup> It is this desire

<sup>46</sup> John 3:36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 20:31.

<sup>47</sup> I Cor. 13:8.

<sup>48</sup> Matt. 7:7; Lk. 11:9.

which St. Augustine expresses when he says: "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thee, and restless is our heart until it rests in Thee."<sup>49</sup>

This is what revelation says to the believer. This view confirms greatly the argument of appropriateness which we have developed above. Hence we understand how decisively the Church<sup>50</sup> condemns those who say that immediate vision of God is impossible, just as it is impossible for the owl to endure the splendor of the sun. This position is true of every created or creatable intelligence, left to its own natural forces, but it is not true of the created intelligence when it is supernaturalized by consummated grace and the light of glory, which are a participation in the intimate life of God Himself.

<sup>49</sup> *Confessions*, Bk. I, chap. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Denz. no. 530.

## THE NATURE OF ETERNAL BEATITUDE

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WE MUST consider the beatifying object and the beatified subject.<sup>1</sup>

### The Beatifying Object

St. Thomas defines the object of beatitude as follows: "It is that perfect good which completely satiates the desire of the rational being."<sup>2</sup> He continues thus: "Only the uncreated and infinite good can satisfy fully the desire of a creature which conceives universal good." Whereas truth is formally in the mind, which judges in conformity with external objects, the good which is the object of the will is in the things themselves which are good. The natural or connatural desire of the will reaches forward, then, not to the abstract idea of good, but to a real and objective good. Hence it cannot find beatitude in any finite and limited good, but only in the sovereign and universal good.<sup>3</sup>

It is impossible for man to find that true happiness, which he desires naturally, in any limited good: pleasures, riches, honor, glory, power, knowledge. Our mind, noticing at once the limits of these goods, conceives a higher good and carries

<sup>1</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Beatitude."

<sup>2</sup> Perfect good is that which quiets and satiates the appetite. Ia IIae, q. 2, a. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Only God is the universal good, not as predicate, but as being and as cause.



us on to desire that higher good. We must repeat: Our will, illumined by our intelligence, has a depth without measure, a depth which only God can fill.

This truth it is which made St. Augustine say: "Unhappy he who knows all things without knowing Thee; my God: blessed he who knows Thee, even though he be ignorant of all else. If he knows Thee and knows also other things, he is happy, not by knowing them, but by knowing Thee, provided that, knowing Thee, he also glorifies Thee by thanking Thee for Thy gifts." <sup>4</sup>

We must distinguish natural beatitude from supernatural beatitude. Natural beatitude consists in that knowledge and love of God which we can attain by our natural faculties. If man had been created in a state purely natural, by his fidelity to duty he would have merited this beatitude, namely, first, a natural knowledge of God's perfections reflected in His creatures, a knowledge without any mixture of error; secondly, a rational love of God, the Creator, love composed of reverent submission, fidelity, recognition, the love, not indeed of a son, but of a good servant in relation to the best of masters.

But supernatural beatitude, which we are now speaking of, surpasses immeasurably the natural exigencies of every created nature, even the highest angelic natures. This supernatural beatitude consists in sharing the very beatitude of God, that beatitude whereby He rejoices in knowing Himself and loving Himself for all eternity. Notice the expression in the parable of the talents: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." <sup>5</sup> This means: Take part in My own beatitude. We are called to see God as He sees Himself, to love Him as He loves Himself. Truly, the depth of our will is such that

<sup>4</sup> *Confessions*, Bk. V, chap. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 25:21.

only God, seen face to face, can fill that depth and draw the soul irresistibly. The depth which the soul has by its very nature is augmented by infused hope and charity, which widen, as it were, our heart, increase its capacity to love, and arouse in us aspirations higher than all natural aspirations, even the most intimate and elevated. St. Augustine speaks thus: "God is the goal of our desires, He is the one whom we shall see without end, whom we shall love without weariness, whom we shall glorify forever without fatigue."<sup>6</sup>

### Subjective Beatitude

If such is the object of eternal beatitude, what subjective element is it that formally constitutes beatitude? All theologians admit that subjective beatitude consists in a vital union with God through the higher faculties, intelligence and will, that is, in the beatific vision and love which follows it.

St. Thomas<sup>7</sup> asks a question: Does beatitude consist formally in the vision of God or in the love of God? According to him and his disciples, essential beatitude consists formally in the possession of God. Now it is by the beatific vision that the saints in heaven possess God, whereas the beatific love follows this possession, since it presupposes the vision of God, seen face to face. Love, in fact, carries us on to an end that is still absent, in which state we call it desire, or toward an object which we already desire, in which state we call it joy and repose. This joy, therefore, presupposes the possession of God, and this possession is had by the vision

<sup>6</sup> *De civ. Dei*, Bk. II, chap. 30, no. 1. This is one of the most beautiful definitions of heaven and beatitude that was ever pronounced. We know none that is more perfect. Cf. *Sermo* 362, 29: "Insatiably thou wilt be satiated with truth."

<sup>7</sup> *Ia IIae*, q. 3, a. 4.

without medium. Hence love either precedes this possession or follows it.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, the intelligence receives the object into itself, becomes the object known, whereas the will remains, we may say, outside the object, which is received into the intelligence. To illustrate, to enjoy a scene we must first contemplate it, to enjoy a symphony of Beethoven we must first hear it. Knowledge takes possession of beauty, and joy follows knowledge.

Essential beatitude, therefore, consists in the immediate vision of God, and is consummated in the love which follows the vision. Love, a characteristic of vision, follows that vision as liberty, morality, sociability follow man's rational nature.

This doctrine is in conformity with many texts of Holy Scripture. "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God."<sup>9</sup> "This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."<sup>10</sup> "We shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is."<sup>11</sup> "We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face."<sup>12</sup>

The teaching of St. Thomas<sup>13</sup> is in harmony with the relations he establishes between the intelligence and the will. Intelligence is higher than the will, because intelligence has an object that is more absolute and universal, namely, being

<sup>8</sup> The will is carried toward its end, by desiring it when it is absent, by enjoying it when it is present. But it is clear that the desire of that end is not the attainment of that end. Delight comes to the will by the fact that the end is already present. But the converse is not true, namely, that something becomes present because the will delights in it. Hence God becomes present to us by the act of intellect, that is, by vision, and then, as a consequence, the will rests with joy in the end already attained.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 5:5.

<sup>10</sup> John 17:3.

<sup>11</sup> I John 3:2.

<sup>12</sup> I Cor. 13:12.

<sup>13</sup> Ia, q. 82, a. 3.

as truth, whereas the object of the will is the good, which presupposes reality and truth, without which the will would not pursue a real good, but an apparent and illusory good.<sup>14</sup>

Scotus and his followers, on the contrary, since they hold that the will is superior to the intelligence, maintain that essential beatitude consists formally in love, to which vision is subordinated.

To this position, Thomists reply: Scotus is considering beatitude as a concrete whole, without noticing that it has several elements. It is true that beatitude is consummated in love; but we must still ask: What is the nature of this beatitude, what is it formally, what is the principle whence its characteristics derive? Thomists maintain, with right, that the mind is higher than the will, since it directs the will. Formal beatitude, then, is the act of the mind, is the immediate vision of God, as we have seen in the texts of Scripture just cited. Thomists add: Here below indeed it is more perfect to love God than to know Him, because our knowledge is measured by our limited ideas, whereas our love, free and meritorious, goes out toward Him. But in heaven our knowledge will no longer be imperfect: it will be purely intuitive, higher than any created idea. Beatific love will flow necessarily from the vision. This beatific love is not free. It is something higher than liberty.<sup>15</sup>

Suarez, having examined the position of St. Thomas and of Scotus, says that essential beatitude consists formally both in vision and in love.

Thomists reply: If it were thus, the intellect and will would not be related by subordination of one to the other, but would be coordinated, equal each to the other, just as would

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Janvier, *Conférences de Notre Dame*, Lent of 1903, pp. 122, 123. See also *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Gloire de Dieu."

<sup>15</sup> Denz., no. 530.

be two individuals of one and the same species who resemble each other very strikingly. But the truth is not thus. Intelligence and will are two faculties, specifically distinct, and therefore unequal. The will is subordinated to the intelligence which directs it. The will is carried on to a true real good, but only on condition that it follows the right judgment of the intellect, a judgment conformable to reality. We desire only what we know, and we do not rejoice except in a good which we possess. Joy does not constitute the possession, but presupposes the possession. Hence intelligence and will are not equal in the possession of God. They arise in order, one after the other. By vision the soul possesses God. By love it enjoys Him, rests in Him, prefers Him to itself.

St. Augustine speaks as follows, repeating his conversation with his mother at Ostia: "All within us cries out: 'We made not ourselves, but the Eternal One made us.' If, after this word, all things were silent, and He Himself alone would speak to us, no longer through them, but by Himself: if then our soul, lifting itself on the wings of thought up to eternal wisdom, could retain unbroken this sublime contemplation: if all other thoughts of the spirit had ceased and this alone had absorbed the soul, and filled it with joy, the most intimate and the most divine: if eternal life resembled this ravishment in God which we experience for a moment: would this not be the consummation of that word: 'Enter thou into the joy of Thy Lord'?"<sup>18</sup>

In truth, celestial beatitude is the consummation of that transforming union, spoken of by St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, the consummation of that vision wherein the just soul is deified in its very depths. In heaven this fusion will take place by immediate vision and consequent love. The

<sup>18</sup> *Confessions*, Bk. IX, chap. 25.

soul, it is true, remains inferior to God, because only God is existent reality, He who is. Compared with Him, we are always as nothing. God preserves eternally in just souls all that they have by nature and by grace. He is eternally in them, or, to speak still more truly, they are eternally in Him.

## • XXIX •

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### THE SUBLIMITY OF THE BEATIFIC VISION

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TO HAVE a just idea of this vision, we must see its immediacy, its source, and its object, primary and secondary.<sup>1</sup>

#### This Vision Is Intuitive and Immediate

According to the definition of Benedict XII,<sup>2</sup> this act of the blessed intellect is a vision, clear, intuitive, immediate, of the divine essence. Without being comprehensive, it still enables us to know God as He is.

By its clarity this vision is distinguished from the obscure knowledge which we have of God, either by reason or by faith. By its intuitive and immediate character it is immeasurably superior to all knowledge that is discursive and analogical, which does not reach God except by using His effects as principle. This intuitive vision is higher than all abstraction, all reasoning, and all analogy. It is immediate intuition of the supreme reality of the living God. Hence it surpasses by far all vision, even the intellectual visions which the great mystics receive here on earth, because these visions remain within the order of faith and do not give intrinsic evidence of the Trinity. The beatific vision, on the contrary, does give

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, Ia, q. 12. See also the Commentaries of Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, etc. See also *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Intuitive."  
<sup>2</sup> Denz., no. 530.

this evidence, showing that God, if He were not triune, would not be God.

Hence we are called to see God, not only in the mirror of creatures, however perfect, not only by His highest radiations in the world of angels. We are called to see Him without the medium of any creature, to see Him better than we see those to whom we speak on earth, because God, being spiritual, will be most intimately present in our intelligence, which He fortifies with power to see Him.

Between God and ourselves there will be not even an intermediary idea,<sup>3</sup> because all created ideas, even infused ideas, however elevated, can be only limited participations in the truth, and cannot therefore represent God as He is in Himself: supreme Being, infinite Truth, Wisdom without measure, infinite and luminous source of all knowledge. No created idea could ever represent as He is in Himself Him who is thought itself. Thus the child's cup cannot contain the ocean.<sup>4</sup>

Further, we cannot express our contemplation in one word, even in an interior word, in a mental word, because this word, being created and finite, cannot express the Infinite as He is in Himself. This contemplation without medium absorbs us in some sense in God, leaving us without a word to express it, because only one word can express perfectly the divine essence, namely, the Word begotten from all eternity from the Father. The divine essence itself, sovereignly in-

<sup>3</sup> Ia, q. 12, a. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes, during a storm at night, we may see a flash from one extremity of the heavens to the other. Now let us imagine a flash of lightning, not sensible but intellectual, similar to a lightning flash of genius, but one which subsists eternally, which would be Truth itself and Wisdom itself, and which at the same time would be a vivid flame of Love itself. This imagination will give us some idea of God.



telligible, more intimate to us than we ourselves are, will take the place of all created ideas, impressed and expressed.<sup>5</sup> In the order of knowledge we cannot conceive one more intimate than this, even though it be distinguished by different degrees.

Here on earth, when at some sublime spectacle, we cannot find words to describe it, we say that it is ineffable. With far higher reason is this true when we see God face to face.

This vision, though it is intuitive and without medium, is still not comprehensive. God alone can know Himself to the full extent of His knowableness. This limitation involves no contradiction. Here on earth many persons may see the same scene in different degrees, according as their vision is more or less good. Many intellects see one and the same truth more or less profoundly. Each grasps the proposition, subject, verb, and attribute, but more or less perfectly. Thus in heaven all the blessed see God without medium, but with a penetration that varies in proportion to their merits, but none as profoundly as God knows Himself, all that He is, all that He can do, all that He will do.<sup>6</sup>

### The Light of Glory

This vision, intuitive and immediate, reaches the object of that uncreated vision whereby God knows Himself. It

<sup>5</sup> Ia, q. 12, a. 2, and the commentaries of Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, Gonet, the Salmanticenses, Billuart. The divine essence itself takes the place, both of the impressed species and of the expressed species, that is, of the mental word. Theologians often compare this intimate union in the order of knowledge to the union in the order of being brought about by the hypostatic union, the humanity of Jesus and the person of the Word, where the Word terminates and possesses the humanity. If this second union is not impossible, then the first, with still greater reason, must also be possible.

<sup>6</sup> Ia, q. 12, a. 6, 7. God, so say the theologians, is seen in His entirety, but He is not totally seen in that entirety.

reaches Him less perfectly than He does Himself, but it reaches Him.

How is this possible? It would be absolutely impossible for any created or creatable intelligence left to its own natural forces, because these forces are proportioned to their own natural object, which is infinitely inferior to the object proper to the divine intellect. Any created intelligence therefore needs a supernatural light to elevate it, to fortify it, that it may be able to see God as He is in Himself. Otherwise it would be before Him as the owl before the sun; it would not see Him.<sup>7</sup>

This light, received in a permanent fashion in the intellects of the blessed, is called the light of glory. The Council of Vienne<sup>8</sup> condemns those who "maintain that the human soul does not have to be elevated by the light of glory in order to see God and to have holy joy in Him."

Thus the beatific vision arises from the intellectual faculty as its radical principle, and secondly from the light of glory as its proximate principle. This light supernaturalizes the vitality of our intelligence, as the infused virtue of charity supernaturalizes the vitality of our will.

The light of glory and infused charity, thus received into our two higher faculties, themselves arise from the consummation of sanctifying grace, which is received, like a divine graft, into the essence of the soul. How well sanctifying grace merits the appellation, participation in the divine nature! Grace is a nature, a radical principle of operations, a principle which, fully developed, makes us able to see God as He sees Himself. In God the divine nature is the principle of operations strictly divine, the principle of His

<sup>7</sup> Ia, q. 12, a. 4, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Denz., no. 475.

own uncreated vision of Himself. In the just soul in heaven, sanctifying grace is the radical principle of the intuitive vision of the divine essence, a vision which has the same object as the uncreated vision.

### The Object of the Beatific Vision

The first and essential object is God Himself. The secondary object is creatures known in God.

The blessed see clearly and intuitively God Himself as He is in Himself, that is, they see His essence, His attributes, and the three divine persons. The Council of Florence says: "They see clearly God Himself, one and three, as He is."<sup>9</sup> Hence the beatific vision surpasses immeasurably, not only the most sublime human philosophy, but even the natural knowledge of the most elevated angels, even of any creatable angel. The blessed see the divine perfections, concentrated and harmonized in their common source, in the divine essence which contains them all, eminently and formally, in a far higher way than white light contains the colors of the rainbow. Thus the blessed see how mercy the most tender, and justice the most inflexible, proceed from one and the same love, infinitely generous and infinitely holy. They see how this same love identifies in itself attributes apparently the most opposed. They see how mercy and justice are united in each and every work of God. They see how uncreated love, even in decisions the most free, is identified with wisdom. They see how this love is identified with sovereign good, loved from all eternity. They see how wisdom is identified with the first truth, always known. They see how all these

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 693.

perfections are one in the essence of Him who is. They contemplate this pre-eminent simplicity, this purity and absolute sanctity, this quintessence of all perfection.

In this intellectual vision, never interrupted, they see also how the infinite fecundity of the divine nature blossoms into three persons. They see the eternal generation of the Word, who is the splendor of the Father, figure of His substance. They see the ineffable spiration of the Holy Spirit, who is the terminus of the mutual love of the Father and the Son, who unites the Father and Son in the most intimate and mutual self-communication. Such is the primary object of the beatific vision.

Here below we can but enumerate the divine perfections, one after the other. We do not see in what intimate manner they are in harmony. We do not see how infinite goodness harmonizes with the permission of evil, even of unspeakable malice. We know indeed that God does not permit evil except for a greater good, but we do not clearly see this greater good. But in heaven everything becomes clear, particularly the value of the trials we ourselves have suffered. We shall see how divine goodness, essentially self-diffusive, becomes the principle of mercy. On the other hand, we shall see how this same infinite goodness, having the right to be loved above all things, becomes the principle of justice. Here on earth we are like a man who has seen each color of the rainbow, but who has not yet seen white light. In heaven, seeing the uncreated Light, we shall see how the divine perfections, even the most widely different, are harmonized in Him and become one.

The blessed see in God, in the Word, also the holy humanity which the Son assumed for our salvation. They contemplate the hypostatic union, the plenitude of grace, of

glory, and of charity in the holy soul of Jesus. They see the infinite value of His theandric acts, of the mystery of the Redemption. They see the radiations of that Redemption: the infinite value of each Mass, the supernatural vitality of the mystical body, of the Church, triumphant, suffering, and militant. They see with admiration what belongs to Christ, as priest for all eternity, as judge of the living and the dead, as universal king of all creatures, as father of the poor.

In this same vision, the saints contemplate the eminent dignity of the Mother of God, her plenitude of grace, her virtues, her gifts, her universal mediation as co-redemptrix.

Further, since beatitude is a perfect state which satisfies all legitimate desires, each saint knows all others who are blessed, particularly those whom he has known and loved on earth. He knows their state, be they on earth or in purgatory.<sup>10</sup> Thus the founder of an order knows all that concerns his religious family, knows the prayers which his sons address to him. Parents know the spiritual needs of their children who are still in this world. A friend, reaching the end of his course, knows how to facilitate the voyage of friends who address themselves to him. St. Cyprian speaks thus: "All our friends who have arrived wait for us. They desire vividly that we participate in their own beatitude, and are full of solicitude in our regard."<sup>11</sup>

The beatific vision is one unique, unbroken act, measured by the one unique instant of an unchangeable eternity. It is

<sup>10</sup> Ia, q. 12, a. 10. That which the blessed see in God they do not see successively but simultaneously. The beatific vision, measured by participated eternity, does not tolerate succession. Things which the blessed see successively they see extra-Verbum, by a knowledge inferior to the beatific vision and hence called the vision of evening whereas the beatific vision itself is like an eternal morning. Cf. *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Intuitive," cols. 2387 ff.

<sup>11</sup> *De immortalitate*, chap. 25.

an act that cannot be lost. It is the source of the happiness of the elect and, as we shall see later, of their absolute impeccability.

In this supernatural knowledge everything is harmonized. There is no longer danger of being too intent on secondary goods or of losing the chief good. The soul in heaven sees the corporeal world from on high, in perfect subordination to the spiritual world. The events of time are seen in their relation to the plenitude of eternity. God's deeds, natural or supernatural, are seen as radiations of God's action. The line of view is no longer horizontal, stretched out between past and future. It is the vertical view, which judges of everything from on high, in the light of supreme Truth.

This entire beatific world of knowledge leads the blessed soul to love God above all things, immovably, and to love creatures in Him only as manifestations of His infinite goodness.

## BEATIFIC JOY

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THE saints in heaven, seeing God face to face, love Him above all things, because they see with the most perfect evidence that God is better than all creatures combined. This love will never pass away. Faith will give place to vision; hope will be replaced by possession: but "charity never falleth away."<sup>1</sup>

By charity, already on earth we love God, not only as a good supremely desirable, the object of hope, but because of His infinite goodness in itself, a goodness far higher than any of His gifts. Charity wills He should be known, loved, and glorified; that His imprescriptible rights be recognized, His name be sanctified, His will be done. This is the love of friendship, whereby we will unto God all that belongs to Him, wishing His happiness as He wills our happiness. Thus, even here on earth, we share in God's intimate life, have our life in common with Him, have spiritual communion between Him and ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

This charity will last forever. It would be an error, even a heresy, to think that our love of God in heaven is merely the consummation of our hope, which makes us desire God as our supreme Good. Even here on earth, the act of hope, which can exist in a soul in the state of mortal sin, is notably

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 13:8.    <sup>2</sup> IIa IIae, q. 3, a. 1. Charity is identified with friendship.

inferior to the act of charity, and love of God in heaven is nothing but the perfect act of charity, whereby the soul transcends itself, whereby without cessation it loves God more than itself, whereby it passes out beyond itself, and enters into a state of uninterrupted ecstasy.<sup>3</sup>

This love implies admiration, reverence, recognition. It implies, above all, friendship, with all its simplicity and intimacy. It is love with all its tenderness and all its power, the love of a child that throws itself into the tenderness of its Father, and wills unto that Father all that belongs to Him, just as the Father takes the soul into His own beatitude. God says to us: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."<sup>4</sup> Christ says: "Come, ye blessed of My Father."<sup>5</sup> We shall not indeed love God as He loves us, but the Holy Spirit will inspire a love worthy of Him.

This transforming union, now in a state of consummation, fuses our life with the intimate life of the Most High. We rejoice that God is God, infinitely holy, just, and merciful. We adore all the decrees of His providence, all manifestations of His glorious goodness. We subordinate ourselves completely to Him, saying to Him: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory."<sup>6</sup> This supreme act of the highest of the theological virtues is the only one that is meant to last eternally. God alone, it is true, can love Himself infinitely, love Himself as far as He is lovable, but each blessed soul will love Him with all its power, with a love that no longer knows obstacles.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ia Hae, q. 28, a. 3. "Extasis" is an effect of love: "In the love of friendship affection, simply speaking, goes outside itself, because it wills and does good for a friend."

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 25:21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:34.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 113:1.

<sup>7</sup> Ia Hae, q. 184, a. 2.



## The Satiety of the Blessed

This state of satiety is always new and never passes away. St. Augustine writes: "All our life will be one Amen, one Alleluia. Sadden not yourselves by considering this truth in a carnal manner, as if in heaven, just as on earth, we could become weary by repeating the words: Amen, Alleluia. This heavenly Amen, this Alleluia, will not be expressed by sound which passes away, but by the emotions of love, the emotions of the soul embraced by love. "Amen" means "It is true." "Alleluia" means "praise God." God is the immovable truth, who knows neither defect nor progress, neither decline nor growth. He is truth, eternal and stable: truth forever incorruptible.

"We shall sing our Amen forever but with a satiety that is insatiable. With satiety, because we live in perfect abundance, but with an insatiable satiety, because this good, while it satisfies completely, produces also a pleasure ever new. Insatiably satiated by this truth, we shall repeat forever: Amen. Rest and gaze: that is our eternal Sabbath."<sup>8</sup>

Greek philosophers discussed the question whether pleasure in movement is superior to pleasure in repose. Aristotle<sup>9</sup> shows clearly that the highest joy is that which completes achievement, is the terminus of perfect, normal activity, which is no longer in motion toward the end, but possesses the end and rests therein. This truth is realized in the highest way in celestial beatitude.

<sup>8</sup> Sermon 362, no. 29. Cf. also Bossuet, Sermon 4, on All Saints.

<sup>9</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. X, chaps. 4, 5, 8. "Pleasure follows acts as maturity follows youth." Further above he had said that the highest joy is the joy that results from the most elevated act of the most elevated faculty, that is, the intellectual knowledge of God united to the love of the supreme Good.

Heavenly joy has a newness which cannot pass away. The first instant of the beatific vision lasts forever, like eternal morning, eternal spring, eternal youth. It resembles the eternal beatitude of God. God's life is one unique instant of immutable eternity. He cannot grow old. He is not past or future, but eternally present. He contains eminently all successive events, as the summit of a pyramid contains all points at its base, as the view of a man placed on a mountain embraces the entire valley. Simultaneous totality: that is the definition of eternity.

As illustration, we may point to Mozart, who heard instantaneously and completely the melody he set out to compose. Similarly, great minds embrace their entire science with one sole glance.

The beatific vision of the saints is measured by the unique instant of immovable eternity. The joy of that instant will never pass away. Its newness, its freshness, will be eternally present. As the vision will be always new, so likewise the joy which flows from the vision.

We can get some ideas of this truth by the joy we experience when we begin to relish the word of God. This joy, far from passing away, grows ceaselessly. The contrary is seen in sense goods. Avidly desired at first, they give us an ever decreasing joy.

Continuance of friendship, ten years, twenty years, and more, is a sign that this friendship has a divine origin. Divine friendship, relish for God's word, is a lasting joy, which lifts us above embarrassed affairs, domestic needs, and useless pastimes. That which nourishes the soul is divine truth and the supreme goodness revealed therein. Bossuet says: "If this divine truth pleases us when it is expressed by sounds that pass away, how will it ravish us when it speaks in its

own proper voice which never passes away! God does not use many words: He speaks one eternal word, His Word, His *Verbum*, and thereby says everything. In this Word we, too, see everything."

"Taste and see that the Lord is sweet." This sweetness is the prelude of heaven's joy: repose in an action which never ceases, in an unmediated vision which floods the soul with a joy forever new.

St. Thomas,<sup>10</sup> following St. Augustine, speaks thus: "We grow weary of sense goods when we possess them. Not so of spiritual goods. They do not diminish, they cannot be harmed, they give us a joy that is ever new." This joy we sometimes have in prayer. "My Lord and my God, take from me all that impedes me on the road to Thee, give to me all that leads to Thee. Take me from myself and give me to Thee, that I may belong entirely to Thee." God penetrates the depths of our will. God seizes and wounds the soul, that it may possess Him fully.

This doctrine finds admirable expression in *The Imitation of Christ*: "Repose in God, O my soul. He is the eternal repose of the saints. Beloved Jesus, let me find repose in Thee, not in creatures: not in health, in beauty, in honors, in glory. Not in power and dignity. Not in riches, honors, and knowledge. Not in merit and aspiration. Not even in Thy own gifts and rewards. Not even in the transports of spiritual gladness; not in the angels and archangels and the whole host of heaven: not in anything visible or invisible, not in anything which is not Thyself, O my God. All Thou canst give me outside of Thyself, all that Thou dost discover of Thyself to me, is too little. It does not suffice me if I do not see Thee, if I do not possess Thee fully, if I do not rest in

<sup>10</sup> Ia IIae, q. 2, a. 1 ad 3; IIa IIae, q. 20, a. 4.

Thee alone." Such is the joy of heaven, always new. We speak of heaven as the future life. A better term is "everlasting."<sup>11</sup>

### Love beyond Liberty

In heaven charity takes on new modalities. It becomes a love higher than liberty itself, a love we can never lose.

Here on earth our love of God is free because we do not see God face to face. God is seen by us as good under one aspect and severe under another aspect. His commandments can displease that which is still to be found in us of egoism and pride. Hence our love for Him remains free and therefore meritorious.

In the fatherland, on the contrary, we shall see infinite Goodness as He is in Himself. We cannot find in Him the least aspect which can displease, nothing to drive us away, not the least pretext for preferring to Him anything whatsoever. Our eternal act of love will never suffer the least shadow of weariness. Infinite Goodness, seen without medium, fills so perfectly our capacity of love that it attracts us irresistibly more than any ecstasy that can be had on earth, where love is still free and meritorious. In heaven there will be a happy necessity of love.<sup>12</sup>

Here especially we see the measureless depth of the soul, in particular of our will, of our capacity for spiritual love, which God alone, seen face to face, can satisfy.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III, chap. 21.

<sup>12</sup> There will no longer be indifference. This indifference exists in regard to any object which seems good under one aspect, but not good or insufficiently good under another aspect. Cf. Ia IIae, q. 10, a. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ia, q. 105, a. 4. "The will can be moved by any good object, but cannot be sufficiently and efficaciously moved except by God. God alone is universal good. Hence He alone can fill the will and sufficiently move it as object." Cf. Ia IIae, q. 4, a. 4. "Ultimate beatitude consists in the vision of the divine essence, and

But this love, though it is not free, is still not forced and compelled. Nor is this something lower than liberty and merit, as are the involuntary acts of our sense nature here below. Rather, it is something higher than liberty and merit, like that spontaneous love which God has for Himself, that love which is common to all three divine persons. As God necessarily loves His own infinite goodness, so our love, arising from the beatific vision, can never be interrupted or lose aught of its fervor.

In a manuscript written by one who lacked human culture but who was far advanced in the ways of prayer, I recently read these words: "In heaven the soul receives God into itself. Received thus by Him and in Him, it loses in Him its liberty. Entirely drawn to God, it surrenders to joy in God. It possesses God, and is possessed by Him. It knows and feels that this joy is its eternal state." Heaven's joy is an everlasting morning.

### Impeccability

The blessed in heaven cannot sin. Their state is a state of sinlessness, not only because God preserves them from sin, as here below He preserves from sin saints who are confirmed in grace, but because one who has the beatific vision cannot turn away from it by sin, cannot feel the least pretext to love Him less for a single moment.<sup>14</sup>

thus the will of him who sees God loves of necessity whatever he does love in relation to God, just as the will of him who does not see can love necessarily only under the common viewpoint of the good which it knows." Thomists thus comment on this passage: "Upon the beatific vision there follows the happy necessity of loving its object, a necessity also as regards exercise. The will of the blessed is completely filled, is adequated, conquered by the supreme Good now clearly seen."

<sup>14</sup> Ia IIae, q. 4, a. 4. Commentaries of Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, Gonet, Billuart.

Here on earth no one ceases to will happiness, although he may often search for happiness there where it is not, even perhaps in suicide. The saints in heaven, too, cannot cease to love God, seen face to face, but they cannot be tempted to turn elsewhere. They are indeed free to love this or that finite good, this or that soul, to prefer one soul to another, to pray for it, to follow the commands of God to assist us. But this liberty never deviates toward evil. It resembles the liberty of God Himself, which is at the same time free and impeccable. Again it resembles the human liberty of Christ, who enjoyed the beatific vision from the first instant of His conception. But in Jesus these free acts were still meritorious, because He was still a *viator*, a traveler, whereas the free acts of the blessed are no longer meritorious, because they have arrived at the terminus of their meritorious voyage. The soul confirmed in grace has no longer need to merit.

### Beatitude That Cannot Be Lost

It follows from all we have been saying that the saints in heaven cannot lose their beatitude. Scripture calls this beatitude "eternal life." As the wicked go into eternal punishment, so the just go into eternal life.<sup>15</sup> St. Peter speaks of "a never-fading crown of glory."<sup>16</sup> St. Paul says that this crown is incorruptible.<sup>17</sup> He goes on to say that our afflictions, light and momentary, gain for us an eternal weight of glory.<sup>18</sup> The Creed ends with these words: "I believe in life everlasting."<sup>19</sup>

The expression "eternal life," everlasting life, means much more than future life. Future is only a part of time, which

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 25:46.

<sup>16</sup> I Pet. 5:4.

<sup>17</sup> I Cor. 9:25.

<sup>18</sup> II Cor. 4:17.

<sup>19</sup> Denz., no. 430.

passes, which bears within itself a succession of moments. But eternal life is not measured by time, neither by solar time nor by spiritual time. Eternal life is measured by the unique instant of immovable eternity, an instant which cannot pass, which is like an eternal sunrise.

Theologians say that the eternal life of the blessed is measured by participated eternity. This participated eternity differs, without doubt, from that essential eternity which is proper to God. It differs, because it had a commencement at the moment of entry into heaven. But it will not end, and has not within itself any succession. It is truly the unique instant of immovable eternity. This instant is not dead, but sovereignly alive, because it fuses perfect intelligence and perfect love.

This vision and this love exist at the topmost point of the beatified soul. But, beneath this topmost point, there will be a region less high of intelligence and will, a succession of thoughts, of emotions, of desires, in the form of prayers addressed to God in regard to this or that soul still on earth.

The inamissibility of beatitude follows from the essence of that beatitude. Heavenly bliss, by its very nature, satisfies all aspirations of the just soul. But this satisfaction could not exist if the blessed could say to themselves: "Possibly a time will come when I shall cease to see God." Such cessation of beatitude, after it has been possessed, would be the greatest suffering, and a suffering inflicted without guilt. If we cling so closely to the present life, in spite of all its sadness, how much more will we cling to the life of heaven? Hence nothing can bring the beatific vision to an end, neither God who has promised it as recompense, nor the soul which has reached it.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ia IIae, q. 5, a. 4.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent says: "He who is happy, must he not desire ardently to enjoy without end that which makes him happy? And without the assurance of a stable and certain felicity, would he not be the prey of fear?" <sup>21</sup>

The blessed souls live above the reach of our hours and days and years. They live in one unique instant which does not pass. This instant, when we enter heaven, when we receive the light of glory and begin to see God forever, must be prepared for. In this preparation three other instants of life have pre-eminent importance: that of receiving justification by baptism, that of reconciliation with God if we have offended Him gravely, that of a happy death, that is, final perseverance. Beatific love, we know, corresponds to the intensity of our merits. Not in heaven do we learn to love God, but here on earth. The degree of our life in eternity depends on the degree of our merits at the moment of death. There are many mansions in the Father's house, corresponding to varied merits.<sup>22</sup> "He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap blessings."<sup>23</sup>

Christian life on earth is eternal life already begun. Sanctifying grace and charity endure eternally. St. John of the Cross speaks thus: "In the evening of our life we shall be judged by our love for God and neighbor."

Eternal joy, beatific love, is ineffable. If here on earth we are enchanted by the reflection of divine perfection in creatures, by the enchantments of the visible world, by the harmony of colors and sounds, by the immensity of the ocean, by the splendor of the starry heavens, and still more by the

<sup>21</sup> The First Part, chap. 13, no. 3.

<sup>22</sup> John 14:1.

<sup>23</sup> II Cor. 9:6. Cf. *Supplementum*, q. 93, a. 3.



spiritual splendors revealed in the lives of the saints, what joy shall we feel when we see God, this creative center of life and of love, this infinite plenitude, eternally self-existent, from whom proceeds the life of creation!

Each soul will rejoice, not only in the reward it has received, but also in the reward given to other elect souls, and still more in the glory of God, in the manifestation of His infinite goodness. This joy will be an act of the virtue of charity, the normal consequence of love of God and of creatures for the sake of God.

Such is the essential glory which God has reserved for those who love Him. "The eye hath not seen," says St. Paul, "nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him."<sup>24</sup>

Then, too, we shall see the immense distance between goods that are spiritual and goods that are material. The same material good, the same house, the same field, the same territory, cannot belong simultaneously to many persons. Possession by one hinders possession by another. On the contrary, spiritual goods, the same truth, the same virtue, the same God seen face to face, can belong simultaneously to all. Nay, we possess these spiritual goods the more, the more others possess them. Their joy multiplies our joy.

Similarly we shall see clearly that goodness is essentially self-communicative. God the Father communicates His entire nature to His Son and through His Son to the Holy Spirit. The person of the Word communicates itself to the humanity of Jesus, and through this humanity He communicates to us a participation in divine life.

The elect in heaven belong to the family of God. The Blessed Trinity, seen clearly and loved sovereignly, dwells

<sup>24</sup> I Cor. 2:9.

in them as in a living tabernacle, as in a temple of glory, endowed with knowledge and love. The Father engenders in them the Word. The Father and the Son breathe forth the personal love of the Holy Spirit. Charity renders them in a measure similar to the Holy Spirit; vision assimilates them to the Word, who Himself assimilates them to the Father of whom He is the image. They enter therefore in a sense into the cycle of the Blessed Trinity. The Trinity is in them, rather, they are in the Trinity, as the summit of reality, thought, and love.<sup>25</sup>

### Love of the Saints for Our Lord and His Holy Mother

Beholding the three divine persons, the saints understand likewise the personal union of the Word with the humanity of Jesus, His plenitude of grace and glory, His charity, the treasures of His heart, the infinite value of His theandric acts, of His merits, the value of His passion, of His least drop of blood, the unmeasured value of each Mass, the fruit of absolution. They also see the glory which overflows from the soul of our Savior upon His body, and they see how He is at the summit of all creation, material and spiritual. In Him they see also Mary coredemptrix, the infinite dignity of her divine maternity, her position in the hypostatic order, superior to the orders of nature and of grace. They see the greatness of her love at the foot of the cross, her elevation above the angelic hierarchies, the radiation of her universal mediation. This vision of Jesus and Mary belongs to essential beatitude as its most elevated secondary object.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Bossuet, *Meditations on the Gospels*, Second Part, 75th and 76th day.

<sup>26</sup> On the contrary, vision extra-Verbum, and with much more reason the sense-vision of Christ and of Mary belong to accidental beatitude. There is a great difference between these two kinds of knowledge. The highest is called by St.

Hence the saints love our Lord as the Savior to whom they owe everything. They see that without Him they could have done nothing in the order of salvation. They see, down to the least detail, all the graces they received from Him: all the effects of their predestination, namely, their vocation, justification, glorification. They live by Him. Each sees in Him the Bridegroom, the Bridegroom of the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant. What love they must have for the mystical body, of which Jesus is the head! What bliss in being loved by God in Jesus Christ, whose members they are!

Such is the vision described in the Apocalypse: "I heard the voice of many angels saying with a loud voice: The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and benediction. The Lamb was slain and has redeemed us . . . in His own blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."<sup>27</sup> "The heavenly Jerusalem hath no need of sun, nor the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." "There shall not enter into it anything defiled, . . . but they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb."<sup>28</sup>

Bossuet writes as follows: "Let us here below begin to contemplate the glory of Jesus Christ, to become like unto Him by imitating Him. The day will come when we shall be like

Augustine the knowledge of morning, the other, the knowledge of evening, because the latter knows creatures, not by the divine light, but by the created light which is like that of twilight. We may better understand this difference if we think of two kinds of knowledge which we may have of souls on earth. We may consider them in themselves by what they say and write, studying them as would a psychologist, or we may consider them in God, as was done, for example, by the holy Curé of Ars, when he was hearing confessions. He was the supernatural genius of the confessional, because he heard those souls in God, while he himself remained in prayer. Thus he gave supernatural replies, replies not only true, but immediately suited to the question. Penitents went to him because his soul was full of God.

<sup>27</sup> Apoc. 5:12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:9; 21:23; 21:27.

unto Him in glory, when we shall be inebriated with His love. Thus will be consummated the work for which Jesus Christ came on earth.”<sup>29</sup>

Again<sup>80</sup> he writes: “Jesus says of the elect, ‘I am in them.’<sup>81</sup> They are My living members, they are Myself. The eternal Father sees in them nothing but Jesus Christ, loves them by pouring forth on them the love He has for His Son. Let us, then, remain in silence with our Savior. In wonder at the grandeurs given us in Him, can we have any other desire than to render ourselves worthy of His grace?”

Here we find the true meaning of the term, “spiritual gospel.” This is written by the Spirit, not with ink on parchment but with grace on our minds and wills. This spiritual gospel is the complement of the one we read in daily Mass. It is being printed day by day, century by century, and will be finished on the last day. It is the spiritual history of the mystical body. God knows it from all eternity. The blessed read it in God.<sup>82</sup>

Mary is loved by all as the worthy Mother of God, mother of divine grace, the powerful virgin, mother of mercy, refuge of sinners, consoler of the afflicted, help of Christians, queen of patriarchs, of prophets, of apostles, of martyrs, of confessors, of virgins, of all the saints. The love of the saints for Jesus and Mary belongs to essential beatitude. It is the highest among the secondary objects of the beatific vision.

### Love of the Saints for One Another

Seeing one another in God, the saints love one another. The degree of this love is measured by nearness to God.

<sup>29</sup> *Meditations on the Gospel*, Second Part, 72nd day.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, the 75th day.

<sup>81</sup> John 17:26.

<sup>82</sup> Father de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*.

Each rejoices at the degree of beatitude which others have received. Yet each loves with special affection those to whom he has been united on earth.<sup>33</sup>

What an immense throng! Here we find, not only patriarchs, prophets, the precursor, St. Joseph,<sup>34</sup> the apostles, but the souls of children who died after their baptism. And in this immense assembly we find harmonized the greatest variety with intimate unity, the highest intensity with the deepest repose. The saints whom we call dead, because they have left the earth, are in reality overflowing with life.

Each of the saints has his personal distinction. Each is himself, with all his natural gifts and supernatural privileges, all of them perfectly developed. St. Paul differs from St. John, St. Augustine from St. Francis of Assisi, St. Theresa from St. Catherine of Siena. Yet they resemble one another since each contemplates one and the same divine truth, each is on fire with one and the same love of God. Hence the masters of the spiritual life tell us: Be supernaturally yourself. That means, eliminate your faults, that the image of the Father and the Son may be formed in you. Let each reproduce that image in his own fashion. Unity in diversity is the definition of beauty. And spiritual beauty is deathless beauty.

Lastly, the blessed love us. They pray, in particular and without ceasing, for those whom they have known here below. So near the source of all good, they heap benefits upon us. They draw from God's treasury the gifts which His goodness wishes to bestow. Further, all the saints in heaven love us, even those whose very existence we know not, because we

<sup>33</sup> IIa IIae, q. 26, a. 13.

<sup>34</sup> St. Joseph, though he is the highest of all saints after Mary, is often named after the prophets, the patriarchs, and the Precursor, since he belongs to the New Testament. The Precursor forms the transition from the Old to the New.

with them are members of that mystical body of which Jesus is the head.

Hence we, too, must love the saints. This love is a sure and abundant source of spiritual progress. Who can tell the fruits of that intimacy of grace which exists between us and this or that saint in heaven whom we are moved to imitate? In each of them we find our Lord, the supreme model.<sup>86</sup>

This love of the saints for one another belongs to essential beatitude, because they see and love one another in the Word. What joy flows from the contemplation of uncreated good in all its radiation!

We read in *The Imitation*:<sup>86</sup> "Think, My son, on the fruits of your labors, of the end which will come soon, of the recompense and repose there in great joy. They cannot turn their heart to any other object because, filled with eternal truth, they burn with charity which cannot be extinguished. They do not glory in their merits, because they do not attribute to themselves the good they have. They attribute it all to Me, who have given them everything in infinite charity.<sup>87</sup> The more they are elevated in glory, the more they are humble in themselves, and their humility renders them more dear and unites them ever more closely to Me.<sup>88</sup> It is written: 'They fell down before the Lamb . . . and adored Him that liveth forever and ever.'<sup>89</sup> O ye humble souls, rejoice! Ye poor, leap with gladness! The kingdom of God belongs to you if you walk in the truth."

<sup>86</sup> *Life and Christian Virtue*, chap. 17.

<sup>88</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III, chap. 49, no. 6.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 58, no. 3.

<sup>88</sup> John 15:19.

<sup>89</sup> Apoc. 4:10; 5:8, 14.

## ACCIDENTAL BEATITUDE

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WE HAVE spoken of essential beatitude, which consists in the immediate vision of God and in the love which flows from this vision. But the Lord, so rich in mercy for His elect, adds to essential beatitude a joy in created good, a joy which corresponds to their aspirations. This is what we call accidental beatitude.

This accidental beatitude is found in the society of friends: in general joy at the good deeds done on earth: in the special recompense given to certain classes, the halo of virgins, for example, of doctors, and of martyrs: in the resurrection and in the qualities of the glorious body.

### Accidental Beatitude in the Soul

In regard to those whom they have known and loved on earth, the saints receive, besides the beatific vision *in Verbo*, also new knowledge *extra Verbum*. It is an accidental joy to learn, for example, of the spiritual progress, of their friends on earth, to see them entering heaven. This knowledge *extra Verbum* is inferior to the beatific vision. Hence some call it the evening vision, contrasted with the morning vision which sees created things in God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Between these two kinds of knowledge, as we have said, we find a great difference, just as we find a similar difference between the knowledge of a

Further, each soul is happy to be honored by God, by the friends of God, especially by those who shine by wisdom.<sup>2</sup> Each has a special joy in seeing his own good recognized and appreciated, good which he accomplished on earth in the midst of great difficulties.

Special recompense will be given for victories gained against the flesh, the world, and the devil: the halo of virgins, for victory against the concupiscence of the flesh: the halo of the martyrs for victory over persecutors: the halo of doctors for victory over ignorance, errors, infidelity, heresy, over the spirit of division and negation. This halo belongs, not only to those who have publicly taught sacred science, by word or by pen, but also to those who have taught in private fashion when occasion presented itself.<sup>3</sup> "They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity."<sup>4</sup> This halo belongs, first to the spirit, then, after the resurrection, to the body, just as the essential glory of the soul is reflected in the body raised from the dead.

### Resurrection of the Flesh

To accidental beatitude belongs also the resurrection of the body and the characteristics of the glorified body.<sup>5</sup> The resurrection is a dogma of faith. It was denied by the Sadducees, the Manicheans, the Albigensians, the Socinians, and is denied today by rationalists.

We must say first: If a good number of those who died (e.g., Lazarus and the son of the widow of Naim) were recalled to life by our Lord, and later by the apostles and other

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psychologist based on words and writings and the other kind of knowledge possessed by a holy director, like St. Francis de Sales.

<sup>2</sup> Dan. 12:3.

<sup>3</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 96, a. 5-7.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 138:17.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 75-86.



saints, what can hinder our immortal soul, made by nature to inform and vivify its body, from being reunited forever to that body, though in different degrees of merit and demerit?

This revealed truth, defined by the Church,<sup>6</sup> is supported by numerous Scripture texts. The Fourth Council of the Lateran gave this definition: All will arise, each with his own body which he had upon earth, to receive what each has merited, according as his works were good or bad.

The universal resurrection, then, is of faith. This resurrection requires at least that there be essential identity between the risen body and the body which the soul had while it was still in union with the body. According to certain writers<sup>7</sup> this suffices, because the soul, being a substantial form, gives to the body its specific life, even the actuality which we call corporeity. Nevertheless theologians hold commonly, with St. Thomas, that it must also be individually the same body, that is to say, it must contain at least a part of the matter which was formerly in that body. Otherwise how could we say that each one will rise in his own body which he had on earth? How could we say that this individual body rises from the dead?<sup>8</sup> St. Paul says: "For this corruptible must put on

<sup>6</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, First Part, chap. 12; IV Council of the Lateran., Denz. no. 429.

<sup>7</sup> Thus Durandus, who is followed by some modern authors.

<sup>8</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 79, a. 1, 2, 3. From the Four Books of Sentences, dist. 44, q. 1, a. 1: "If the soul does not resume the same body, we could not speak of resurrection; we would speak rather of the assumption of a new body." A. 2. "Numerically the same man must rise; and this comes to pass, since it is one and the same individual soul which is united to one and the same numerical body. Otherwise we would not have resurrection." Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3. Also *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 80; also *Tabula aurea*, "Resurrectio," nos. 11, 12. Also Hugon, *Tractatus dogmatici, De novissimis*, p. 470. Nevertheless, just as our organism without losing its identity is renewed by assimilation and disassimilation, it seems sufficient that any part of the matter which once belonged to our body would be

incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”<sup>9</sup> The Catechism of the Council of Trent speaks as follows: “Each of us will rise with the body which we had on earth, which was corrupted in the tomb, and reduced to dust.”<sup>10</sup> This is the uniform testimony both of Scripture and of tradition.

In the book of Job we read: “I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God; whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”<sup>11</sup> Isaias says: “Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again! Awake and give praise, ye that dwell in the dust.”<sup>12</sup> Daniel speaks as follows: “Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach.”<sup>13</sup> In the Second Book of Machabees, one of the martyrs says to his judge: “Thou indeed, O most wicked man, destroyest us out of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life.”<sup>14</sup>

Jesus defends the resurrection against the Sadducees. “Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.”<sup>15</sup> Again: “Concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken by God saying to you: I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac

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reanimated in the risen body. Hence St. Thomas (*Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 81) replies to the ordinary objections on this point. Cannibals do eat human flesh, but human flesh is not their only food. Plants in a cemetery do assimilate matter taken from corpses, but the matter of these plants does not come exclusively from corpses. Cf. Hervé, *Manuale theologiæ dogmaticæ*, IV, no. 636. Nor is it impossible for infinite wisdom and omnipotence to recover the matter of a body which has disappeared. Cf. Monsabré, *Conferences de Notre Dame, La resurrection* (1889), pp. 218 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Part I, chap. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Job. 19:25, 27.

<sup>9</sup> I Cor. 15:53.

<sup>12</sup> Isa. 26:19.

<sup>13</sup> Dan. 12:2.

<sup>14</sup> II Mach. 7:9.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 5:29-30; 10:28.

and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”<sup>16</sup>

In the Gospel of St. John our Lord is still more explicit: “The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.”<sup>17</sup> Again: “He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day.”<sup>18</sup>

St. Paul<sup>19</sup> proves the possibility of the resurrection by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. “If the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again, and if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins.” “For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive, but everyone in his own order, . . . and the enemy, death, shall be destroyed last.”<sup>20</sup> St. Paul announces the same mystery to the Athenians,<sup>21</sup> to the Governor Felix,<sup>22</sup> to the Thessalonians.<sup>23</sup>

The Fathers of the second century speak explicitly of this dogma.<sup>24</sup> Martyrs proclaim it at their death.<sup>25</sup>

Reason cannot give a demonstrative proof of this truth, but it can give high reasons of appropriateness. These reasons are thus expressed by the Catechism of the Council of Trent: “The first is that our souls, which are only a part of ourselves,

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 22:23-32.

<sup>17</sup> John 5:29.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:54.

<sup>19</sup> I Cor. 15:17.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 15:21-27.

<sup>21</sup> Acts 17:31-32.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 24:15, 21.

<sup>23</sup> I Thess. 4:17.

<sup>24</sup> Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, and Tertullian speak at length on this point. Also St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory. See *Enchir. patr. Index theologicus*, nos. 598-600. “The dead will rise, all the dead, each with the body they had on earth.”

<sup>25</sup> Ruinart, *Acta martyrum*, p. 70.

are immortal, and retain forever their natural inclination to union with the body."<sup>26</sup> Hence it seems contrary to nature that they should forever remain separated from their bodies. Now that which is contrary to nature is in a state of violence and cannot last long. Hence it is very appropriate that the soul be united to its body again and that the body be raised to life.<sup>27</sup> The soul is naturally the form of the body, hence it groans at the idea of separation. Therefore it should not be deprived forever of this body.<sup>28</sup>

A second reason is found in the infinite justice of God, who has established punishments for the wicked and rewards for the good. Hence it is appropriate that the souls be reunited to their bodies in order that these bodies, which have been instruments, whether of good or of evil, partake with the soul in the awards and punishments deserved. This thought was developed by St. John Chrysostom<sup>29</sup> in a homily to the people of Antioch.

In the case of the wicked the body has taken part in deeds of iniquity, in criminal voluptuousness. In the case of the good the body has been in the service of the soul in the accomplishment of good works, sometimes heroic work, in devotion, in the apostolate, in martyrdom. Further, the bodies of the just are temples of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says. Hence the resurrection of the body is highly appropriate, that the soul

<sup>26</sup> Our intelligence, the lowest of all intelligences, has as proper object intelligible truth known as in a mirror in sense things. Hence normally it has need of the imagination, and the imagination cannot exist actually without a corporeal organ.

<sup>27</sup> *Contra Gentes*, Bk. IV, chap. 70.

<sup>28</sup> What we are here saying refutes metempsychosis, according to which the human soul would pass from one body to another, either into the body of a beast or into another human body. This is impossible because the human soul has an essential relation to this individual human body and not to the body of a beast. Thus the separated souls remain individual, each by its relation to its own body.

<sup>29</sup> *Homilies*, 49, 50.

may lack nothing in its state of felicity. Here we see, together with the justice of God, also His wisdom and His goodness.

A third reason is drawn from the victory of Christ over sin and the devil, which victory consequently triumphs over death which is a consequence of sin. He won this victory over death by His own resurrection and by that of His Blessed Mother. Hence it is appropriate, since He is to be the Savior of humanity, body and soul, that He win also the definitive victory over death by universal resurrection.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent speaks thus: "O wonderful restoration of our nature, for which we are indebted to the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over death!"<sup>80</sup> Holy Scripture is explicit on this point: "He shall cast death down headlong forever."<sup>81</sup> Osee says: "O death, I will be thy death."<sup>82</sup> St. Paul explaining this last word fears not to say that, after all the other enemies, death itself will be destroyed.<sup>83</sup>

We read in St. John: "Death shall be no more."<sup>84</sup> It is supremely appropriate that the merits of Jesus Christ, which destroyed the empire of death, be infinitely more efficacious than the sin of Adam.<sup>85</sup>

### The Qualities of the Glorious Body

St. Paul speaks thus: "One is the glory of the celestial bodies and another of the terrestrial: one is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars, for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory;

<sup>80</sup> *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Part I, chap. 12.

<sup>81</sup> Isa. 25:8.

<sup>82</sup> Osee 13:14.

<sup>83</sup> I Cor. 15:26.

<sup>84</sup> Apoc. 21:4.

<sup>85</sup> Heb. 2:14.

it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body.”<sup>36</sup>

Following this doctrine, theologians distinguish four chief qualities in the glorified body: impassibility, subtility, agility, and clarity.

Impassibility is the gift which preserves not only from death, but also from pain.<sup>37</sup> It arises from the perfect submission of the body to the soul.<sup>38</sup>

Agility delivers bodies from the heaviness which weighs down the present life. The risen body can go where the soul pleases, with a swiftness and ease which St. Jerome<sup>39</sup> compares to that of the eagle.

Subtility renders the body capable of penetrating other bodies without difficulty. Thus the glorious body of the risen Christ entered the Cenacle though the doors were closed.<sup>40</sup>

Clarity gives to the body of the saints that brightness, that splendor, which is the very essence of the beautiful. Our Lord<sup>41</sup> says: “Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their father.” To give an idea of this quality, He was transfigured before His apostles on Thabor.<sup>42</sup> St. Paul says: “Jesus Christ will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory.”<sup>43</sup> The Israelites in the desert<sup>44</sup> saw an image of this glory on the forehead of Moses, after He had seen God and received God’s words. He was so luminous that their eyes could not endure the splendor.

This clarity is but a reflection, an overflowing, of the glory of the soul on that of the body.<sup>45</sup> Hence the bodies of the saints will not all have the same degree of clarity, but each will have the degree proportioned to its light of glory. Thus St. Paul

<sup>36</sup> I Cor. 15:42.

<sup>37</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 83, a. 1, q. 84, 85.

<sup>38</sup> *De civ. Dei*, Bk. XI, chap. 10.

<sup>39</sup> *Commentary on Isaiah*, chap. 40.

<sup>40</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 83.

<sup>41</sup> Matt. 13:43.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 17:12.

<sup>43</sup> Phil. 3:21.

<sup>44</sup> Exod. 34:20.

<sup>45</sup> *Supplementum*, q. 85, a. 1.

says: "Star differeth from star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." <sup>46</sup>

Lastly, our senses will find a pure and ineffable joy in the humanity of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, the choir of the saints, the beauties of the renovated world, the chants of adoration and thanksgiving in the city of God. Such will be the accidental beatitude of heaven after the renovation of the world. <sup>47</sup>

What fruits follow on the knowledge of this mystery to which nature gives us no right to aspire? The Lord has deigned to reveal these things to the little ones, whereas He has hidden them from the wise and prudent. <sup>48</sup> The first fruit is thanksgiving. Second, the control of passion in the service of a holy life, such a life as the Lord expects from us in our own particular conditions. Third, consolation in seeing our dear ones die. Lastly, courage in suffering. Job consoled himself by the hope of seeing the Lord, his God, on the day of resurrection. <sup>49</sup> The splendor which appears at times on the face of saints, e.g., of St. Dominic and St. Francis, is the prelude to the brightness of eternity. <sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> I Cor. 15:41.

<sup>47</sup> Isa. 65:17 announces a new heaven and a new earth. The Apocalypse 21:1 repeats the same truth. The second epistle of St. Peter 3:10 explains the phrase: "The day of the Lord will come like a thief. In these days the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will be dissolved, and the earth will be consumed with all the works which it encloses. We expect, according to the promise, a new heaven and a new earth where justice dwells." Cf. Monsabré, *Conférences de Notre Dame*, no. 101. <sup>48</sup> Matt. 11:26. <sup>49</sup> Job 19:26.

<sup>50</sup> Heretics, wishing to kill St. Dominic, waited for him on a road where he was to pass. But when he came near, such a brilliant light illuminated his features that they did not dare to touch him. This light was the sensible radiation of the contemplation which united him to God. With him was saved also the order which he intended to found.

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## THE NUMBER OF THE ELECT

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MANY works have been written on the number of the elect. We may refer particularly to the article in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*.<sup>1</sup> Here we restrict ourselves to that which is certain, or at least very probable, in agreement with the great majority of theologians.

### The Mystery of This Number

The number of the elect is known only by God. "The Lord knoweth who are His."<sup>2</sup> The liturgy says that this number is known to Him alone.<sup>3</sup> This is reaffirmed also by St. Thomas.<sup>4</sup> The end of the world will come when the number of the elect is complete, when the succession of human generations has reached its goal.

This number in itself is very great: "I heard the number of them that were signed (of the servants of God), a hundred forty-four thousand were signed, of every tribe of the children of Israel. . . . After this, I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dict. théol. cath.*, "Elus."

<sup>2</sup> God alone knows the number of the elect.

<sup>3</sup> Apoc. 7:4-9.

<sup>4</sup> II Tim. 2:19.

<sup>5</sup> Ia, q. 23, a. 7.



If we count both angels and men, the number of the elect seems to be higher than that of the reprobate. Thus St. Thomas,<sup>6</sup> because, according to the testimony of Scripture<sup>7</sup> and tradition, most of the angels remained faithful. As regards angels, says St. Thomas,<sup>8</sup> evil happens only in the minority of cases, because, since the angel has neither sense power nor passions, he does not run the risk of remaining satisfied with an inferior form of life.

When we speak of men exclusively, we do not know, first of all, if among the worlds scattered in space the earth is the only one that is habitable. But if we restrict our question to men on our planet, the number of the elect remains a matter of controversy.

Many Fathers and theologians incline to the smaller number of the elect, because it is said in Scripture: "Many are called, but few are chosen."<sup>9</sup> Again: "Enter you in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there are who go in thereat; how narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life and few there are that find it."<sup>10</sup> Still, these texts are not absolutely demonstrative. Thus, following many others, Père Monsabré<sup>11</sup> remarks: "If these words were intended for all places and for all times, then the opinion of the small number of the elect would triumph. But we are permitted to think that they are meant, directly, for the ungrateful time of our Savior's own preaching. When Jesus wishes us to think of the future, He speaks in another manner. Thus He says to His disciples: 'If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to Myself.'<sup>12</sup> 'The gates of

<sup>6</sup> Ia, q. 63, a. 9. *I Book of Sentences*, dist. 39, q. 2, a. 2 ad 4.

<sup>7</sup> Dan. 1:10.

<sup>8</sup> Ia, q. 63, a. 9 ad 1.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. 20:16; 22:14.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7:14.

<sup>11</sup> *Conférences de Notre Dame*, no. 102.

<sup>12</sup> John 12:32.

hell shall not prevail against (My Church).’<sup>18</sup> And showing us the results of the last judgment, He says: ‘The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting.’ ”<sup>14</sup>

Monsabré continues: “Remark that He does not tell us definitely the number of the good and of the wicked. To those who demanded a clear pronouncement, He was content to reply: ‘Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many . . . shall seek to enter and shall not be able.’ The rigorists will tell me possibly that Jesus here hides the mystery of His justice, in order not to frighten timorous souls. As for myself, I prefer to think that He hides here the mystery of His mercy, that we may avoid presumption.”<sup>15</sup>

The common opinion of the Fathers and ancient theologians is without doubt that those who are saved do not represent the greater number. We may cite in favor of this view the following saints: Basil, John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Leo the Great, Bernard, Thomas Aquinas. Then, nearer to our own times: Molina, St. Robert Bellarmine, Suarez, Vasquez, Lessius, and St. Alphonsus. But they give this view as opinion, not as revealed truth, not as certain conclusion.

In the last century the contrary opinion, namely, of the greater number of the elect, was defended by Father Faber in England, by Monsignor Bougaud in France, by Father Castelein, S.J., in Belgium.

To conclude: some insist on the mercy of God, others on the justice of God. Neither one side nor the other gives us certitude. And the reasons of appropriateness which each invokes differ very much from the reasons of appropriateness invoked in favor of a dogma which is already certain by

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 16:18.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:46.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 13:24.

revelation, whereas here we are treating of a truth that is not certain.

Theologians in general are inclined to fill out what Scripture and tradition tell us by distinguishing the means of salvation given to Catholics from those that are given men of good will beyond the borders of the Church.

Restricting the question to Catholics, we find the doctrine, generally held especially since Suarez, that, if we consider merely adults, the number of the elect surpasses that of the reprobate. If adult Catholics do at one time or another sin mortally, nevertheless they can arise in the tribunal of penance, and there are relatively few who at the end of life do not repent, or even refuse to receive the sacraments.

But if we are treating of all Christians, of all who have been baptized, Catholic, schismatic, Protestant, it is more probable, theologians generally say, that the great number is saved. First, the number of infants who die in the state of grace before reaching the age of reason is very great. Secondly, many Protestants, being today in good faith, can be reconciled to God by an act of contrition, particularly in danger of death. Thirdly, schismatics can receive a valid absolution.

If the question is of the entire human race, the answer must remain uncertain, for the reasons given above. But even if, absolutely, the number of the elect is less great, the glory of God's government cannot suffer. Quality prevails over quantity. One elect soul is a spiritual universe. Further, no evil happens that is not permitted for a higher good. Further, among non-Christians (Jews, Mohammedans, pagans) there are souls which are elect. Jews and Mohammedans not only admit monotheism, but retain fragments of primitive revelation and of Mosaic revelation. They believe in a God who is

a supernatural rewarder, and can thus, with the aid of grace, make an act of contrition. And even to pagans, who live in invincible, involuntary ignorance of the true religion, and who still attempt to observe the natural law, supernatural aids are offered, by means known to God. These, as Pius IX says,<sup>16</sup> can arrive at salvation. God never commands the impossible. To him who does what is in his power God does not refuse grace.<sup>17</sup>

We cannot arrive at certitude in this question. It is better to acknowledge our ignorance than to discourage the faithful by a doctrine which is too rigid, to expose them to danger by a doctrine which is too superficial.

The important thing is to observe the commandments of God. St. Augustine<sup>18</sup> said, and the Council of Trent repeats: <sup>19</sup> "God never commands the impossible. But He warns us to do what we can, and to ask of Him the grace to accomplish what we of ourselves cannot do, and He aids us to fulfill what He commands."

Let us put our confidence in Jesus Christ,<sup>20</sup> "the victim of propitiation for our sins,"<sup>21</sup> "the Lamb of God, . . . who taketh away the sin of the world."<sup>22</sup> "Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Denz., no. 1677. Cf. St. Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, chap. 43, no. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Children who die without baptism go to limbo. They do not suffer, since they do not know that they have been called to see God face to face. They know Him with a natural knowledge and have a certain natural beatitude, though they cannot, by reason of original sin, attain an efficacious love of God, author of nature. This truth shows indirectly the glory and the grandeur of baptism.

<sup>18</sup> *De natura et gratia*, chap. 43, no. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Denz., no. 804.

<sup>20</sup> I John 2:2; 4:10.

<sup>21</sup> John 1:29.

<sup>22</sup> Heb. 4:16.

<sup>23</sup> On this point Bossuet says: "Why does Jesus wish us to enter into these sublime truths? Is it in order to trouble us, to alarm us, to ask the question, am I of the elect or not? Far be from us so unworthy a thought! God does not intend that we penetrate His secret counsels and eternal decrees. The purpose of

### The Signs of Predestination

The Council of Trent <sup>24</sup> has declared that we cannot have on earth certitude of our predestination without a special revelation. Aside from this special revelation no man can know if he will persevere in good works to the end. Nevertheless there are signs of predestination which give a kind of moral certitude that one will persevere. The Fathers, especially St. Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Great, St. Bernard, St. Anselm, have enumerated certain of these signs, following the directions of Scripture.

Theologians enumerate eight signs of predestination. First, a good life; secondly, the testimony of a good conscience; thirdly, patience in adversities for love of God; fourthly, relish for the light and the word of God; fifthly, mercy toward those who suffer; sixthly, love of enemies; seventhly, humility; eighthly, special devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Patience in adversity shows how inequality of natural conditions is compensated for by divine grace. This is the truth expressed in the beatitudes: Blessed the poor in spirit, blessed the meek, blessed those who weep, blessed those who hunger and thirst for justice, blessed the merciful, blessed the pure of heart, blessed the peacemakers, blessed those who suffer persecution for justice. These possess the kingdom of God. To bear patiently and perseveringly a heavy cross is a great sign of predestination.

our Savior is this: He has given to His elect a certain choice of means by which they approach eternal salvation. The first of these is that we unite ourselves to His prayer and say to Him: 'Deliver us from evil.' Then to pray with the Church: 'Permit us not to be separated from Thee; if our will would go astray, permit it not.' Jesus teaches us to abandon ourselves perfectly to His goodness, to work with our whole heart for our salvation, to give ourselves to Him entirely for time and for eternity.

<sup>24</sup> Denz. nos. 805, 826.

Theologians sometimes add these special signs: first, a great intimacy with God in prayer; secondly, perfect mortification of the passions; thirdly, the ardent desire to suffer much for the glory of Christ Jesus; fourthly, an indefatigable zeal for souls.

We may here remind the reader of the great promise of the Sacred Heart, to those who receive Communion well on nine successive first Fridays. This promise, we have said,<sup>25</sup> is absolute though it supposes that Communion has been well made for these nine times. This would be, therefore, a grace given only to the elect.

The mystery of predestination reminds us that we can do nothing without the grace of Christ.<sup>26</sup> "What hast thou," says St. Paul, "that thou hast not received?"<sup>27</sup> But predestination does not make superfluous our own efforts because adults must merit eternal life. No one is in heaven unless he has died in the state of grace. No one can go to hell except by his own fault. We are heirs of God, coheirs with Christ, if we suffer with Him that we may be glorified with Him.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See chap. 18.

<sup>26</sup> John 15:5.

<sup>27</sup> I Cor. 4:7.

<sup>28</sup> Rom. 8:17.

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## EPILOGUE

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REVEALED doctrine on death, judgment, hell, purgatory, and heaven, shows us what the next life is, manifests to us the depth of the human soul, which God alone can fill. The power which brings us to heaven, our destination, is sanctifying grace, the seed of eternal life, the source of the infused virtues, especially of faith, hope, and charity, with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Let us note as we approach conclusion, that these great theological virtues are today often completely disfigured. Faith in God, hope in God, love of God and souls, have been replaced in many thousands of moderns by faith and hope in humanity, by the love of humanity. Subjective smartness has taken the place of sacred doctrine. Everything is irremediably false.

In certain Masonic lodges, in the first hall, we read upon the walls: "Faith, Hope, Charity." Chesterton has written on this subject under the heading: "Grand Ideas Gone Mad."

Properly speaking, persons are astray, not ideas. Under physiological and psychical disturbance men become fools. And the higher their intelligence, the more this folly grows, its proportions corresponding to their faculties and their culture. Religious folly is the most difficult folly to cure, because there is no appeal to a more elevated motive. Intelligence has gone astray in its highest reaches, deceives itself

habitually, particularly in its ideas on God, God's infinite justice, and God's mercy.

Grand ideas gone mad: religious ideas without center and equilibrium. This results when men substitute for faith in God faith in humanity, so full of aberrations. Faith, illumined by the Holy Spirit, by the gifts of intelligence and wisdom, becomes the principle of mystical contemplation. But faith, where it degenerates, becomes the principle of a false mysticism, whose devotees are impassioned for the progress of humanity, as if this progress were never to suffer reverse, rather as if this progress were God Himself, who becomes Himself in us. Renan was asked the question: Does God exist? His answer was: Not yet. He did not see that this answer was a blasphemy.

Classic antiquity was not afflicted with such complete lack of equilibrium. After antiquity came Christianity, came the supernatural elevation of the Gospel. Then, when men abandoned Christian truth, their fall was accelerated by the height from which they fell.

This departure begins with Luther, who denied the Sacrifice of the Mass, the validity of sacramental absolution and confession, the necessity of observing the commands of God in order to be saved. Descent was hastened by the Encyclopedists and the philosophers of the eighteenth century, by the corrupted Christianity of J. J. Rousseau, who robs the Gospel of its supernatural character and reduces religion to a natural sentiment which can be found, more or less altered, in all religions. These ideas were propagated everywhere by the French Revolution. Further, Kant maintained that speculative reason cannot prove the existence of God. There followed Fichte and Hegel, who teach that God does not



exist outside and above humanity, but that He becomes God in us and by us, that God is nothing but the progress of humanity, just as if this progress were not accompanied from time to time by a terrible recoil into barbarism.

Between Christianity and these monstrous errors arose the system called liberalism, a halfway station, which concludes nothing, gives no sufficient motives for action. Liberalism is replaced by radicalism, then by socialism, finally by materialistic and atheistic communism.<sup>1</sup> The negation of God and religion, of family, of property, of the fatherland; all follow close on hand. Communism ends in universal servitude beneath the most terrible of dictatorships. Acceleration holds good in mental procedures as it does in corporeal.

Let us turn back and reclimb the mountain of holiness. Holiness, as St. Thomas<sup>2</sup> shows, has two essential characteristics, the absence of all stain of soilure and sin, and a firm union with God.

Holiness is perfect in heaven, but it begins on earth. It manifests itself concretely in three fashions, upon which we would here insist. We have three great duties toward God: we must know Him, we must love Him, and we must serve Him. Thus we obtain eternal life. Now there are souls which have especially the mission of loving God and of making Him loved. These are souls of strong will, who receive from God the grace of a burning love. There are others whose mission is to make God known. In such souls the intellect is manifestly the dominating character, and these souls receive above all the graces of enlightenment. And there are souls whose chief mission is to serve God by fidelity in daily

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Œuvres de Donoso Cortès* (Paris: 1862), especially the letter of thirty pages written in 1852 to be presented to Pius IX.

<sup>2</sup> IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 8.

duty. This class contains the majority of good Christians. These three forms of sanctity seem to be represented in the three privileged apostles, Peter, John, and James.

Those of the first class, wherein will is dominant, receive graces of ardent love. They ask themselves: What can I do for God? What work shall I undertake for His glory? They thirst for suffering, for mortification, in order to prove to God their love and to repair offenses of which He is the object. They desire to save sinners. Only secondarily do they apply themselves to the task of making God better known.

To this group belong the following: Elias, so remarkable for his zeal, St. Peter, so profoundly devoted to our Lord that he wills to be crucified head-downwards; then the great martyrs, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Lawrence. Nearer to our own times we find St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare, the daughters of St. Clare. Later still we find St. Charles Borromeo; St. Vincent de Paul, overflowing with charity for neighbor; St. Margaret Mary, St. Benedict Joseph Labre, and the holy Curé of Ars.

The danger for these souls lies in the energy of their will, which can degenerate into rigidity, tenacity, obstinacy. In those who are less fervent, such rigidity is their dominant fault. They have a zeal not sufficiently illumined, not sufficiently patient and amiable. Sometimes they give themselves too much to active work, neglecting prayer.

The trials which the Lord sends them tend especially to make them supple, to break their will when it has become too rigid, to make it perfectly docile to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Under these trials their burning zeal becomes more and more illumined, more patient and bending and sweet. Thus they climb the mountain to the summit of perfection.

The second class, that is, souls dominated by intellect, climb the mountain by another path. They receive graces of light, which carry them on to contemplation, to those immense and all-embracing views which are the reward of wisdom. Their loves grow by the road of intellective deduction. Compared with the preceding class, they have less need of activity or of reparation, but if they are faithful they come to a heroic love of the God who ravishes them.

To this group of souls belong the great doctors: St. Augustine, St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Francis de Sales. We may note that the latter often laments his slowness in following the lights he has received. And this is a common danger for these souls. They do not proceed to conform their conduct to the light God gives them. Their intelligence is highly illumined, but their will lacks zeal.

These souls may suffer particularly from error, from false directions which turn aside their intellect. These trials purify them and, if they meet them well, they too reach a great love of God. An enlightened soul, if it is faithful, will be more united to God than a soul that is ardent but unfaithful.

The third class of souls is dominated by memory and practical activity. Their chief mission is to serve God by fidelity to duty. Their memory brings before them particular facts. They are struck by a trait in the life of a saint, or a word of the liturgy. Divine inspiration renders them attentive to various forms of perfection. If they are faithful, they rise to the highest levels of sanctity.

To this class would belong, it seems, the apostle St. James, the great shepherds of the primitive Church, all devoted even to martyrdom to a right ruling of their dioceses. In this class, too, in modern times, we find St. Ignatius, attentive to the most practical means of sanctification, careful to

consider men as they are and not only as they should be: St. Alphonsus Liguori, entirely preoccupied with morality, with the practical apostolate, so necessary in his time against Jansenism and infidelity.

The danger for these souls is that of attaching themselves to works which are good in themselves, but which lead only indirectly to God. Some find their entire perfection in austerities, others in devotion, others in their habitual labors, others in the recitation of interminable prayers. The danger here is that of falling into trifles and scruples, which retard their entrance into contemplation, which hinder them from the intimacy of union with God. The methods and means which served them for the moment become in time hindrances to loving and simple contemplation of God.

The trials for these souls are to be found chiefly in the practice of charity. They suffer much from the faults of their brethren. But if they are faithful in the midst of these difficulties, they too reach a very intimate union with our Lord.

Such are the three principal forms of holiness, corresponding to our three great duties toward God, to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him.

In Jesus Himself we may see the excellence of these three forms of sanctity. First, in His hidden life, in the solitude of Nazareth, in the house of the carpenter, He is the example of fidelity to daily duty: acts which are lowly and humble, but which become great by the love which inspires them.

In His apostolic life, secondly, Jesus was the light of the world. "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>8</sup> His teachings on eternal life,

<sup>8</sup> John 8:12.

and the roads to arrive there, are not acts of faith on His part. They come from His vision of the divine essence.<sup>4</sup> He founds the Church and confides it to Peter. He says to His apostles: "You are the light of the world."<sup>5</sup> And He sends them to teach all nations, to bring them baptism, absolution, the Eucharist.<sup>6</sup> All this he confirms after His resurrection.<sup>7</sup>

In His life of suffering, thirdly, Jesus manifests the full zeal of His love for His Father and for us. This love leads Him to die for us on the cross, thus to make reparation to God and to save souls.

Jesus therefore possesses, in pre-eminent manner, these three forms of sanctity. And He likewise shows how to meet the dangers which other souls encounter. He had burning zeal without rigidity, without obstinacy. His love was never more burning than on the cross, and never did He manifest a more patient sweetness. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Enjoying contemplation, the most luminous and elevated, He is never lost in this contemplation. He is not abstracted from the world, not drawn out of the world like a saint in ecstasy. He is above ecstasy, without ceasing to contemplate. He speaks to His apostles on the least details of their apostolic life.

Finally, attentive to most minute details in the service of God, He ever keeps in view the more important questions. He sees everything in God, the things of time in the things of eternity.

Jesus is higher than any saint, as white light is superior to the colors of the rainbow. Proportionately, we may apply this

<sup>4</sup> IIIa, q. 9, a. 2, q. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 5:14.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:18-19; 18:18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 28:19.

truth to the pre-eminent sanctity of Mary, Mother of God, full of grace. These two are in a special sense our mediators, whom God has given to us by reason of our feebleness. Let us be guided by them. They will lead us infallibly to eternal life. The life of grace is everlasting life already begun.

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