

THE MEANING OF GRACE

CHARLES JOURNET



WITH STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS



DEUS BOOKS

FROM SHADOWS and SYMBOLS to the TRUTH



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THE MEANING OF GRACE

To Père Jacques Loew
and
the Worker Mission at Sts. Peter and Paul

THE MEANING OF GRACE

by

CHARLES JOURNET

with

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS



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NOTE

These discourses, given in the chapel at Ecogia, in August 1956, have not been rewritten, but simply retouched. Should they have been published? We have done so, we have tried, very simply, in catechetical fashion, to suggest answers to certain questions, both old and new, that the mystery of grace poses to each one of us, in the hope that the reader will go on to a more profound reading of the scriptural texts.

CHARLES JOURNET
August 1957

PART ONE

Grace and Its Essence

I

Habitual Grace and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

I should like to speak to you first of the *essence* of grace, according to St. Thomas' treatise on grace; then of its *existential states*, for which I shall make use of data drawn from other sources, notably Aquinas' treatises on Christ and the sacraments.

The Judaeo-Christian Revelation of God's Love

The very first thing, one which must never be forgotten, which we shall never adequately grasp, is that the Judaeo-Christian revelation is the revelation of *the love of God for us*, of a love which will never cease to astonish us here below because it surpasses all we could possibly conceive, and of which we can never plumb the depths. To know the depths of God's love for us, we should have to be God. And the effects of this love are disconcerting and surprising to us, precisely because we are unable to comprehend its Source. They are disconcerting to the purely rationalistic reason, even to reason pure and simple.

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The Presence of Immensity by Creation and the Presence of Indwelling by Grace

The first act in which God's love pours itself out is *creation*. God is the Infinite, the Absolute. He possesses being, intelligence, love, beauty to an infinite degree. We should not say he *has* being, intelligence, love; rather, that he *is* Being itself, Intelligence itself, Love and Beauty themselves. He dwells in himself; he is lacking in absolutely nothing. Why, then, did he create the world?

When man acts, it is always to procure for himself some benefit; but God could gain no benefit from creation. So then we are compelled to say that, if he created the world, it was through pure superabundance, pure desire to communicate his riches, pure disinterestedness, through love. Here we border on the mystery of his *presence in creation*. This is a presence at once of causality and conservation; the same divine omnipotence that makes the universe emerge from nothingness keeps it above nothingness; just as I exercise the same force to lift a weight and to keep it at the height to which I have raised it.

The divine presence envelops and penetrates all creatures. It is a *knowing* presence, which pierces the secrets of hearts; a *powerful* presence, which gives beings their activity, gives to the rose-bush for example the power to produce a rose; a presence of *essence*, which also gives the rose-bush the power to "be" what it is. These are the three aspects of his presence in creation. It is intimate to creatures. Strictly speaking, God is more present to things than they are to themselves. "God who art in my heaven more my heaven than heaven," said Père Chardon; he is in me more me than myself. And if for one instant he were to forget the world, it would fall immediately into nothingness.

Yet God who is so mysteriously present to the

world is not immersed in the world; he is not dissolved in things. He keeps his absolute transcendence. If, then, he fills all things, it is as the infinite Cause of an effect that is imperfect and limited: "Do I not fill both heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23, 24), he asks, and the psalmist says, "If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I sink to the nether world, you are present there" (Ps. 138, 8).

There is a second act of God that is still more overwhelming. It is a little like the act of a mother who feels the child she has brought into the world is too remote, and takes and presses him to her heart. God unites himself in a new way to the souls who open themselves to his grace and his love. This is a presence still more mysterious, more hidden, the *presence of indwelling*. We read in the Book of Proverbs (8, 31): "And I found delight in the sons of men," and in Ecclesiasticus (24, 7-8): "Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose inheritance should I abide? Then the Creator of all gave me his command, and he who formed me chose the spot for my tent, saying 'In Jacob make your dwelling, in Israel your inheritance.'"

That God desires thus to come down secretly into our universe to find his dwelling in it is a truth already perceived dimly in the Old Testament. But the fullness of this revelation is to be found in the New Testament. Consider, for example, the opening verses of chapter 21 of the Apocalypse: "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold the dwelling of God with men, and he will dwell with them. And they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more; neither shall there be

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mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.' ”

In this second way, God cannot dwell in material things; but where there is a spirit, he is able to come down and hold converse with that spirit. And this presence of indwelling is conditioned by the descent, in that spirit, of grace in its fullest meaning. You see the importance of grace: it transforms the soul and fits it for the immediate indwelling of the divine Persons.

The word “grace” has three interdependent senses. The first is that of well-wishing. We say of someone: he has the favor, the grace, of the king. So it is an *act of love* that comes down to make contact with some being. The second sense is that of something given to a person to signify or symbolize this well-wishing. So it is a *gift*. And the third sense is that of gratitude on the part of the person who has been favored: he is *grateful*, he gives thanks. You see the interdependence: the favor precedes the gift which, when it is received by someone worthy of it, calls forth the act of thanksgiving.

The *uncreated divine Grace*, the uncreated divine favor, causes in us *created graces*, created gifts and benefits, for which we render acts of thanksgiving.

We shall leave aside this third meaning and consider the first two.

Difference between Human Love, which Presupposes the Being of Things, and Divine Love, which Creates the Being of Things

There is one great difference between God's love and man's, between God's favor or grace and that of a man: God's love is creative, *it pours out being and goodness into things*, whereas man's love presupposes the goodness, the beauty of things. It

is *because* a thing is, because it is good or beautiful that it draws me to love it. When it is fully good, it ravishes me; when it is only partly good, it invites me: I can love a human creature in spite of all it lacks, because there is some good in it, because I think of it as willed by God, redeemed by the blood of Christ. Someone may be uncongenial to me, but if I remember the words of St. John of the Cross: "Put love where there is none, and you will reap love," my love will go out to meet him in the attempt to provoke response. But I am not able by my love alone to produce or create the goodness or beauty of any thing; not even a mother, by her act of loving, can change the heart of her son who is a sinner.

It is otherwise with God's love, which is prior to the being and goodness of things. That is easy to grasp: before the creation, there was nothing; God could not look on the world and be in love with its beauty. God first willed the world—willing and loving are the same with him—and the world budded forth and grew, as the outcome of his act of love. The world exists because God loved it; it continues because God continues to love it. There is, therefore, an inversion to make when we go from man's love to God's: man's love follows upon the goodness of things, God's is creative of the goodness of things.

The "Common" Love of God for All Creatures and His "Special" Love for His Friends

We must now observe that God's love is of two kinds:

(a) A love which St. Thomas calls *common*, by which God loves the blade of grass, the star, the pebble of which the film *La Strada* speaks. . . . All these beings *are*, and they are by an act of divine love and volition. Even the sinner has his being,

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even the devil, and this being would not subsist did not God continue to will it. What is evil in the devil is his perverted will, the act by which he annuls the love offered to him; but his being itself is a richness; being is always a splendor, a participation in the divine Source. In this sense we can say that the common love of God extends to all that exists, insofar as it exists;

(b) A *special* love by which God elevates the rational creature above the conditions of his nature, clothes him as if with a new nature, brings him into a new universe. He makes him a sharer in the divine life by pouring into him created grace. Created grace is a *reality*, a quality, a light that enables the soul to receive worthily the indwelling of the three divine Persons.

St. Thomas says of this second love that it is *absolute*, because God wills to pour into the soul by its means the absolute eternal Good, insofar as it can contain it, in faith here below, in the beatific vision hereafter. Along with itself, grace brings its very source, the Trinity in its entirety, just as the sun itself is given to us in one of its rays. Once there is the state of grace, there is the indwelling of the divine Persons; and once there is this indwelling, it produces itself in the soul that which makes it possible, namely grace. Of course, we bear this treasure in weak vessels, as St. Paul says (2 Cor. 4, 7): our heart is weakened by the original wound and the accumulated wounds of our past sins. Nevertheless, we are certain that if God's love falls upon us it cannot fail to purify us.

You know that the Lutheran, protestant teaching is quite different. It denies the existence of created grace. It holds that God can love his friends without endowing them with a new reality. It acknowledges only uncreated grace. God's love for his friends falls on them without creating or

changing anything in them. Man, since the first sin, remains wholly corrupted. If he believes, that is, if he has confidence in Christ, God *regards* him as just on account of Christ's death, but this man is *not* interiorly illuminated and sanctified; he remains intrinsically a sinner, polluted. He is, according to Luther, "at once sinner and just."

The Universe of Natures and that of Grace

There are, then, two universes. First of all, the *universe of natures*: the nature of a mineral, of a plant, of an animal, of a man—animated body, incarnate soul—and also of the angels. God could have created a universe composed solely of natures, but in this hypothesis what would have been our relations with God? We should know the world by reason and from the world we should ascend to God as to its source. We would know God only through a glass, darkly. What we would see first would be the universe, its riches, its beauty, its being, and doubtless that is something! It is something, but it is being which is weak, limited, fugitive; philosophers call it *contingent* being.

The universe is solid enough to be more than nothingness and to demand a cause, a justification; but not sufficiently so to be its own justification. It is borrowed being, dependent on the Being *per se*, the Absolute. Then, in the order of natures, we would know God as the great X on whom the world depends. He would be the Master, the Creator, but we could not enter into a relationship with him as friend to friend. Aristotle said we cannot speak of friendship with the immortal gods, because friendship supposes a certain equality.

But God does not leave us in that condition. He comes out to meet us, and his desire is to set up in us a new universe of life, light and love, so that we may be able to make our way toward the

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depth of his being and intimacy with him, to speak to him as our friend. That is the mystery of the elevation of our nature by grace, and that is why we call this new life *supernatural*. It transforms, imbues our whole being to make it proportionate to an end hitherto unknown to it, one which goes beyond our nature.

God raises us up, rather as the artist uses an instrument to make it produce what by itself it would be incapable of—joy, sadness, prayer. Something beyond its own power acts through the instrument: it is a human heart that touches the instrument and the effect produced, being on the plane of its cause, is a human effect. If divine grace comes down into me, I shall no longer be in community only with the things of earth and with men, but with the divine Persons, with all that is deepest and most hidden in the heart of God.

The saints have been wrapt in contemplation before these two immense mysteries of God's love: the presence of creation and conservation, the presence of immensity; and above all the presence of indwelling, by which man is not only a child of men but child of God. St. Thomas observes that, even in the natural order, we find something that, if we carry it to the extreme, enables us as though by a leap to understand this elevation of man above his own condition and his entry upon intimacy with the divine life.

The physico-chemical activities of the mineral world function, in their natural state, on the mineral plane alone; but they are utilized by life at the biological stage. The vegetative life, for instance, lifts up a plant or a tree toward the sky, instead of abandoning it to the law of gravity. When sensitivity comes, it utilizes biological laws: the eye must be moistened (vegetative life) so that

it can see (sense-life). And when we come to reason, we see it using sensitivity and the passions for a work of human reason. You see, then, how a lower order whose laws remain in force is, as it were, assumed into the orbit of a higher order, and this still within the sphere of nature. Can God, then, not take over man too, with his reason, to make him gravitate round him? We have to admit that he can. He remains man, but attracted and invited to enter the orbit of a super-human life.

Habitual or Permanent Grace

Are we to conceive of this light of grace as coming to us like a ray shining through a pane of glass from which the light fades once the ray has gone? Is it simply a movement on God's part raising us toward him in a transient way, passing through us only to let us fall back afterward into our solitude? That was the idea of one medieval theologian, Peter Lombard. Or should we envisage grace as a divine movement which, at the moment it touches us, permanently enriches us with living roots enabling us to make acts of love every time we wish to? Yes, that is the true view. That is the thought of St. Thomas summing up the traditional teaching.

Consider, he says, the world of natures: God does not use the rose tree as an *opportunity* for producing the rose! God puts in the rose tree a certain permanent quality which causes it to bear roses. This seed has an innate aptitude which makes it produce this flower and this fruit. Likewise in the animal kingdom: this egg gives this kind of bird. Every being acts according to its bent. There exists in it a permanent determining principle which lies at the source of its way of acting. This is what is called its *nature*.

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The occasionalist philosophers say that each time God acts he uses beings as *occasions*, but without having endowed them with particular natures. And Malebranche, in particular, "If I want to move the finger or hand, it is necessary for my act of will to act on my imagination, and thence on my muscles. But I do not know, in reality, what has to be done for the movement to be completed. Since I know nothing at all about that, it is not I who move my hand." According to this view, God would use beings as immediate occasions for his acts and they would then be like phantoms. No! God has created a universe of natures and has endowed beings on every level, and they are as it were *permanent sources of activity*.

Well then, asks St. Thomas, will God act in the supernatural order with less love than in the natural order? No, God will not be less condescending and beneficent; he puts in us a permanent quality we call *habitual grace*. "Habitual" comes from the Latin word *habere*, to have. Grace is a *habitus*, a having, an endowment we possess continuously and which is the source in us of activity. The divine action, when it takes hold of me—say that I am in a state of sin—and if I open myself to it, places me in the *state* of grace, that is to say in a stable condition of grace. If I sleep, I am still in the state of grace; when I wake up, I make an act of faith or love in virtue of this permanent root which remains in me ready to act.

You know that man has certain faculties—intellect, will, sensitivity—which are rooted in the soul. The intellect is the power of the soul to know the universe, to receive in itself the impression of things and then to penetrate within them by contemplating them; the will is the faculty which, unlike the intellect, does not receive the world into

itself to view it in a disinterested way, but leads us out to make contact with things.

The soul is like a tree trunk, with the faculties as its principal branches. Grace comes into the essence of the soul, and then diffuses into our faculties the infused theological virtues: faith into the intellect, raising it up, placing in it a ray of the light by which God knows himself; hope and charity into the will: God places in it a ray of the love with which he loves himself, and I am able to love God in some degree as he loves himself. Grace also brings the moral virtues to the faculties. It is like a graft which, added onto the soul and its faculties, makes it act in a divine manner.

In What Sense Is It Finite and Infinite?

Grace is, as it were, a participation in the divine nature. That is the definition always quoted by theologians. It is to be found in the second Epistle of St. Peter (1, 3-4): "For indeed his divine power has granted us all things pertaining to life and piety through the knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and power—through which he has granted us the very great and precious promises, so that through them you may become *partakers of the divine nature*. . . ."

For us to be able to know and love God in the most hidden depths of his mystery and as he is in himself, the principle of knowing and loving, which is in God in an infinite degree, has to be, as it were, carried over into us; that is what grace does. It is—and this is a mystery—at one and the same time finite and infinite. It is *finite* because it is in my soul which is finite. If I am able to grow in grace, if it can be more intense in another soul than in mine, that is a proof that it is finite. But if it makes us enter into the divine intimacy, it must be at the same time *infinite*.

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How are we to understand this paradox? Let me give you an image: the eye, if you take it in itself as an organ, is finite (in its structure); but if you consider its tendency and the scope of its field of vision, it is infinite (tendentially, intentionally). We may therefore say that the eye is finite constitutively and infinite intentionally or tendentially. Well then, something of the sort, but much more profoundly mysterious, happens with grace. Its source is God. God sees himself, not by a ray of his light, but by his whole light; he is wholly transparent to himself, and he loves himself by his love which is infinite. In me there is a ray of his life and his love, that is to say a finite *participation* in the divine nature; but grace in me is directed immediately on to the *infinite depths of God*. You see the mystery, simultaneously finite and infinite in character.

When death comes, grace will lead me to God immediately seen and possessed, and my soul will be filled to overflowing. But even now, in the night of faith, my soul takes hold of God, and that is what is called the indwelling of the divine Persons.

Some Scripture Texts

This profound mystery is revealed in several places in Scripture, which speaks of God's indwelling in us, or of the indwelling of the divine Persons or of the Holy Spirit who represents the whole Trinity, for where one of the divine Persons dwells there dwell inseparably the two others. "Do you not know," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, him will God destroy; for holy is the temple of God, and this temple you are" (1 Cor. 3, 16-17). God comes as a guest asking

us to admit him, and he converses with us if we really desire it. It is no longer a simple relation of creature and Creator, servant and master, but of friend with friend.

St. Paul says again: "Do you not know that your members are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought at a great price" (1 Cor. 6, 19-20). We do not belong to ourselves, we belong to God and his infinite love. From time to time, man questions himself: What am I? Is this life in time something of real value, if I am of such slight account? Yes, this life has a great value, since I belong to God who wishes to take possession of my whole being. The being and soul of a man are more precious than we can imagine: "You are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6, 16).

St. Paul goes on to say, in the Epistle to the Romans (8, 9): "You, however, are not carnal but spiritual, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." For it is certainly possible to refuse the descent of God's love into us. But if we do not refuse, he takes the initiative himself. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also bring to life your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who dwells in you." The infinite God will immortalize in heaven these poor habitations he has borrowed from us for a moment at one point of time and space.

We have the great text of St. John (14, 23): "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." You see: if anyone love me. If there is created love, that is to say created grace with all that goes with it, with its virtues of faith, hope and charity, then "my Father

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will love him, we will make our abode with him." We have a guest with us, we are never alone; and who is our companion? No other than the Trinity in its entirety.

In the Apocalypse, Chapter 3, 20, we read: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man listens to my voice and opens the door to me, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and *he with me.*" It is like an evening meal, when we venture to speak of the most intimate and profound matters which we would not mention in the daytime. And he will come, not only to speak to us, but to give us the power to reply to him ourselves: "*And he with me.*" When anyone is in the state of grace, then there is a dialogue, conversation of friend with friend. So we see that the dissipation of mind which so prevails in the world today is a form of madness. We need times of silence: "Be silent, and see that I am thy God in thy heart." In times of difficulty or sadness, in times of suffering, if you frequently call to mind that God is in you to give you his love, you will not be alone, you will find the Guest within you, and he will answer you.

Different Degrees of Grace Correspond to Different Degrees of Indwelling

The indwelling of the divine Persons 'is, then, always the accompaniment of grace. The two mysteries are co-relative. Grace is like a net we throw over the Trinity to hold it in captivity. Or here is another way to visualize it: when you bring into a room a source of light, it illuminates the walls; so, when the divine Persons come to us (here we have the source, uncreated grace), they illuminate the walls of the soul (here we have the effect, created grace). And if you possess grace, then the

source of grace, the three divine Persons, is there too.

In the very gift of sanctifying grace, says St. Thomas, the Holy Spirit himself is sent and given to man to dwell in him. The uncreated Spirit is given in created grace, as the sun is given in its rays. The uncreated Gift of the Spirit and the created gift of grace are simultaneous. There are differences of degree in the life of individual souls; but in each of them the intensity of grace and the intensity of the indwelling increase with the same movement.

The saints come to such a vivid awareness of these riches that at times they feel as if their heart would burst. Admittedly, God may lead them by desert paths, and St. John of the Cross says that, at times, God seems to be asleep in the soul. But all at once he arouses himself, and the impact he makes is so violent that, if it lasted, it would be mortal: the soul, as yet unfortified by the light of glory, seems then to be unable to support the power of the divine Persons.

Each Holy Communion should intensify in us this grace and this indwelling. We should come away from it, our souls more open to, and more deeply penetrated by, the Trinity.

Such are the gifts God makes to the least of souls that rises from a state of mortal sin. A man who has made only a poor confession, with a love still weak, and who has received absolution, already possesses grace and is dwelt in by God. Both the grace and the indwelling desire to grow stronger in him.

Sons of God, Brothers of Jesus, Co-Heirs with Christ

If grace, in the words of St. Peter, makes us "participators in the divine nature" and communicates to us, in some measure, the divine nature, it

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makes us *children* of God, *sons* of God. The child has the nature of its parents; what is born of a bird is a bird, what is born of man is a man, what is born of God is God. "He came unto his own," says St. John, "and his own received him not. But to as many as received him, he gave the power of becoming *sons* of God; to those who believe in his name, who were *born* not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1, 13). And again: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3, 1-2). And St. Paul: "The Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are sons of God" (Rom. 8, 16).

Jesus, also, is Son of God. We are, therefore, *brothers* of Jesus. God has predestined us to reproduce the image of his Son, "that he should be the first-born among many *brethren*" (Rom. 8, 29). Those he sanctifies, Jesus "is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, saying, 'I will declare thy name to my *brethren*'" (Heb. 2, 11).

And if Jesus is *heir*, we, as brothers, shall be his *coheirs*: "But if we are sons, we are heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ, provided, however, we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8, 17). See, then, the ways in which we resemble Jesus.

Consider now the differences. Jesus is Son "by nature," he possesses necessarily the divine nature, by reason of the identity of his being and nature with the being and nature of the Father. We are sons of God "by adoption," we possess the divine nature by a free effect of the divine goodness, by a finite participation in the being and infinite nature of God.

Jesus is Son of the Father by eternal generation; we are sons of the three Persons of the Trinity by

creation and adoption. There is an impassable distance between the first-born who is above all creation (Col. 1, 15) and the multitude of his brethren, between his fraternity which is source and ours which is derivation. This is the meaning of the words of Jesus to Mary of Magdala, the morning of Easter: "Go to my brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to *my* Father and to *your* Father, to *my* God and *your* God'" (John 20, 17).

Jesus is heir by "identification" of his glory with that of the Father: we are his coheirs by "participation" in this destiny. There is again an abyss between being heir of the divine glory by right of nature and being heir by right of merit, like the servant to whom it will one day be said, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of thy master" (Matt. 25, 21).

It is necessary to insist on the reciprocal relation between the finite gift of grace and the infinite gift of indwelling. This view is alone capable of bringing out the full dimensions of grace. Our catechism speaks of sanctifying grace, but scarcely at all of the fact of indwelling, which is of greater value, being the source of which grace is the effect.

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS

Habitual Grace and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

1. How is God present in creation? What are the three aspects of this presence?
2. What is the "presence of indwelling"?
3. How is created grace related to the "presence of indwelling"?

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4. How do human and divine love chiefly differ? What do we mean by the "common" and the "special" love of God?
5. What relationship exists between the supernatural life of grace and our human natures?
6. What would be our conception of God in a world composed solely of natures?
7. What is "habitual" grace? Can we be in a state of grace when we sleep?
8. What is the effect of grace on the essence of the soul, and on the soul's faculties?
9. What is the difference between our Lord's Sonship of God, and our own becoming sons of God through grace?
10. How would you define grace? Is it finite or infinite?

II

Actual Grace

Actual and Habitual Grace

The divine impulse which, if we do not stultify it, causes us to pass from sin to justification (where we are given habitual grace with the indwelling of the Holy Trinity) confronts us with the problems of the *divine movement* and *human freedom*.

Grace—we are speaking here of *actual grace*—is the divine impulse that produces in us acts of free adherence to God, of free acceptance and consent. God comes to me to draw me to him. I can interrupt or destroy this divine movement; or else I can let God act in me and take possession of my free will and make it assent, *without violating it*.

Actual grace seeks me out in sin to bring me to justification; then, when I am there, it comes back again and again, insistently, to carry me to a higher stage of sanctifying grace. God is constantly knocking at the gate of my heart to invite me to go beyond the state I have reached, because my whole life should be a journey on the way to Love. I cannot give a renewed assent to Love, nor above all can I give a more intensified assent than hitherto, unless a divine movement comes secretly to my heart to help it ascend higher. I can refuse it. But if I let God act he will raise me further, step by step, to a greater love. "At the end of your life," says St. John of the Cross, "you will be asked how you have loved"; that is to say, the degree of your love at the moment of death determines the degree of intensity the beatific vision will have for you eternally.

Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom

The relations of grace and freedom, of God's action and man's, is a great problem that continually preoccupied the thinkers of antiquity. Cicero said that either the gods have foreknowledge, knowing what will happen tomorrow, and we are not free; or else we are free, and the gods do not know what will happen tomorrow. Which are we to choose? According to Cicero, we have to accept human freedom which is certain, and so much the worse for the knowledge of the gods! But, said St. Augustine, it would be absurd to choose between the two; they must both be held: divine foreknowledge and human freedom.

There we have the problem. How is it to be solved? Only Catholic teaching provides a solution or, to be exact, the teaching of St. Thomas, for I see in him the confluence of all the efforts made by the preceding centuries. The understanding of Scripture possessed by the Fathers has always been preserved in the Church; and their solutions are coordinated, rethought in depth by St. Thomas.

The way to solve the problem is, before all else, to distinguish clearly the case of the *good act* and that of the *evil act*. All who fail to do this go astray. They say either that man is equally cause of his good and of his bad acts, or else that God is responsible for man's bad acts as well as his good ones. To adopt the same method of explaining good and bad acts is a fundamental mistake that renders the problem insoluble.

The Scheme of the Good Act; Opposed Errors of Pelagius and Luther; the Catholic Doctrine

First let us look at the structure of the *good act*. In the course of history two contrary positions are in constant conflict. In different terms and in vari-

ous expositions of this question, we continually find this same conflict of two opposed theses, both of them erroneous.

On the one hand there is the position of Pelagius, a British monk, a contemporary of St. Augustine who attacked him. The Pelagian error consists in saying that the good act is decisively the product of man alone. Of course, Pelagius says, God created the universe, placed me in the world, gave me my human nature with its faculties, and imparts abundant graces of illumination. But it is I alone who assent freely to God, and it is this assent which is decisive. Take an example of two men at the bottom of a well: God holds out his hand to each, and so is ready to help; but it is I alone who take his hand; I am, doubtless, saved because God first stretched out his hand, but the decisive factor is that I, by my free will alone, took the hand, whereas my neighbor did not. So the choice is mine alone.

On the other hand, there is the exactly opposite error, held by Luther, among others, in the Western world: the good act comes from God alone. Man is wholly corrupted. The act that saves him comes from God alone. God alone justifies the sinner, in the way in which we have seen Luther to understand justification: God decides to "regard this sinner as just."

On the one hand the aim is to exalt the human will, the greatness of man as a free being; on the other, to exalt God's omnipotence.

These flatly opposed views arise from a common initial confusion. They are like brothers at enmity, both sharing the same parentage. The error common to both is to think that divine and human action are mutually exclusive: either it is man who does the good act, and then it is not God; or else it is God, and so not man. We are asked to choose

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between the two, and this is precisely where the error lies. For who, in fact, does the good act? Both God and man together.

Notice that I take these two opposing positions of Pelagius and Luther from the Western world; but in *La Vallée*, Poussin's book on Buddhism, I remember coming across the same problem stated in India under a different imagery. Salvation, it was said, comes about either in the way of the kitten or the little monkey. When attacked by a snake, the monkey jumps into its mother's bosom, and the mother jumps up into the trees; the decisive act is the strength with which the monkey clings to its mother; this represents the Pelagian position. The kitten, on the other hand, when in danger, does nothing at all; the mother takes it by the skin of its neck, and does everything. That is the Lutheran position. There is, too, the figure of two railway-engines that face one another on the same line; when one goes forward, the other goes back, each in turn. Divine and human action are held to compete against one another.

But human action (created) and divine action (uncreated) are not on the same plane. Divine action (in relation to human action) is one of envelopment: it gives rise to it, gives it being and continuance. According to Catholic doctrine, we must say that the good act comes from both God *and* man, from grace *and* freedom.

If you draw a circle and set inside it God *and* man, grace *and* freedom, you have the Catholic doctrine as defined: you escape both the Pelagian and the Lutheran error (not to mention the Calvinist and, in our own time, the Barthian). But the problem now lies within the circle; how are the divine and human actions to be coordinated or subordinated?

Molinism and Thomism

There are two schools of thought on this. One is that of St. Thomas Aquinas which, through St. Augustine, derives from St. Paul—the great traditionalist school.

The other arose in the age of the baroque and of humanism. It is that of Molina, a Portuguese Jesuit who, on account of certain unresolved difficulties, wanted to explain in a way hitherto untried the relation of grace and freedom. God and man, he said, act like two horses on the tow path of a canal drawing a boat. The actions of God and of man are supplementary like those of the horses. Molina thought of them as simply added one to the other. His doctrine has not been condemned, since he said, as regards the good act, God *and* man, grace *and* freedom. But, as we see, he transposed to within the circle the preceding error and if he did not set them against each other, at any rate he *juxtaposed* the divine and the human action. He did not sufficiently grasp the difference in plane between divine and human action and stressed unduly, to an extreme degree, the power of the human will. Here, expressed in accepted Christian terminology, we find again the example just given: God holds out his hand, I take it.

The traditional doctrine, the only one rooted in Revelation, has not yet been defined because there still remain certain questions to elucidate. But the definition will come, already the general line is clear: *human action is subordinated to the divine action*. It is not only God *and* man, grace *and* freedom, but God *through* man, grace *through* freedom, that does the good act. Is the rose produced by the rose tree? Or by God? Or else partly by God, partly by the rose tree? We must say: the rose is produced wholly by the rose tree as sec-

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oundary cause, and wholly by God as first cause, the enveloping cause. God gives the rose tree the ability to produce the rose. God, acting on the rose tree to make it produce the rose, does not diminish, but rather enriches it. The more he intervenes, the more excellent will be the rose tree, the more powerful its action, the more perfect the rose.

God does not only hold out his hand to me; but *he also enables me to take his outstretched hand.* There are many things God does *without* me; there are others he does only *through* me. "God," says St. Augustine, "who created thee without thee will not justify thee without thee."

This, then, is the scheme we have to preserve, within the circle: subordination of man to God, all the richness of man coming from God as first cause, *the free act being at one and the same time wholly from man as secondary cause, wholly from God as first cause.*

Divine Motion and Human Freedom

But then, you will say, if God intervenes in my freedom to make me assent, surely I am not free? Here we have to be very clear, I shall take four examples, on four different levels.

God gives the radium atom both being and the power to act by emitting rays. Thus he communicates to it something of his dignity as cause though, admittedly, to a very low degree. Now, in affecting the atom to endow it with activity, God does not violate it, but makes it fecund. The atom then is, as it were, a transformer of the divine energy and changes it into physical energy on the mineral plane.

Now take a rose tree. In the winter, it is at rest; but when touched by God in the spring, life begins to awake within it and soon it brings forth roses. The rose tree, then, is as it were a transformer of

the divine energy into vegetative energy. The divine action does not impair its nature, but helps it act in the vegetative order.

A bird sings. When God touches its nature, he enables it, without violating it, to exercise its activities in the sensitive order. He enables it to sing in the way proper to a bird.

We come to man, a free being with intelligence and will, with his immortal soul greater than all the world; when God touches his soul he enables it to act according to its nature, which is to rule over things of a lower order. Freedom is not independence in relation to God: if God does not touch me, am I then free? O no! If God does not touch me, I act no more, I exist no more, I fall into nothingness.

Freedom is to be found within God himself, as in its infinite source; the nearer I draw to God and the more I share in his rule over lower beings, the more I am free. *My freedom is a dependence in relation to God*, a dependence that gives me a *power over and freedom of choice in regard to the lower things*. Because my heart is made for the fullness of the good, the beautiful and the true, because my soul is greater than the world and the world offers me only partial goods (real or apparent) I can, confronted with these goods, assent because they are *good*, or refuse them because they are *partially* good.

Take the case of truth. I can look for it in the world of physics and chemistry, or of mathematics or philosophy, or anywhere you like. These will never be other than particularized truths, none of them can fill my mind to capacity. I am always free to turn my life to the pursuit of this or that aspect of the truth.

It is the same with the good. You offer me such and such a good, life in the world, for example,

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or the religious life. I always have to give up some things good and choose others, which are good but particularized. Even if I choose the contemplative life, God shows himself to me in the aspect of a particular good: if I am a Carthusian, I cannot go out and preach to pagans or raise a family. You offer me only particular goods and I was made for total good. My soul keeps its power and freedom of choice.

Then God, when he touches me according to my nature, does not infringe my freedom but, on the contrary, exalts it: "God who made this delicate machine of our free will is the only one who can move it without breaking it." He does not impair natures, but makes them flourish. Who was more dependent on God than St. Francis of Assisi, and who was freer? You could place him in any condition you like, throw him into a concentration-camp, he would still be in command of all that was lower in the scale of being, he would still be St. Francis.

Divine Foreknowledge of the Good Act

This then is the *structure of the good act*. God produces through me my free act and, since he knows all that he does, he knows this act. If I perform an act of love tomorrow, it will be because God has given me the enveloping and sustaining impulse. Does he know this act beforehand? Knowing beforehand is the act of someone immersed in time, and what I know in advance are only those things that are not free, they are predetermined facts whose cause is already posited today and whose development is inevitable. I know beforehand the stakes that have been laid. A doctor can say in advance that a disease will develop in a certain way and that death will result. I can say that the sun will rise tomorrow at

such and such a time. But I cannot know a free act beforehand and with certainty. I can only make a conjecture: perhaps this person will do this particular act, which is good, or that, which is bad.

If God were within time, he would be reduced to knowing the future only "in advance." But he would know in this way only predetermined events, the stakes already laid, the drama whose scenario was already written. But God is not in time; he is on the mountain of eternity. If I am on level ground and see a procession coming along, I see first the beginning, then the middle, then the end; but if I go up a hill, I see at a single glance the whole sequence.

In God there is no past, present and future parallel to our past, present and future. He is on the mountain of eternity, whence he sees simultaneously the whole sequence of our past, present and future. In God there is no *remembrance* of things past nor, strictly speaking, *foresight* of things to come. There is in him but one *vision*, a single present and simultaneous look at what, successively, has been, is, will be. From his place of eternity God knows all the free acts his creatures have done, are doing, will do; he knows with a knowledge which does not *precede* these free acts, but is *above* them; he knows them not *beforehand*, but *from all eternity*. You see then, that when we say "God knows beforehand," we are attributing to him a human manner of knowing.

So God's knowledge is safeguarded in the case of the good act. It is certain that, from all eternity, God sees himself instigating in me this or that good action, making it come to fruition, and that without violating my free will, but rather creating it. God's prescience from all eternity—the prefix must be understood not as meaning "be-

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forehand," but as signifying knowledge "of a higher mode" ¹—and human freedom are thus reconciled. We come, not to a contradiction, but to a great mystery. God is mystery; if you stop thinking a mystery of him, if you imagine him and his knowledge of the world after the fashion of man, everything falls to pieces.

The Scheme of the Bad Act

Let us pass on to the structure of the *evil act*. This is a mystery too, but one of darkness.

Suppose I have to testify in court of law. I have to think what I want to say, I proceed from not doing to doing; there is an element of *being* there. If my testimony is true, all this being is ordered to truth; if it is false, there is the same amount of physical being, but the whole action is morally warped, anarchical; it is far removed from the purpose for which it was made. The power and the very act of witnessing were given me for the sake of justice; I use them for injustice, to destroy and not to build. So we must say: *all that there is of physical being in the sinful act derives from God, the source of all being; all that there is of moral deviation comes from me.*

The example given by St. Thomas is that of a man whose brain's locomotive centers function well, but whose tibia is bent. As a result, whenever he walks he limps. If you try to prevent him from limping, you prevent him from walking; the two are inseparable. But the deviation comes from the bent tibia, not the moving center. The whole action comes from the locomotive center and the nerves controlling walking, which are themselves

¹ "He to whom everything is always present knows the future not by *prescience* but by a knowledge of the present, *praesentium scientia.*" St. Anselm, *Dialogue on the fall of the Devil*, P.L., v. 158, col. 353.

sound; the whole deviation comes from the bent tibia, from an intermediate cause, not from the source of the movement.

So it is with the act that is bad. All the *being* (physical) of the bad act comes from God, but all the *deviation* (moral) of the bad act, everything that causes the deviation of the movement given by God for our good, all the sinfulness, comes from man alone.

In the good act, God has the first initiative, he is the first, enveloping cause of the act, and man the secondary cause. In the sinful act, man is first cause of the deviation, that is of the non-being, the disorder, the destruction. *Homo prima causa mali*: man is *first* cause of evil! But can he be first cause of anything? Yes, he can be first cause of whatever is not a thing; he can do what is *no thing*, he can destroy, annihilate the divine action that comes to visit him. Here man can take the first initiative; he is first cause of the annulling of the divine action. So, you see, it is a mystery of darkness.

**“Thy Destruction Comes from Thee, O Israel;
from Me Comes Thy Help”**

The divine movement takes the initiative in my regard; it is always attentive to my welfare. Its presence surrounds me like the air I breathe; if I place no obstacle in its way, it will bear fruit in me in good acts. But God does not create good acts in me without my doing anything. He does them *through me*. He does not deck me out in them as one decorates a Christmas tree with candles and sweets, which would be absurd; rather, he *makes me produce* good acts as the fir tree brings forth cones, that is to say by a vital process.

God is always knocking at the door of my heart. If I let him act, he makes me assent in a more and

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more excellent way. I cannot pride myself on this or pray like the Pharisee: "O God, I thank thee that I am not . . . like this publican . . . I pay tithes of all that I possess." If I do something good, what I should say is, "My God, I have so often refused you. Thank you for having helped me to consent this time. To you the glory, and not to me, worm of the earth."

I can say "No!" It is not that God has not helped me sufficiently. He was there, as I told you, knocking at the door of my heart. I have impeded his movement and in such wise that, if I continue to do so and death comes, it will be hell, separation from God. I shall not blame him, I shall never be able to blame him for not having helped me enough. It is I who willed to hinder the divine movement, I am to blame. None of the damned will arise at the last day to say, "Lord, you did not help me enough." They will all say, "That is what I willed." And they will go on maintaining that their choice was an excellent one. If a single one of the damned could say he was damned by God's fault, God would not be God.

So then, if I die in an act of love, it is God who will have enabled me to do this act, and I shall say, "Lord, it is due to your infinite goodness that I am entering finally into your Light. You have sent me into Paradise, as an archer shoots his arrow at the mark. To you be the glory." That is precisely what predestination is: the act by which God takes hold of me and causes me to give the ultimate assent to his love.

If I refuse, God comes again, seeking to raise me from the ruinous state into which I have fallen. He may rouse me to remorse; right to the end he pursues me with his mercy. If I decide to refuse to the end, that is my fault: I will that my will prevail over God's summons. So the text always

cited by St. Thomas: "Thy destruction comes from thee, O Israel; from me alone comes thy help" (Osee 13, 9), is applicable to each of us when we understand Israel as a figure of the soul.

The man who has shut himself against grace would have been led by the divine action, had he not frustrated it, to do a good act, which would have been followed by other good acts till final justification. God offered him what would have produced the bud, which would have put forth the flower, and finally the fruit.

Normal and Miraculous Divine Initiatives

On the other hand, if I allow God to act, he will as a rule cause me to make first an act of faith, then of saving fear, then one of hope, and then will come a beginning of love: all is not lost, you can yet, with this grace, rise to your feet again.

I go to a church, to a confessional, confess my sins humbly, receive absolution and God's boundless pardon, and at that moment I am justified. That is how it happens in the majority of cases.

Nevertheless, there may be exceptional cases. Instead of preparing a sinner gradually for justification, by a succession of movements each of which may be impeded, God may overwhelm him suddenly by an irresistible movement, as he did St. Paul on the road to Damascus. He may cause him to enter Paradise with the suddenness of a man falling into ecstasy; he does so frequently, I think, but theologians say that this is in the nature of a miracle. The normal process is a series of graces that can be resisted, but that, if accepted, will lead to one that is irresistible, victorious—a grace that will make me produce the good act and I will thank God for giving me the strength to do so.

Let us call the resistible graces that I may frus-

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trate *sufficient* graces, and the irresistible ones offered in these when they are not impeded—as fruit is offered in the flower—*efficacious* graces. That will explain the distinction between sufficient and efficacious grace.

Sufficient and Efficacious Grace:

Pascal, the *Lettres Provinciales*, Jansenism

This distinction brings to mind Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales*, but we will not find there anything to throw light on it. Pascal rejects the doctrine, which he attributes to the Jesuits, according to which "there is a grace given indiscriminately to all men and dependent on free will to the point that it makes this grace efficacious or inefficacious, without any additional help from God," a grace "they call *sufficient* because it suffices by itself for acting." That is the theory of the man at the bottom of a well, who has no need of help to take hold of God's hand stretched out to help him. We, too, along with Pascal, reject this doctrine.

He attributes to the Dominicans of Saint Jacques a doctrine that may indeed have been held by several of them, according to which sufficient grace is the simple *power* God gives to all men of acting aright; we also reject this "sufficient grace that does not suffice." We hold that sufficient grace is the *movement* God gives to all men to make them act rightly, which they may impede (through their fault) or not impede (and then it infallibly attracts efficacious grace and leads to good actions). But Pascal maintained that there were no sufficient graces, only efficacious graces, and that these are not given to all men. Here we have the Jansenist error.

After the condemnation of the five propositions, the Jansenists themselves made no further difficulty about confessing that Jesus is the Redeemer

of all men, as the Church sings at Christmas. Yet all are not saved. Is that their own fault? Or is it the fault of God in being too sparing of his grace? This is the crucial question. The true doctrine is that Jesus is the Redeemer of all men, *even of those who will not be saved*, for he obtains for them and grants them interior graces of such power that not one of them will dream of accusing God, and they will never cease, throughout eternity, to claim and to choose to be alone responsible for their own damnation.

Divine Foreknowledge and the Initiating of Evil Acts

Man alone is the entire cause of sin; in sin he alone has the first initiative. In sinning, then, do I take God by surprise, elude his knowledge, change his eternal plan?

To say so would be absurd. I should baffle the divine knowledge if, by myself alone, I were able to bring into the world the slightest fraction of *being*. But when I sin, it is not being but non-being, nothingness, that I bring into the world.

When does God come to know this nothingness? *After* he has established his plan? No. My sin of yesterday, my sin of tomorrow, it is not that God *saw* or *will see* me committing them; he *sees* me now: he sees me frustrating the prevenient movements of his grace. He sees this in the eternal present in which he establishes his plan. It is true that the divine plan is immutable, once it is fixed from all eternity. But it is fixed from all eternity only with the free defection of man taken into account. Thus man's sin does not modify the divine plan, but enters into its eternal and determined pattern.

All our difficulties come from representing God's knowledge after the fashion of man's. As soon as we take account of the transcendence of the divine

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knowledge, will and freedom, all contradictions disappear; but we are plunged in mystery. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways!" (Rom. 11, 33).

The Drama of History

Now we are at the point where we can form some idea of the drama of the world:

The first initiative always comes from God in the case of the good; so the initiative of *created* freedom itself derives from the divine initiative. But on account of the power of *refusal* which is a natural part of all created freedom, the first initiative always comes from the creature in the case of evil, God being able but unwilling to prevent the creature opposing him by refusal whenever it so decides. . . . The glory of the divine freedom is to make a work all the more beautiful, in proportion to the extent to which it allows the other [creaturely] freedom to undo it, because from the abundance of destruction it alone can draw a superabundance of being. As for us, part of the pattern as we are, we only see the strange intertwining of the threads that are woven on our heart. (Maritain)

Inequality of Grace

This is the essence of what it is possible to say about actual grace. We have seen that God is bound by his justice and his love to give each one such graces that, if he is not saved, it is his own fault as a sinner, not God's. But God is not obliged to give the same graces to all. There are inequalities in the order of grace, just as there are in the order of nature.

We do not mean the inequalities that come from sin, from injustice, against which we ought to fight. What of the natural inequalities of men? Why do they exist? St. Catherine of Siena says: so that each one may be, in regard to all the rest, both a giver and a beggar. St. Thomas, viewing the whole of creation, explains that God was, doubtless, free to create or not. But if he willed to create with a certain magnificence, he had to multiply and diversify creatures, so that each should represent some aspect of his infinite richness.

So it is with grace. God imparts his gifts variously the better to show forth the beauty and perfection of his Church. It is like a garden where there are the white roses of virginity and the red ones of martyrdom, the holiness of innocence and that of repentance.

Think of little children at the moment of their baptism. They each receive the same baptism. Their state is the same, it is purely a state of waiting. But with the awakening of moral consciousness, when God knocks at the door of their soul, inequalities begin to appear. St. Teresa of Lisieux, for example, began with a grace much superior to that of other small children. There must be every sort of thing in God's garden, not only all the different flowers but grass, too, and pebbles in the paths. And, after all, it is a fine thing to be only a pebble in the paths of Paradise!

Charismatic Graces in the Service of Love

We shall end with a word on what are called "charismatic graces." The word grace is here taken in a different sense, not unrelated to the former, but not so radical. It is no longer a question of grace *gratum faciens* (which makes the soul "graceful" and gives it an attractive quality, itself a gift of God, who himself becomes enamored of it); nor

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of actual grace (which precedes and follows sanctifying grace); but of graces *not directly sanctifying* the person receiving them, graces that simply enable him to perform acts that assist others along the road to sanctifying grace. They are *useful socially*.

St. Thomas distinguishes two kinds of common good: the *extrinsic* common good of a collectivity, and the common good intrinsic to, *immanent* in the collectivity. The latter serves the former. In the temporal order, the "extrinsic" common good of the army is victory, which is what is aimed at; the common good "immanent" in, interior to, the army is its right order; it must be organized in such a way as to achieve victory.

In the spiritual order God is the common good extrinsic to or distinct from the Church; the order of the Church is the common good immanent in the Church. So, then, sanctifying grace is directly ordered to be pleasing to God, the extrinsic common good of the spiritual universe. Charismatic graces, on the other hand, are directly ordered to the perfection of the Church, the immanent common good of the spiritual universe, and to promote in the Church the flowering of sanctifying grace.

How, asks St. Thomas, can a man act so as to prepare others to receive sanctifying grace? Not by entering their heart (*interius movendo*) to turn it toward God; God alone can do that. But he can, from outside, perform a certain number of acts that may be like ladders enabling others to gain access to sanctifying grace (*exterius agendo*).

How are these charismatic graces to be recognized? By applying the passage in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians (12, 27): "Now you are the Body of Christ, member for member. And God indeed has placed some in the Church, first apos-

bles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healing, services of help, power of administration, and the speaking of various tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?"

These graces, which do not necessarily sanctify those who have them, are privileges. But the privilege reserved to a few is not what is most valuable; it is at the service of love, which is offered to all. One of these privileges is a *prophetic light* enabling one to transmit the message with a certain penetration. This light, this knowledge, is indeed called faith, but it is not the theological virtue offered to all, which alone is necessary for salvation. It is the "faith to work miracles" offered to a few.

For example, at certain moments a saint will feel that if he asks God for a particular miracle, perhaps the raising to life of a dead person, God will grant it him; at other times, he will not pray for it. Such gifts enable their possessors to confirm their message. There is also the gift of expression, of *interpretation* of tongues. The *gift of tongues* spoken of in the first Epistle to the Corinthians requires discernment. A certain exaltation may cause a man to speak in tongues, to utter words he is unable to explain. What accounts for this? Sometimes a morbid element. In the beginnings of Christianity these manifestations took place in various circles, and they may have been the vehicle of valuable lights or gifts; but a considerable discernment is necessary in such cases, and St. Paul says that those who interpret are more important than those who speak in tongues, since the latter do not edify the community, but the former do.

The gift of tongues the Apostles had at Pentecost was a grace of quite different quality from the gift of tongues to whose presence among the Corin-

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thians St. Paul witnesses, and which may still be found at meetings of Salvationists and other sects, where the divine and the human, the true and the false, the healthy and the morbid are intermingled. The gift of Pentecost, on the contrary, must have been wholly excellent.

The best explanation I know is that given by Mickiewicz, a kind of prophet in the natural order. He used to speak in French at the Collège de France entirely without any sort of preparation. When he had an audience in front of him, all sorts of things came into his mind, and he succeeded in communicating his most profound thoughts in a language which was not his native tongue. This led him to explain how he conceived the gift of Pentecost. The Apostles, so he thought, may simply have spoken in their own language, but their thought itself was instilled, in its pure state, into their hearts, so that "each man heard in his own tongue," that is to say, in the sounds of his native language. To illuminate or stir, almost directly, the hearts of those present, by overcoming the language obstacle, was quite a different thing from the gift of tongues of the first Christian communities.

To these charismatic graces I would add other privileges: those of the hierarchy, that is the power of jurisdiction or the power of teaching with authority in matters speculative and practical, which resides in the bishops and the Sovereign Pontiff, and the power of orders or the power of consecrating the Eucharist and administering the sacraments, all of them powers enabling some people to help others to attain eternal life. They are powers at the service of love, which is primary and given to all.

In this connection, I like to recall that there is one precept of the Gospel Jesus asks us to ob-

serve, though he did not observe it himself: "Cast not your pearls before swine." He himself offered, gave his love to all! So much so that Leon Bloy says—in a phrase characteristic of him—that the Holy Spirit "prostitutes himself" to go in search of people in the gutter.

Those who are given privileges will have to account to God for the way they have used them. If they do so in a holy manner, they may be brought closer to God, but in themselves these charisms are a burden, a service. We must recall in this connection the last words of Claudel's *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher*: "It is love that is strongest."

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS

Actual Grace

1. What is "actual" grace?
2. How does God behave toward the soul in sin?
3. What fundamental distinction enabled St. Thomas to reconcile—in his philosophical system—divine foreknowledge and human freedom?
4. What did Pelagius and Luther have to say with regard to the "good act"?
5. Is God the first cause of the "good act? Give the Catholic viewpoint.
6. What is the normal process whereby a man is finally enabled to produce the "good act"?
7. "My freedom is a dependance in relation to God." Comment.

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8. How does God see our past, present and future?
9. Describe briefly the structure of the "evil act."
Is God its first cause?
10. What are "charismatic" graces?

III

Predestination

The Mysteries of Grace Are Mysteries of Love Accepted or Refused

On the basis of what has been said in the preceding pages we shall try to interpret a few passages of St. Paul, principally on the subject of predestination.

These questions about grace are extremely mysterious and profound. If, in discussing them, we forget that God is a God of love, if we speak about them without steeping them in the atmosphere of divine goodness that knocks at men's hearts, we may well say what would seem theologically—or rather, verbally, literally—exact, but what would in fact be a deformation, misleading and false. Ultimately only the great saints, the great lovers of God, can speak of these matters without distorting them.

We must bear in mind, at the outset, that in the word predestination, as in prescience, the prefix "pre" signifies an anteriority of *dignity and excellence*, not one of *chronology* which would suggest a scenario written beforehand. Predestination is a love-assignation made on high, a supreme divine destination in course of realization, a supreme "prevenience" on the part of Love, a prevenience not refused, but accepted and finally brought to fulfillment.

Texts from St. Paul on Predestination

The doctrine of predestination is a scriptural doctrine, a part of revelation, which we are to be-

lieve without doubting. But how is it to be understood? There is the Catholic interpretation, and the Lutheran and Calvinist one, to which we shall return later.

The word predestination we owe to St. Paul. In the Epistle to the Ephesians (1, 4-5), he writes: "God . . . chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in his sight in love. He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons, according to the purpose of his will."

Further on (2, 4), we read: "God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of his very great love wherewith he has loved us even when we were dead by reason of our sins, brought us to life together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, *and seated us together* in heaven in Christ Jesus." Here the Apostle sees in advance the elect gathered together in the heavens round Christ, saying: thanks to you, O God, for having predestined us by your love. You are he who enabled us to utter the supreme assent we gave to you. To you be the glory.

The word predestination was already used in the Epistle to the Romans: "And those whom he has predestined, them he has also called; and those whom he has called, them he has also justified, and those whom he has justified, them he has also glorified" (8, 30). Here again the Apostle sees in advance the elect gathered in the heavens, and reflects on how they have been led there by God. God first called them; he went to meet them with graces which they did not frustrate though they could have done so. If they assented to them, it was by a divine movement in them, for our assent always comes from God: "thy salvation comes from me, O Israel, thy destruction from thee." Since they did not refuse this first call, they went on to

justification through a new divine movement; and those whom he has justified God finally brings to heaven. That is the supreme prevenience by which God enables us to die in his love.

Refusal on the Part of the Non-Predestined

When you reread these passages, they will give you no difficulty if you see them in the context I have indicated. You will remember that, if anyone is not predestined, it is because he refuses the call, and not once only, like the fallen angels, for again and again divine grace returns to, and even importunes, the human heart. How often? The Apostles asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?", and the answer was, "Seventy times seven" (Matt. 18, 21-22). That is what Jesus expects of men, who yet are miserable creatures and loath to show mercy. Elsewhere he said, "But if one of you asks his father . . . for a fish, will he for a fish hand him a serpent? or if he asks for an egg, will he hand him a scorpion? Therefore, if you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Good Spirit to those who ask him!" (cf. Luke 11, 11-13; Matt. 8, 9-11).

So then he, too, will forgive me seventy times seven. He will return to knock again at the door of my soul. Nevertheless, if I wish to refuse him, I can; I have the terrible power of saying no to God, of making a definitive refusal that will fix my lot for eternity. I can say to him: I do not want your love, I want to be myself, to be myself not *in* you, but *against* you, to be forever like a thorn in your heart. This is the frightful refusal of hell.

What might possibly lead to a misconception on this point is the very moving parable of Dives and

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Lazarus (Luke 16, 19), where we see Dives beseeching Abraham to let Lazarus go and warn his brothers to change their way of life. Abraham, however, answers, "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hearken to them. . . . If they do not hearken to Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe even if someone rises from the dead."

As you see, the purpose of the parable is to show that we have to hear now, while there is time; afterward, it will be too late. But it would be a mistake to suppose that, in hell, the damned have the sentiments of charity attributed to the rich man. If one of the damned could say: Lord, allow me to tell others what thy love is so that they may not be damned like me, he would bring charity into hell, and hell would be blown to pieces. (We must always regard the intention of the parable—and the evangelist shows what this intention is—otherwise, its character would be altered, and we might be led astray. Consider the parable of the unjust steward, which scandalizes so many Christians through their misunderstanding of it.)

So, if anyone is not among the predestined, it is in consequence of a refusal for which he bears and always will bear the responsibility. He will persist in his refusal, in his hate—that, in fact, will be his torment—but he will never retract his original choice.

St. Thomas gives us a comparison. Take a man who hates his enemy. He wants to kill him. He thinks: If I meet him, I shall kill him. But he is prevented; perhaps he is in prison. Ah, he thinks, once I am out of prison! He lives by, feeds on his hatred. He may be told: "Don't you see that the cause of your misery is your hatred?" "I do," he replies, "but that's the way it is; I *want* to have my revenge." In any case, we know quite well that

we can cling to feelings which torment us. This example is no more than an image of the perpetual refusal of the damned, the refusal because of which they are not among the predestined. Such is the Catholic doctrine.

What we have said earlier on the divine prescience serves to clarify this doctrine completely. We do not say, "God does not predestine, God abandons and reprovcs those whom he knows *in advance* will refuse his prevenient grace." We say, "God does not predestine; God abandons and rejects those who, as he *sees, from all eternity*, themselves take the first initiative in the final refusal of his prevenient grace." From eternity, he takes account of their free refusal in the establishment of his immutable and eternal plan.

The Erroneous Doctrine of Double Predestination to Hell or to Heaven

The erroneous doctrine put forward by Luther, and by Calvin in his *Institutes* is that, just as some are predestined to heaven, so are others to hell; God himself therefore *drives* them to hell, and they cannot escape it. This is the thesis of double predestination: one to heaven, which is just, provided that it is not understood in the sense of Luther and Calvin, for whom, as we have seen, the good act comes solely from God, and not from God through man; the other to hell. As you see, there is a twofold error here: predestination to heaven is misconceived and the idea of predestination to hell is introduced—a still worse aberration. For that matter, Protestants today no longer defend Calvin on this point; Karl Barth declares frankly that he cannot find this idea of predestination to hell anywhere in St. Paul. (Yet, from the doctrinal point of view, some critics see, in the

thesis of double predestination, the cornerstone of the *Institutes*.)

**Predestination as a Speculative Question
and as a Cause of Personal Anxiety**

We shall meet in a moment those texts which, if misinterpreted, could be used to support Calvin; notably in Chapter 9 of the Epistle to the Romans. I purposely choose these vexed points so as to show you how they are to be clarified. But is there any real need to deal with these questions? Is it not rather unwise to do so?

My own opinion is that we must act differently in different cases. Suppose I have to deal with someone who is troubled by the problem of predestination. He asks himself: "Am I saved? If I am predestined whatever I do, I am sure of salvation; and if I am not predestined, whatever good I do is no use at all." How should I answer him?

First of all, I should have to discern the meaning of the question. It may be a speculative one, a question of revealed truth, of theology. In that case I should give an answer that would doubtless entail a mystery, but not a contradiction. You know that a mystery is something that calls for our adoration, it is the dark night of God, which is the spiritual food of the metaphysician, the theologian, the saint; whereas a contradiction is detestable, it is the dark night of incoherence and evil.

But perhaps it is a question that arises from real anguish of mind, a question asked by someone going through an interior trial, whom God wishes to nail upon the cross. In that case, I should not attempt any explanation; that would be beside the point. I would say, "Bear with this trial at present, bear with it in darkness and make profound acts of faith; a very mysterious work is to

be wrought in you. Later on, when God's intention in harrowing your soul has been fulfilled, come back and we shall talk over the matter again, and the answer I shall give you will appear to you as wholly true. But for the time being you are stunned, God asks of you an act of total abandonment to him. Make no attempt to evade it. If I began to argue with you, I should be failing in my role as "angel" appointed to help you and show you the way."

What we are saying in connection with predestination is applicable to other matters. If anyone puts a speculative problem to you, try to elucidate it. You may not always have the answer pat, but the Church possesses it and you can easily inform yourself of it. But there is also God's plan for souls. I have in mind someone whose stumbling block was the suffering of animals. None of the answers suggested to him gave him satisfaction. He was not in a condition to grasp them. The only thing he could do was to bear this state of anxiety as a cross; and that, no doubt, is precisely what God intended him to do.

As for the question of predestination, the saints managed to find answers that resolved it, not theoretically, but concretely, in the dark night of love. For example: "Lord, if your justice must one day condemn me, I will to be condemned, for I know your justice is adorable!" Or: "Lord, if I am not to love you later in eternity, at least let me love you here in the present." Or: "O my God! You know I cannot endure hell, and I know that I am not good enough for Paradise. To what shall I have recourse? Your forgiveness." That is how God restores such souls to peace. The devil said to St. Teresa: "Why give yourself all this trouble? The die is cast!" In her spirited way, she replied: "Then it was not worthwhile for you to take the

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trouble to come and tell me!" Then the devil understood; he too is a wit!

St. Paul's Doctrine on the Mystery of Israel: God's Summons, Neglected by the Mass of the Jews, Passes to the Gentiles, but Will Return to Israel

Now let us take the point about the rejection of the Jews, as dealt with in the Epistle to the Romans (9-11). "Salvation is from the Jews," Jesus had told the woman of Samaria. God had prepared this people, privileged among all the rest, to be the cradle of the Incarnation. Privileges, I have already said, are not the chief thing. The chief thing is love, and God dispenses that to all on account of Christ's death on the cross; each man can accept or refuse it. But, after all, Messianic salvation, the honor of proclaiming and receiving the Messiah, was first offered to the Jews. And then, when the Messiah came, the Jews as a whole ignored him, passed him by.

What does God do? He might have said: "They did not want my favor: I shall take it away." But God never does that. When the gift of his love is refused by one person or people, he transfers it to others. He does not shut the door of the feast; instead of the first ones invited, he sends for the poor, the lame, the blind (Luke 14, 21). In place of the Jews, the immense multitude of the Gentiles is invited. Thus, the fault of the Jews becomes the salvation of the Gentiles. "By their offense," says St. Paul, "salvation has come to the Gentiles. . . . Their offense is the riches of the world" (Rom. 11, 11. 12).

And when the Gentiles who have accepted this light begin to lose their fervor, then God will cause the Jews to return. The mass of Israel—which does not mean each individual Jew, but the Jews as a people—jealous at seeing other peoples

preferred to them (Rom. 2, 11), will finally come into the Church. And the conversions from Judaism that occur constantly as time goes on point to the place where, one day, the Jews will come in their multitudes. "For I would not, brethren, says St. Paul, "have you ignorant of this mystery . . . that a partial blindness only has befallen Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles should enter, and thus all Israel should be saved" (Rom. 11, 25-26). The Apostle then concludes with the cry: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways" (Rom. 11, 33).

**At the Time of Israel's General Defection,
"a Remnant" Remained Faithful**

Nevertheless, St. Paul is deeply distressed that Israel, as a whole, refused the Messiah born within it. "I have great sadness and continuous sorrow in my heart. For I could wish to be anathema myself from Christ for the sake of my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh; who are Israelites, who have the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the legislation and the worship and the promises; who have the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is, over all things, God blessed forever" (9, 2-5).

Has God then, asks the Apostle, failed to keep his word, since he had promised to Abraham a whole progeny? No: for the Church, at its inception, was wholly composed of Jews, with our Lady, Simeon, Anna, the Apostles; and it will never be so splendid as it was then. God's promise has not failed, because there was a "remnant," to use the technical term, which remained faithful when the mass had gone astray.

St. Paul explains here (Rom. 9, 6-8) that those who are of the posterity of Abraham are not all sons of Abraham. There is Israel according to the flesh, namely those who have descended from Abraham by way of generation; and also Israel of the promise, those who, among the descendants of Abraham, have the spirit of Abraham. And there are the Gentiles, to whom grace will be offered and who will be joined to these latter. They will form part of the Israel of the promise, the Israel of the spirit; not by way of generation and descent by the flesh, but by way of the spiritual regeneration given at baptism.

Distinctions between Vocations Concerning the Present Time, in which God Is Completely Free to Choose or Reject Whom He Will, and Vocations Concerning Eternal Life, in which He Is Bound by His Love

We now come to the principal passage. St. Paul begins by asking if we can reproach God for choosing another people to replace the one he had first chosen, which had not accepted his gift. No, he declares, for God can without injustice choose whom he will and reject whom he will. In order to elucidate this answer of his, I want to make a distinction; it will give the key to the whole of this ninth chapter of Romans.

There are two sorts of vocations, destinations, calls. There are those concerning this present time, which might be called temporal ones, and in them God's choice is completely free. There are, in addition, those concerning eternal life, where God is not free to give or withhold the grace which, if we do not refuse it, will lead us to our true home. God is not free, because he is bound by his love.

So then, to apply this distinction, can I reproach

God for not having made me a poet like Dante, or for not giving me Pascal's genius? Or for having caused me to be born in this particular country or at this particular time? In this social class, with my particular temperament, my state of health? For not having given me, like the Apostles, the grace of foretelling the future or working miracles? He is completely free; he is not accountable to me. But, when it is a question of eternal life, then God is not free, he is bound to give me such graces that, if I am not saved, it is my own fault. You see the difference.

If I have an accident and chance to die when I consider I have the right to live longer, I cannot say to God that this is unjust. That is what St. Paul means when he says that if the potter makes both a common vessel and a one of outstanding beauty, the former cannot argue with the potter. If it is fitting there should be common objects as well as works of art, what is there for the clay to say about it? It is the same with the temporal vocations of different people. Also with their "prophetic vocation." Why was it Israel that was the bearer of the prophetic message announcing the Messias? Why not other people as well? There is no answer.

I was asked by a small Chinese boy why Jesus was not born in China. I told him Jesus was born in Asia, not in Europe; that missionaries went to China, but that they came up against the resistance of the forces of evil. That, however, was not a direct answer; there isn't one. And to those who are always asking why God became incarnate in Israel and not in India, where mystical religions were flourishing, or in Greece, so alive to philosophical questions, it is possible to give reasons not without value. We may say, for instance, that the divine revelation would be exposed to adulter-

ation from erroneous mysticisms, in the one case, or, in the other, to rationalization by philosophical gnosticism, and that its transcendence stood out most clearly when it made its appearance in a simple people, healthily human, a stranger to superstructures of thought. But, once again, none of these reasons is decisive.

Israel alone, then, received the prophetic vocation concerning the Messiah. Does that mean that the other peoples were abandoned by God? No, for God sent them hidden graces, not so that they might be bearers of the Messianic message, but to orientate them toward eternal salvation, in which regard not a single soul of any race was forgotten.

So you see there are two spheres, two planes. On one plane, that of temporal gifts and destinies, and of charismatic graces, God is completely free; he chooses whom he will and rejects whom he will, without any injustice. On the other plane, that of graces of salvation, God is doubtless free to give his children different and unequal graces, to one two talents, to another five. But he is not free to deprive any soul of what is necessary to it. He is bound by his justice and love to give each of them those graces which, if not refused, will bring them to the threshold of their heavenly country.

Exposition of Romans 9 as Applied to Vocations Concerning the Present Life

I think the distinction I have given will enable you to understand this ninth chapter. Read it first of all as referring to the sphere of vocations in this present life and the charismatic gifts. These are what St. Paul begins with.

“It is not that the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israelites who are sprung from Israel; nor because they are the descendants of Abraham, are they all his children; but ‘Through

Isaac shall thy posterity bear thy name.' That is to say, they are not sons of God who are the children of the flesh, but it is the children of promise who are reckoned as posterity. For this is a word of promise: 'About this time I will come and Sara shall have a son' " (Rom. 9, 6-9).

Abraham had a son by Agar the slave, but Sara his wife remained barren. Then the angel came and announced that Sara would bear a son the following year. So from that time there were two sons: Ismael, son according to the flesh, and Isaac, the child of the promise. From which would the descendants come? From Ismael, whom Islam claims as forebear? No, but from Isaac, the child of the promise; by him the prophetic message was to continue. That does not mean that Ismael was rejected by God in what pertains to eternal salvation, but he was not chosen to be the bearer of the prophetic message.

Then comes another disjunction. "And not she only; but also Rebecca, who conceived by one man, Isaac our father." They were twins, Esau and Jacob. Which of the two will be the bearer of the prophetic promise? Here again, God is entirely free. "For before the children had yet been born, or had done aught of good or evil, in order that the selective purpose of God might stand, depending not on deeds, but on him who calls, it was said to her, 'The elder shall serve the younger'; as it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated' " (9, 10-13).

"Jacob I have loved," as bearer of the promise. "Esau I have hated," not as regards eternal life, but as far as the promise is concerned, I have disregarded him.

"What then shall we say? Is there injustice with God? By no means. For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will

show pity to whom I will show pity.' So then there is question not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God showing mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised thee up that I may show in thee my power, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth' " (9, 14-18).

How is this passage to be understood? Moses was sent by God to Pharaoh to say to him; "Let my people go." But Pharaoh refused to understand him. Had he been more enlightened, he would have said, "Go with thy people." Then he would himself have entered into God's plan; he would have shared, in some degree, in the vocation of the people who were the bearers of the promise. But Israel left against his will, and he sent his army in pursuit of them. Pharaoh went wrong in the realm of high politics. This does not mean he was necessarily damned but that he showed forth the glory of God in spite of himself. Moses and his people passed over the sea wherein Pharaoh's armies were lost.

I shall continue the passage, still keeping within the first sphere. "Therefore he has mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardens (9, 18). That is to say, he leaves in error whomever he decides to. Pharaoh went astray on the level of high politics. Cyrus, however, saw more clearly and, freeing Israel from captivity, sent it back to its own country to rebuild the temple. He furthered the plan of God, and so is praised in Scripture.

"Thou sayest to me: Why then does he still find fault? For who resists his will? O man, who art thou to reply to God? Does the object moulded say to him who moulded it: Why hast thou made me thus? Or is not the potter master of his clay, to make from the same mass one vessel for honor-

able, another for ignoble use? But what if God, wishing to show his wrath and to make known his power, endured with much patience vessels of wrath, ready for destruction, that he might show the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he has prepared unto glory?" (9, 19-23).

Wishing to "show his wrath" means to set on one side. The message is passed on in another way. "As he says in Osee, A people not mine I will call my people, and an unbeloved, beloved, and her who had not obtained mercy, one who has obtained mercy. And it shall be in the place where it was said to them: you are not my people; there they shall be called sons of the living God.' And Isaia cries out concerning Israel, 'Though the number of children of Israel are as the sands of the sea, the remnant shall be saved . . . because a speedy word will the Lord accomplish on earth'" (9, 25-28).

The Same Concerning Eternal Life

We have read these passages as referring to the sphere of vocations in this present life. Now let us take some of them again in their application to the vocation to eternal salvation. This is not the plane St. Paul directly refers to but, from time to time, it may have been underlying his thought.

First of all we take this text: "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated" (9, 13). If this meant: I have loved Jacob in person, and saved him for eternal life; I have hated Esau in person, and rejected him for eternal life, then we should say that, from all eternity, God knows that the supreme initiative of Jacob's final act of love comes from himself; Jacob is saved by the divine goodness. And from all eternity God knows that the supreme initiative of Esau's refusal comes from Esau himself. Esau is rejected in consequence of

this free refusal made, in spite of God's goodness toward him. He is rejected because he made these divine graces of no effect.

We must distinguish clearly between the way in which Jacob is saved (namely through the divine goodness) and that in which Esau is rejected (through his bad will). To fail to see this distinction and to say that God has the first initiative in Esau's damnation as he has in Jacob's salvation, that he is the cause of the former as of the latter, is to fall into the error of Calvin.

The second text is: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy; and I will show pity to whom I will show pity" (9, 15). Taking this on the plane of the call to salvation, this is the Catholic interpretation: let us suppose a man to whom God has offered his love and who sins, freely refuses this love, destroys grace in himself. God could say to him, "From now on, I shall leave you in your sin. Is that justice or injustice?" He would have to answer, "It is justice." But God might also say, "In justice, I ought to abandon you, as I have in the case of others; nevertheless, once again, purely out of mercy and compassion, I shall go in search of you."

Now let us look at the Calvinist interpretation: original sin has destroyed our free will. God chooses certain ones among us to be saved; he has mercy on whom he will have mercy. The rest are predestined to hell. And if you protest that it is iniquitous that men deprived of free will should be thrown into hell, Calvin will rise up against you and say that, since God does so, it is not iniquitous, but a mystery we must adore.

The third text is: "The scripture says to Pharaoh: For this very purpose I have raised thee up that I may show in thee my power, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. Therefore

he has mercy on whom he will; and whom he will he hardens' (9, 17-18). On the plane of eternal salvation, to "harden" someone means, in the Catholic sense, to allow their consequences to follow on acts that he has voluntarily chosen to do. I have committed a certain sin, which will normally lead to certain other sins. If God does not intervene, out of pure mercy, to break this sequence of sins, if he abandons me to the logic of my own actions, he will be said to harden me. I go of my own free will down the slope which leads from sin to sin. Is it in this sense that Pharaoh was hardened? Was he personally rejected? How can we know? In the Calvinist sense, to "harden" means to be plunged ever further into sin by a deliberate punitive action on the part of God.

The fourth text is: "Thou sayest to me: Why then does he still find fault? For who resists his will? O man, who art thou to reply to God? Does the object moulded say to him who moulded it: Why hast thou made me thus? Or is not the potter master of his clay, to make from the same mass one vessel for honorable, another for ignoble use?" (9, 19-21). According to Catholic teaching, God is bound to give grace to all, but he is not bound to give it equally. He gives his servants one, two or five talents, to each according to his capacity (Matt. 25, 15); and this diversity will contribute to the splendor of paradise. But he is bound by his love to give each of us such graces that, if we fail to attain heaven, we shall have to admit our own sole responsibility.

The fifth text is: "What if God, wishing to show his wrath and to make known his power, endured with much patience vessels of wrath, ready for destruction, that he might show the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he has prepared unto glory?" (9, 22-23). God may abandon the sin-

ner to his sin and the logical results of his sin; it is then that he "shows his wrath," he "endures with much patience" the vessels of wrath ripe for perdition. Why does he endure them? It may be that, at the last moment, he will visit them once again in his goodness. But God may also draw the sinner straightaway from his evil state; it is then that he "shows his glory" in regard to the vessels of mercy. Both Peter and Judas denied Jesus, and he could have abandoned both of them to their sin; it would have been quite just. But he looked on Peter, and his look overwhelmed him; that was mercy.

In the Calvinist view, God endures with much patience vessels of wrath destined to perdition, just as he makes vessels destined to glory. That is the doctrine of double predestination.

Conclusion

The thought of predestination should never lead you to fatalism, or make you say: "What is the use? All effort is useless?" You would be deceiving yourself, from the standpoint both of faith and of theology. What would we think of a farmer who said, "God already knows whether I shall be harvesting or not next summer, so what is the use of sowing this autumn?" We would probably say to him, "God knows from all eternity whether you will harvest or not, because he knows from all eternity whether you will sow or not. He sees, from all eternity, that Mary Magdalen will go to heaven, but only because he sees from all eternity that she will be converted. And, in the case of our refusal, he takes account of it from all eternity in framing his immutable plan."

The thought of predestination may become a temptation to despair that the devil tries to induce in us. If God allows this temptation, it is not that

we may give way, but so that we shall make firm acts of hope in our state of darkness.

Everyone, at all times, is liable to temptation against some point of faith; or against hope as, for example, the man who says "I believe in the life of heaven for others, but not for myself; I am too much of a sinner." And there are temptations against love. It is the great mystics, St. John of the Cross and Mary of the Incarnation, who have best described these various trials. If we come across souls tempted in these ways, it is best to tell them simply, "God is present within your heart, he is mysteriously cultivating its soil. That is an agony to undergo, but something very profound is in preparation, and the acts of faith and hope you make in darkness are perhaps the most valuable of all your life. In heaven you will be 'eternally consoled by that which here below had plunged you into a desolation of soul devoid of all consolation'."

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS

Predestination

1. Why must we always bear in mind in dealing with the mysteries of grace that God is a God of love?
2. Is the doctrine of predestination in Scripture?
3. How is it that some persons are not among the predestined?
4. What is Luther's doctrine regarding predestination?
5. What does St. Paul say about the Jews' return to the Church?

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6. What do we mean when we say that the Gentiles form part of the Israel of the promise?
7. What was the "remnant"? Were there many Jews in the early Church?
8. What distinction does the author draw between the two types of vocation?
9. Comment on the symbolic significance of Isaac and Ismael, Esau and Jacob?
10. Explain briefly why the thought of predestination should never lead to fatalism.

IV

Justification, Merit Consciousness of the State of Grace

What Is "Justification"?

First of all, let us think about justification. This is a theological term, signifying the act by which God moves one who was in a state of sin into the state of grace. There is a passing over from the state of non-justice in relation to God to the state of justice or holiness in relation to God; hence the word justification.

"God Does Not Justify Thee Without Thyself"

How is man's justification brought about? We recall the great sentence of St. Augustine, so often forgotten by Protestants: "God who created thee without thee will not justify thee without thee." In the second discourse, we spoke of the cause of the good act. For Luther, it comes from God alone; for Pelagius, from man alone. Both these views misinterpret St. Augustine's doctrine: *God does not justify thee without thee*. God justifies thee through the assent of thy free will; justification is an act of the free will moved by God. But is that possible? Certainly, says St. Thomas, for God moves natures without doing them violence. God moves man, a free being, by actuating his free will, and God leads him from one free assent to another, if man does not frustrate his activations, to the assent of justification in which the decisive grace descends on him.

The one exception is in the case of the very young. Original sin, in which they are born, is transmitted to them by way of generation, without any personal culpability on their part. Consequently, God does not require of them any personal act for justification. Their parents, without any act of will of theirs, give them *natural life*; baptism, without any act of will of theirs, gives them the *life of grace*.

The Stages of Justification

God's grace always comes beforehand to prompt me. How does he knock at the door of my heart? If I am in a state of sin, he starts by trying to move me to an act of faith: I begin to grasp the extent of the gulf between the misery of my state and the holiness of God. That is why we say that faith is the root of justification. Then comes the fear of God: if I were to die now, I would be separated from him forever. This is not mere servile fear, for there is already in it a beginning of hope. Further, in this hope, there is not yet charity, but already a beginning of love. If I do not disrupt these successive movements of God—as the hail destroys the fruit in the flower—one grace calls up another, then another, and so on.

You have probably heard the axiom: "To anyone who does what lies in him God does not refuse grace." If you take it as meaning "to anyone who does what lies in him with his natural powers alone," you will be misinterpreting it: nature can never be proportional to grace; that is quite out of the question. However you use nature, it will yield only natural results. You may give a horse oats, and he will run faster, but you will not enable him to produce a work of art or solve a mathematical problem; those things are of another order. But if you take the formula as meaning "to any-

one who does what lies in him by the action of antecedent grace (which is always knocking at the door of my heart, which is as much at my disposition as the oxygen I breathe) God does not deny further grace," then the axiom is correct. He moves me again and again, and if I do not break the sequence, leads me to the final outpouring of justification.

This is the great doctrine of St. Augustine, which was settled at the Council of Orange; a whole congeries of propositions, woven from texts of St. Paul, provide the answer to the men known as Semi-Pelagians, and summarize the Church's teaching on grace. They were approved by Boniface II in 529.

The Semi-Pelagians said that the beginning of good acts comes solely from me, and God, seeing I have made a beginning, gives me the power to complete them. No! says the Church, if it is really an act good in relation to the heavenly life, it is God who gave you the beginning, and who gives also the middle and end. God is the first cause making your free will bear fruit, and you are the secondary cause. The only thing you can do of yourself is refuse. These propositions deserve to be translated one day into fine prose. Here, for example, is one of them:

If anyone says that increase of faith comes from God, but denies that the very beginning of the act of faith and the first act of trust in God is already a gift of God, and the effect in us of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who converts our will from infidelity to faith, from impiety to piety, he contradicts the Apostle, who says: I am convinced of this, that he who has begun a good work in you will bring it to perfection until the day of Christ Jesus

(Phil. I, 6)—for you have been given the favor on Christ's behalf, not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him (Phil. I, 29); and again: What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as if thou hadst not received it? (I Cor. 4, 7).

When we reflect on St. Paul's teaching, there often comes to mind a Gospel text that says the same thing but more simply; we had noticed it, but St. Paul was to make us aware of all its implications: "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15, 5). And this "nothing" consists in refusing; and by so acting you do "nothing" positive at all.

So, then, grace is there with its antecedent motion and urges us on, step by step, to justification. But what precisely is justification? It is the moment when, the sequence of graces being unbroken, all at once the flower gives its fruit; the love of God invading the soul sets it on the plane of grace and charity, sanctifies it interiorly, and there results the indwelling of the Trinity. Justification, then, happens instantaneously, although including at one and the same time several aspects: God moves the soul to make an act of love of God and of renunciation of sin, and at the same instant remits its guilt and purifies it.

Justification a Greater Work than Creation

Justification is an act of unfathomable depth. St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, asks if "justification is the greatest of God's works." In this connection, he cites one of the Collects in the Missal: "O God, who showeth supremely thy omnipotence in *par-doning* [giving over and above what he is bound to] and showing mercy. . . ." (10th Sunday after Pentecost). He gives this an-

swer: creation, in one way, is a greater work than the justification of a soul, since it consists in making something out of nothing; but, if we consider the plane on which an action reaches its culmination, then the justification of a soul is a greater work than the creation of the universe, for the term of creation is the good of a transitory nature, while the term of justification is the eternal good of participation in the divinity—it is set on a higher plane. This heaven and this earth will pass away, but the justification of the elect will not pass away.

Miraculous Types of Justification

Is the justification of a soul to be called a miracle? St. Thomas distinguishes various aspects:

(a) Life, he says, is given, naturally and normally, to an infant in its mother's womb. A corpse, on the other hand, is not fitted to receive life, and so the resurrection of a dead person is a miracle. Now, since the soul is spiritual, the image of God, although it certainly cannot claim it has a right to grace, yet it has the wholly passive capacity of receiving it. As distinct from resurrection, which goes against the laws of life, the grace of justification comes to a soul, not as contrary to, but as superior to its nature. In this aspect, justification is not a miracle in the sense in which the raising of Lazarus was.

(b) Considering a second aspect, St. Thomas asks: if we call miraculous what is done against the customary order of things, is justification a miracle? He answers: No, because it happens so frequently. It is in the ordinary course of divine goodness to justify men; it does so progressively, arousing in them successively sentiments of faith, fear, hope and a beginning of love, leading them by stages to their healing.

(c) Yet, in certain cases, justification may be a miracle when God all at once overwhelms a soul, as he did St. Paul. Or it may be as in the case of the good thief, when a sudden light illuminated this common law criminal and he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," and he received the answer: "This day, thou shalt be with me in paradise." Conversions such as these are miraculous chiefly by reason of their suddenness; they pass over the stages normally leading to justification. Other conversions, such as that of the sinful woman related by St. Luke (7, 47), appear miraculous because they seem to blot out instantaneously not only all past sins, but also the temporal punishment due to sin, even, as it seems to have been with Charles de Foucauld, the remembrance and the traces of past sins.

My opinion is that miraculous conversions of the first kind are very numerous and that, thanks to the merits and prayers of saints and friends of God, many great sinners are converted at the last moment. Those members of the Church who pray fervently for the salvation of the world are destined to be saviors of others, in Christ. They bring forth members of the Mystical Body: "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and *mother*" (Matt. 12, 50).

Persons who have lived far from God may, at the very last moment, turn to God without anyone knowing it. They may even seem to have rejected grace. I am reminded of a story by Lucien Marsaux.

A girl living with her father, who had lost his faith, prayed constantly for his conversion. The moment of his death came, and she ventured to ask him, "Shall I send for a priest?" At these words, the father's soul was filled with light; this was what he had secretly desired; he wished to say

yes, but his movements failed him, he made a gesture of refusal, and died. (It may well happen that the external sign goes counter to the real intention. In Claudel's play, *l'Otage*, Sygne de Coufontaine throws herself between Turelure and her former fiancé; the bullet strikes her and she falls. The priest asks her, "Do you forgive him?" But she had done so much violence to herself in marrying Turelure, had had to suppress her feelings so strongly, that the only gesture she could make spontaneously was one of refusal; and so she made it. At least, in the first version. Interiorly, she had not refused to forgive, she had too much generosity; but there may well be a kind of cleavage between the soul and the body with which it is clothed.)

**Is Venial Sin always Avoidable? Does It Lessen
Sanctifying Grace? To What Degree Is Grace,
Once Lost, Regained?**

There are one or two further remarks to be made here on sin and grace.

First of all, a person in the state of grace may well be able to avoid all mortal sin, but not all venial sins (except toward the end of his life, if grace is very powerful in him). For the Christian has to live on a plane at which seemingly opposed virtues are reconciled to each other. He has to be, at one and the same time, prudent as the serpent and simple as the dove. This reconciliation is difficult; in his concentration on one virtue, he is in danger of momentarily neglecting its complement, and committing a venial sin. So he prays God each day to forgive his daily faults (Matt. 6, 12). He is mindful of the words of St. John: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1, 8).

Likewise, a man in the state of mortal sin cannot long remain without committing fresh mortal

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sins. He is drawn into them, when occasion arises, by the weight of sin in his heart. So, if anyone commits a mortal sin, let him not remain in that state, but rise to his feet again as soon as possible, and begin once more to live according to the impulse of grace, according to the "weight of grace" within him.

A second remark concerns the effects of venial sin. We begin with a comparison to show the difference between mortal and venial sin. If I pour acid on an oil painting, the painting is ruined; such is mortal sin. But if I throw dust on it, it can be removed with a sponge and the picture reappears in all its splendor; such is venial sin. Venial sin does not destroy sanctifying grace, it prevents it from spreading its light.

Sanctifying grace inclines me toward God; I would not for anything desire to renounce this basic attitude but, through negligence, I ignore one or other of his invitations to perform a good act in matters of lesser importance, somewhat like a sick man, who, though anxious all the time to be cured, departs occasionally from the prescribed regime. Are we, then, to say that venial sin does, at least diminish sanctifying grace? No. Soiling a lamp glass does not diminish the light itself, but only its brilliance. Yet deliberate and constant venial sin, as opposed to unpremeditated sin, does give rise to a state of tepidity; it digs, as it were, a ditch round the soul and, when the storm of temptations arises, the soul is in danger of being drawn into mortal sin, which would immediately destroy all its beauty.

Finally, what happens to the soul which, after losing grace, regains it by an act of love and contrition? Does it return to the level of grace it had before? It may, or it may not, according to the intensity of its sorrow. Suppose it had previously

a level of ten talents; it may return to God with a love of five talents, or ten, or even twenty. That is the teaching of St. Thomas.

The Doctrine of "Merit"

The second subject I want to speak about is that of merit. The very word is a source of contention; when we use it in talking to Protestants, they are put off and refuse to listen. It is better, in fact, not to use the *word* but to explain the *thing*. Perhaps they will find they have believed it all the time.

What is the doctrine of merit? It is that God is so good that he places in me his grace, by whose power I can face in the direction of eternal life, move toward it, adapt myself to it. In his simile of the vine, Christ said, 'I am the vine, you the branches. He who abides in me . . . bears much fruit' (John 15, 5). You see, God sets in us the sap of grace and of charity, with which we can produce repeated acts of grace and charity with growing intensity; they are the fruits, and the final fruit will be entrance into the heavenly kingdom.

Merit is a title to reward in justice. But can God be obliged in justice toward us? Can there be any proportion between what we give him—we who have received all we possess from him—and the supreme gifts of his grace and his love? Not, indeed, if we are left to ourselves and our own efforts. But yes, there is, if he sets in us the sap of his grace and love, and asks us to make it bear fruit in still further grace and love. Once we are able to produce acts vivified by the sap of grace there is, in fact, a proportion between these acts and their fruit; first between the stem and the flower, and then between the flower and the fruit. So that our very merits are the gifts of God. Hence

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the saying of St. Augustine: "When God crowns our merits, he crowns his own gifts."

Our Merits Are Gifts of God

But are they our merits or the merits of Christ? The Protestant procedure, here as elsewhere, is to oppose instead of to subordinate. To the merits of Christ alone it opposes the merits of man alone. It pronounces for salvation by the merits of Christ alone, and imputes to us the theory of salvation by the merits of man alone, the Pelagian view condemned by the Church as heretical. What then is the real Catholic doctrine? It is summed up in one sentence: our merits are from God and Christ as first cause, and from us as second cause—God gives us, in Christ, the power to assent to him.

If I give this assent, uttered here in time and penetrated by the light of divine grace, it leads me toward my final end, entrance into heaven; it makes me fit to enter heaven, and when I do, it bears its normal fruit, it "merits" my entry into heaven. It is my own assent, my own merit; at times it will have caused me real anguish, will have entailed victory over my passions—it is indeed my own. But it is due even more to God than to me, and the first thought that will come to my mind will be to say, "Thanks be to you, my God, for having given me the power to answer your call; to you be the glory."

To illustrate this Catholic doctrine, that it is God who gives man the ability to merit, we must constantly recur to Christ's comparison: "I am the vine, and you the branches. He that abides in me . . . bears much fruit." Neither Calvin nor Barth is able to explain this text. Calvin says: So you see, the branch severed from the trunk is thrown into the fire; it cannot, therefore, produce any-

thing. We agree; the severed branch withers, but what if it remains attached to Christ? Then it bears fruit. Does the fruit come from the trunk or the branch? From the trunk through the branch. If we ask Barth whether it is God or man who produces the good act, God or the rose tree that produces the rose, he answers that we base our reasoning on a simile. But the simile is taken from the Gospel!

One further observation on merit. As we have seen, I cannot merit the first grace of all; it is always an antecedent gift. But once in the state of charity, I can always, through charity, merit an ever greater degree of charity and, at the moment of death, eternal life.

Merit and Reward

Grace in this life fits us for the glory of heaven, bears fruit in the glory of heaven, merits the glory of heaven; all these expressions are synonymous. Glory is given to grace as its fruit, as its term, as its reward.

This idea of reward occurs frequently in Scripture. St. Paul says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will give to me in that day; yet not to me only, but also to those who love his coming" (2 Tim. 4, 7-8). God who gave Paul grace antecedently will also crown him. As a judge, he will give him what is due in justice. The same is true of all Christians.

The Gospel says that, when you suffer all things, you must "rejoice and exult, because your reward is great in heaven" (Matt. 5, 12). Christ himself said that.

At the last day, when the Son of Man comes in

glory with all his angels, he will say to those at his right hand, "Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. . . ." (Matt. 25, 34-35). In the same chapter, we are told of the servant who received five talents and gained five more, of the one who received two and gained two; but the one who buried his talent was cursed (Matt. 25, 14-30).

How is it possible for Protestantism to deny these ideas of merit and reward, of a God who, when he crowns our merits, is crowning his own gifts? All this recurs constantly in the Gospel. The Pelagian doctrine, of the branch which, severed from the trunk, is held to produce fruit by itself, is imputed to us. But we denounce both errors. They tell us, in accents of reproach, that we Catholics act in view of reward. My answer would be, "Yes, we do, for we know that the reward given by Love is union with the Beloved." "No other reward than you, Lord," said St. Thomas. And St. Paul wrote: "Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2, 9).

What is this reward? Union with the Beloved is a thing sublime and inexpressible. How can it be called unworthy to seek such a reward? They are forced to distort this sublime doctrine in order to attack it. We shall see him "face to face," says St. Paul again (1 Cor. 13 .12); and St. John: "We shall see him just as he is [*sicuti est*]" (1 John 3, 2). Not to desire this reward, this union, would be not to love. Not to desire some day to see the fatherland, when we are born in exile, would be not to love it.

**Can One Merit for Another? Merit *De Congruo*
Means More Than Simple Prayer**

Can we merit grace for others? There is someone in my life whom I love but who is in a state of sin, can I merit his conversion? Not if it is a question of merit *de condigno*, which makes the person acting fit to receive the reward. But certainly, says St. Thomas, if it is a question of merit *de congruo*; it is fitting that the Lord should grant the desires of those who love him. If I do that on which his heart is set, he will do that on which I have set mine. A kind of symmetry comes into being. Only there may be an obstacle on the part of the person for whom one suffers or intercedes.

St. Catherine prayed for a monk she knew to be in anguish, but he hanged himself. On another occasion, she asked of God the conversion of a young man condemned to execution, and he was converted. Those who live on the heights of love can ask great things of God; their wishes may be frustrated by outside resistance, but God may often answer their prayers.

Merit *de congruo* is one thing, and simple prayer another. If I am in a state of sin, I can merit neither for myself nor for others, but I can still pray, both for myself and for others. Prayer is not based on integrity of life, but is an appeal to the pure mercy of God. Even from the depths of sin, I can cry to God; prayer is a grace by which he invites me to approach him, so that in the end he may forgive me. And, though a sinner, I may still pray for others who are better than I, for the Church and the salvation of the world.

Can We Merit Temporal Goods?

Can we merit temporal goods? St. Thomas says that we can, insofar as they are necessary to bring us to eternal life. God is the judge of that. If he

sees that a certain temporal good is for my benefit he may give it to me; and, for the same reason, he may send me troubles. In this sphere, God's gifts are dissimilar. The final part of St. Thomas's treatise on grace teaches that all things come equally to the just and the unjust as regards the *nature* of temporal goods and evils, but that the whole difference lies in the *use* that each makes of these goods and evils.

If an epidemic occurs, we must not suppose that it will afflict the ungodly and spare the pious. It will strike indifferently, blindly, at both good and evil men. But if you accept the sickness in a spirit of love, it will bring you nearer to heaven; if you suffer it in a rebellious spirit, it will lead you away from heaven. The whole matter is on a different plane.

Mary of the Incarnation relates that those of the Hurons who were converted all died of the plague, and the others escaped. To preach the Gospel in these conditions was no joke; for those who accepted it seemed to be punished by God. Her answer was: We shall see about that in heaven.

Recently, a missionary told how, in a village adjoining his in India the chief, who had become a Christian along with some of his people, had a buffalo fall ill—an important matter. He began a novena. Everyone betted on the prospect of a cure: the pagans against, the Christians for. When the nine days were up, the buffalo died. The chief complained to the missionary, who replied that God's ways are not ours.

According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, what counts is the use we make of temporal good and evil. To one in the state of charity, evils, persecutions, reverses are more salutary than success. In his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Thomas makes the terrible state-

ment that continuous success in temporal affairs may, in some cases, be a sign of reprobation.

It seems, in those cases, as if God wishes to reward in this life acts that are valueless for heaven. Speaking of the virtues of Cyrus and Alexander, St. Augustine considers that God raised up these men "for the adornment of this present age [*ut ordinem praesentis saeculi ornaret*]." There have been numbers of great artists and geniuses who have worked for the world of culture and neglected the warnings given by love. St. Augustine held that they have received their reward in this life, a reward which was futile as they were futile.¹ Though time may redeem the work of a poet, as Shelley said, and remove its poison, it does not redeem his soul.

All this brings home to us that the only thing that counts before God is the use we make of things and the love that prompts it, but also that his love is always at hand to urge us on. We must never be in doubt about this.

Can We Merit the Grace of Final Perseverance?

Can we merit final perseverance, which is the coincidence of the state of grace with the instant of death? Can we merit it beforehand? We cannot, for this reason: precisely, because it is the conjunction of the moment of *death* with the *state of grace*, that is to say with the *root* of all merit and fruitfulness. But the fruit is not the root; the fruit of the state of grace is not the state of grace itself. Once in the state of grace, I can merit an increase of grace and also eternal life, but not per-

¹ Cf. Kierkegaard's terrible remark: "God is so great a Lord that, far from making it difficult, he makes it exceedingly easy to deceive him; he goes so far as to give his prizes to the deceivers and to reward them with all the goods of the earth."

severance in the state of grace, not final perseverance. However, I can and must hope that God will keep me in grace at the moment of death; and I know that this grace will not be taken from me unless I reject it myself.

Whenever we say the Hail Mary, we ask for the grace of perseverance: "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." A similar petition is enshrined in all Christian prayers, and is contained in the last petition of the Our Father, when we ask to be delivered from evil.

Can We "Know" If We Are in the State of Grace? The Protestant View

There is one more question to be discussed here, namely: Can we know whether we are in the state of grace?

Here, as on the whole of this subject, there is a great difference between the Catholic doctrine and the Protestant, which has been so vitiated by its conception of corrupted nature and imputed justice. According to the Lutheran teaching, if I have faith, that is to say the absolute personal conviction that, in spite of my total corruption, God regards me as just on account of Christ, then I am just, I am justified. For Calvin, if I have faith, that is to say this same personal conviction, I am, in addition, certain of being predestined. Thus, according to these men, the Christian has the absolute certainty, he is certain by divine faith, of being justified, and even predestined. That is authentic Protestant doctrine.

The Catholic View: No Absolute Certainty Apart from the Case of Confirmation in Grace

What is the Catholic doctrine? To begin with, justification is quite a different thing. God cannot love me or look on me as his child, without

intrinsically justifying me, without pouring his grace into me, without sending down a ray of his holiness into the fragile vessel that I am. But am I certain of having this grace? The answer given by St. Thomas, and repeated by the Council of Trent, expresses the Church's traditional doctrine: apart from a private revelation, I cannot have a certainty that is absolute and infallible of being in the state of grace and predestined. It does happen to individual servants of God that he makes known to them that they are in charity, that they will not lose it, and that they will be with him in paradise. The certainty he gives them is a source of unspeakable interior joy.

The Reason for This

Why is it that, apart from this very rare privilege, which is known as "confirmation in grace," we cannot infallibly, still less as a matter of divine faith, know that we are in grace? The reason is that, grace being a participation in the divine nature, whoever saw it directly would be seeing its very Source, the inscrutable mystery of the divine Being. God is not visible to us face to face in this life; he is apprehended only in a dark manner and his presence in us is a presence in the night. Grace is indeed a splendor, but a nocturnal one; not that it is dark in itself, but that our sight cannot apprehend it. In relation to it and to God who gives it us, we are like the owl in the light of the sun.

St. Thomas cites the verse of the book of Job: "Lo, God is great beyond our knowledge"; and Job continues: "Should he come near me, I see him not; should he pass by, I am not aware of him."

God is so utterly mysterious! A soul may have

him as its guest without knowing it, may even be in sadness and distress. He may leave it, too, without withdrawing its assurance and joy, which are both, in consequence, liable to mislead. God, you see, is outside our knowledge. That is why St. Paul says, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (4, 3): "But with me it is a very small matter to be judged by you or by man's tribunal. Nay I do not even judge my own self. For I have nothing on my conscience, yet I am not thereby justified; but he who judges me is the Lord." I do not then ask myself about my state, but leave my fate in God's hands. All I can do is to say to him, "Lord, if I ought to be punished, then punish me. I would rather be in your hands than in my own."

**Moral or Practical Certainty of the State of Grace:
the Signs of the State of Grace**

So there is no infallible certainty for me about my state as regards the world of grace; but a practical or moral certainty is indispensable to us, and that we can have. How will it make itself known? According to St. Thomas I know with moral certainty that I am in the state of grace if the things of God fill my heart, satisfy my desires; if the things of this world do not hide all else from my view; if my hope, in the words of Claudel at the end of his great *Ode on St. Teresa*, is to "scuttle my ship beneath me and to travel forward on the wings of passion and desire." Not that we must "despise" creatures; but their beauty issues from an infinite Source, which alone is able to fill our souls. In addition, St. Thomas gives a negative sign: to have no consciousness of mortal sin. Other indications, too, might be mentioned. St. Francis de Sales, for example, gives as one a profound devotion to Our Lady.

We may also say that God, hidden in the soul, makes his presence secretly felt by his movements, inspirations, illuminations. In the Apocalypse (2, 17), it is said: "To him who overcomes, I will give the hidden manna . . . which no one knows except him who receives it." Already in this life the man who receives this hidden manna experiences that he is in the love of God; while fully aware of his own frailty, he has an experimental knowledge of God's working in him and the sweetness of his presence. This knowledge is obscure, instinctive, at times dazzling, but always liable to fluctuations.

Fluctuations of Conscience

Notice that there is something analogous in the order of nature. What am I? At certain moments, I seem to be someone, to possess positive certainties, to have values to communicate. Then, the next moment, a ray of God's light falls on me and shows me my nothingness; I feel that I am no more than a husk, a sinner full of lies and darkness. I know nothing any more, I stagger, everything seems empty. The same thing happens to the artist. He conceives some work or other. He feels how great it is going to be. His certainty buoys him up and brings about the realization of his vision. But once the work is done, he wants to destroy it, (Gogol burnt his manuscripts, and Rouault his pictures). It no longer says anything to him. That is not what he meant! Yet perhaps it has real value; he cannot tell. Even the greatest artists cannot judge, they do not know whether they have produced a masterpiece or have utterly failed.

After he had written all his great tragedies, Corneille was convinced that he was still writing masterpieces; but those plays no one ever reads

nowadays. Picasso submitted to the judgment, not indeed of the public, but of Matisse and Braque, and they to his. These doubts and apprehensions on the part of creative artists are like an interior tragedy. The man who succeeds too easily, the painter who sells his pictures in advance, they are the unfortunate ones; they will never again produce anything truly great.

In the supernatural order, men are subject to still greater fluctuations of feeling. At certain moments, the saints will tell you, 'Whatever the devil may say to me, I am sure of being in grace.' St. Ignatius of Loyola said that, even if he had no faith, the experiences in his retreat at Manresa would be enough to give him absolute certainty. They all speak like this. At other moments they wonder if they are not under an illusion. These vacillations are not completely overcome except by the special revelations God gives to some toward the end of their life, at the moment of their "confirmation in grace."

The conclusion to be drawn is contained in the words of St. John of the Cross, "Fear, but with confidence." Fear, for you may not be in grace; but not with a fear that would prevent your acting, make you ask: what is the use? or stifle all your good impulses. That is how the devil sets about using your uncertainty to make you destroy yourself. But do not have, either, a presumptuous confidence, a comfortable self-assurance. No, indeed, you must be on the cross. I am afraid, because I am well aware that if God were to exact a strict account I should be lost; but I know too that he loves me with a love of which I can have no idea in this life. In this way I veer between my wretchedness and his love; but my faith keeps on telling me: God's love will be victorious, for it is greater than my wretchedness.

That is the state of the Christian. Even the poorest Christian has his moments of joy and optimism; then it is as if paradise had come down into his heart. He needs such moments. Then comes a time of trial and he does not know in the least how he stands.

The Apostles themselves experienced these alternations. At the moment of the Transfiguration, the cloud came upon them and the glory of Jesus enveloped them. Peter, James and John felt as if they were on the threshold of paradise: "Master let us set up three tents. . . ." They wanted to stay there for good. But what was the reason for the Transfiguration? Because afterward the agony would come, when the same three Apostles would see Jesus—who wanted to save the world—seemingly overcome by the forces of evil. If the memory of the Transfiguration had not upheld them at that moment, they would have lost their faith. God controls these alternations. All we can do is to say with the poet: "My soul in thy hands is no mere toy, and thy prudence is infinite."

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS

Justification, Merit, Consciousness of the State of Grace

1. What is "justification"?
2. What did our Lord mean when he said: "Without me you can do nothing"? (John 15, 5.)
3. Is the justification of one soul a greater work of God than the creation of the universe?
4. Is "justification" a miracle?

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5. Can we avoid all mortal and venial sins? What is the difference between these two types of sin?
6. Can a person really merit, in justice, a reward from God?
7. What is the reward that we receive? Is the idea of "reward" contained in Holy Scripture?
8. Can one person merit for another? What is merit "de congruo"?
9. Can we merit the grace of final perseverance? What is "confirmation in grace"?
10. Can we "know" if we are in the state of grace? What signs enable us to have a moral or practical certainty that we are?

PART TWO

The Existential States of Grace

V

The First Existential State: the Earthly Paradise or the State of Adam

The Existential States of Grace

So far we have treated of grace considered in itself and in its essence. It is true that we have continually had to relate this to grace as we have seen it to be since the coming of Christ, in the present state of mankind. This was unavoidable. But now we have to treat of the different states, the different actual realizations of grace. We will of course perceive, underlying each of these states, the fundamental structures already indicated; but, in the course of the different ages of mankind, these have been subject to different concrete conditions, taken on different modalities, so that we may well speak of the different existential states of grace.

It is not St. Thomas's treatise on grace we have to consult here, but other parts of his theology. Still, I think that nowadays a treatise on grace has to include these matters.

The First Proclamation of the Judaeo-Christian Revelation Was an Answer to the Problem of Evil

The first existential state of grace is that of the grace given to Adam.

The Judaeo-Christian revelation tells us first, of God's love for men, and second, of the love men must give God in return. The first, the greater of these two mysteries, is that of the divine condescension toward us. At the very outset it gives an answer to one of the most immediate and visible aspects of the problem of evil. Why is our life so full of conflict, conflict between the soul, which is immortal, and the body, a prey to sickness and to death; between the reason and the passions, which draw us in opposite directions; between man and the universe, man who struggles daily to wrest a living from the earth, which responds with famines and catastrophes? What is the reason for all this affliction? And, above all, why should little children suffer and die?

God Could Have Created Man in the State of Pure Nature, that is, in a Tragic and Divided State

Did God create man subject to all these conflicts, in this divided, tragic state? From the philosophical point of view, he could have done so. Man's tragic state is the price of his greatness. Compounded of flesh and spirit, he is the meeting place of the world of visible things and the invisible world of the angels. In the words of St. Thomas, he is a boundary line between two worlds. Such an assemblage of qualities, so complex and delicate a balance, can be had and sustained only by victories in constantly recurring conflicts. Given that man is a "rational animal," we are bound to admit that he is, by definition, a divided and tragic being.

In Fact, He Created Him in a State of Harmony

That is what philosophy tells us. But how does it comfort the mother who has just lost her child? If we explain to her that the laws of the universe are ineluctable and act blindly, she will say, "What do I care for the laws of the universe? Let me have my child back!" This inward and spontaneous protest of hers is an implicit appeal (though she may not know it) to the first state of man. For God did not create man—flesh and spirit, boundary between two worlds—in a tragic state, but in a state of harmony. He did not make him to be just a man, a "rational animal"; he made him, from the outset, to be a "child of adoption," he clothed him with his grace, he came to "dwell in him."

God created man in his "image and likeness"; in *his image*—that, according to the Fathers, means with an immortal soul; in *his likeness*—that means with the grace and indwelling of the Trinity. When man sinned, so they tell us, he lost his "likeness" to God, but kept the "image" of God, which belongs to his nature and the very structure of his being.

The earthly paradise is no myth. It is the first effect of God's love for man, of the incomprehensible tenderness of his love. Again, he might have created man in what theologians call the state of pure nature, giving him all that the definition "a rational animal" implies, and that alone would have been a wonderful gift. He did not consider this to be sufficient.

**Invisible Supernatural Gifts and Visible
Preternatural Ones**

He conferred on him from the start the *supernatural gift of sanctifying grace*, which made of him

an adoptive son, in whom the divine Persons might dwell.

This grace was essentially the same as ours, but differed in the conditions of its existence. It exhibited more visibly its power over the whole being of man. It strengthened in a wonderful degree the threefold domination, natural but fragile and precarious, of the soul over the body, of reason over the passions, of man over the universe. The result was that the soul unfailingly kept its hold on the body, and so there was no suffering, no death either for man or for little children.

Reason was in full control of the passions, which operated spontaneously in its light, and so there was no emotional conflict. Finally, man really governed the world, the earth was his garden and paradise, and so there was no laborious work, no suffering in creative effort, no struggling at odds with nature. Not that the universe was other than it is now: lions, according to St. Thomas, did not feed on grass in the earthly paradise. It was the relation of man to the world that was different, simply because man, irradiated by grace, was different. We catch a glimpse of man's power of dominating all around him, even in the natural order, in the control that animal tamers exercise over beasts incomparably stronger and more agile than themselves. At times it has happened that some hidden force has prevented wild beasts from attacking Christian martyrs. A notable example is contained in the wonderful and quite authentic account of the martyrdom of St. Blandina.

The grace given to Adam was in itself an essentially supernatural gift, invisible and mysterious. On the other hand, the threefold reinforcement it brought to the power of the soul over the body, of

reason over the passions, of man over the world, belongs to the sphere of *preternatural gifts*, which we might call miraculous. To understand the difference between the invisible supernatural world of mystery and the visible supernatural world of miracle, consider the paralytic whom Jesus healed first of his sins (the invisible supernatural mystery), and then of his sickness (the visible supernatural miracle) (Matt. 9, 1-7).

Physiological State of the First Man

We might regard the first man as having been in a psychologically primitive state, very primitive even (not, however, in the sense in which we now speak of primitives, when we ought to say degenerate). He had, of course, his immortal soul, without which he would not be, philosophically speaking, a man. A great power of intuition, but complete absence of experience. And in this soul was original grace, with its preternatural gifts, giving to the passions and instincts the "sleep of love."

In a passage of her *Progress of the Moral Conscience in the First Ages* Raïssa Maritain writes:

There is nothing to stop us imagining the body of this man, free from all trace of degradation, as nearer to the primitive types—in spite of perhaps enormous distances of time, and ruling out the marks of degeneration these may have—nearer to the primitive types studied in pre-history and anthropology, than the developed types which the canons of Egyptian and Greek artists have taught us to consider as the supreme human exemplars.

Era of Religion without Intermediary

That then is the first existential state of grace. Notice, this was the epoch of "religion without intermediaries." Grace was not given by Christ, who had not yet come; nor was it given by anticipation, in view of the future redemption, because, had man not sinned—this is the teaching of St. Augustine, St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas—the Son of man would not have come. So there was no mediation of Christ. Neither were there sacraments, the visible instruments between God and man.

The grace of Adam, infused into man's soul, flowed out to reinforce the triple domination of the soul over the body, reason over the passions, man over the world; all this was the result of a movement of the spiritual coming down to make contact with the things of sense. Now, however, the order is reversed. All graces come to us by the visible mediation of Christ. His teaching, for which the prophets prepared the way, is offered to us by the Church's *magisterium*. His power is brought to us by the sacraments. Once, in the first state of mankind, religion without intermediary or mediation was a fact. It is a fact no longer.

The Age of Adam's Grace the Age of the Father

Original grace exhibited a power grace no longer has in the present state of things. It exercised virtualities that now lie dormant within it. By its use of preternatural gifts it transformed, in some degree, the state of *via* or pilgrimage. Because of this *character of power*, we may say that the age of Adam's grace was the age of the Father. For we attribute omnipotence primarily to the first Person of the Trinity, the Father: "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator . . ." (wisdom is

attributed primarily to the second Person and love to the third, although power, wisdom, and love belong to the divine essence and are possessed communally and inseparably by all three Persons).

Besides this character of power, original grace had a *character of virginity*. It had no previous sin to expiate or repair; it was, as it were, young, fresh, entirely new—nothing preceded it. Now the Father in the Trinity is the first Person; from him the Word is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds. Nothing then is anterior to him. Because of this second resemblance it may be said, once again, that the age of original grace is the age of the Father.

We have just spoken of the transforming power of original grace, which ruled out suffering and death, emotional conflict, the pain of creative effort. Had this state continued, had Adam not sinned, he would have passed from the transfiguration of the state of *via* to the transfiguration of the state of glory, without ever knowing death.

Myths of a "Golden Age"

We are not to think that the earthly paradise is a myth, simply because all religions speak of a golden age. No: the earthly paradise is, before all else, a free gift of divine love; and when men came to compose myths of a golden age, it was probably because there still remained, if not, as some maintain, a memory of their origins, at least some obscure instinct that inclined them to believe that God, in the tenderness of his love, could not have created them in their present state. Their myths and imaginings are poor things in comparison with what this God, whose love is fully revealed only by the Gospel, really did for them, in the beginning. Yet it is curious how man clings to the notion of a golden age. Those who deny its exist-

ence in the past are precisely those who assure us it will come in the future.

Effects of the Fall

What exactly was the fall of man, and what were its effects?

In view of what we have already said, man's first sin could not be a sin of sensuality, intemperance, impurity; for, so long as he remained subject to God, his passions were subject to reason. His first sin could be committed only at the highest point of his being, that is, by breaking with God. A Norwegian proverb says that the fish rots from the head down. The fall was a revolt against God's love, man wishing himself to be no longer *in* God, but *against* God: "You shall be like God" (Gen. 3, 5).

Straightway man lost grace, the essentially supernatural gift of God; we may call it the gold. At the same time, he lost the preternatural gifts, which we may call the silver, as compared with the gold: "The day you eat of it, you must die." "They realized that they were naked" (3, 7); "Cursed be the ground, because of you" (3, 17). Moreover, his human nature was, not indeed destroyed, as Protestantism alleged, but wounded, enfeebled in its striving toward good.

The Window in Sens Cathedral

In the cathedral of Sens there is to be seen on the north side a great window representing all this, and completing and illustrating it by the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10, 30-35). It would be quite possible to use it to teach children the story of the fall and the redemption of man. Emile Mâle gives an explanation of the window in his book, *L'art religieux au XIII^e siècle en France*.

At the top is a city of light: Jerusalem, the city of peace, the earthly paradise.

Next, one below the other, are three sections, lozenge-shaped. In the first of these, a man is beset by robbers beating him: "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem (city of peace) to Jericho (city of pleasure, of change, of corruption)." The robbers attack him, take his gold (grace), his silver (the preternatural gifts), and leave him wounded.

In the second section, the unfortunate man is lying unconscious; the priest and the levite, who pass by, are the Mosaic law, powerless to heal him.

In the third section is the good Samaritan, Jesus. He has set the man on his horse to bring him to the inn, which is the Church. He will return at the end of the world to pay the innkeeper.

Each of these sections is framed by four small round medallions, which give the meaning of the Gospel parable. Around the man going down from Jerusalem in search of adventure, the world of multiplicity and change, we see Adam and Eve in the peace of Paradise. Eve offering Adam the fruit, God intervening from the height of heaven: "Why have you done this?" and the angel expelling Adam and Eve, then putting back his sword into the scabbard, which signifies that man is forgiven.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton (something of an anti-feminist) represents Eve asleep, while the angel explains to Adam all that is to happen: it is true you will be expelled from Paradise, but there is to be a great and glorious redemption. And Adam, who wonders whether he may not therefore have done well to sin, expresses himself in terms which are a prelude to the *Exsultet*—although his theology is slightly suspect!

Around the second section, in which the priest and the levite pass by, we see Moses and Aaron

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before Pharaoh, Moses receiving the law of God, Moses lifting up the serpent, the golden calf—the old law was powerless to save man.

Around the third section, we have the New Testament: Pilate judging the Savior; Jesus fastened to the pillar, then nailed to the cross; and, finally, the angel announcing the Resurrection.

The entire history of man is thus explained by the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Fall Permitted in order to Replace Adam's Grace in the Universe of Creation by Christian Grace in the Universe of Redemption

Why was the fall permitted, why indeed? It was "permitted," that is to say tolerated, *suffered* as contrary to the divine will, and endured by God as an offense against him. At the very moment of temptation, God offered to help man, to succor him by an initial grace, which man was able to refuse and, in fact, did refuse. If man wills to persist in resistance to God he can do so, but the "permission" is by no means an authorization. As Ozanam said, "When man is no longer ready to do the will of God, God leaves him to his own devices, and catastrophe results."

God allowed the fall to come about. But what else could he subsequently do than forgive man? He promised him to help him, yet not to return to the earthly paradise. In Eastern theology we sometimes meet with the idea that man, at the end of time, will recover a state like that of the Garden of Eden (we see it in the beautiful *Récits d'un pèlerin russe*); the human adventure will, in some way, come full circle. But it is not to be. It is not in keeping with the divine power and goodness simply to restore man to his first state. According to the Carmelite school of Salamanca, it would even

be cruel to allow such a catastrophe, in case it should turn out to be useless.

Why, then, did God permit, why did he tolerate the fall? To build up, out of the ruins of the first universe, the universe of Adam's grace, the "universe of creation," one more sublime, more mysterious, more divine, the "universe of Christian grace," the "universe of redemption." The first universe was centered on Adam, who was wholly man and should never have known death. The second universe is centered on Christ, who is God, who knew death and all its bitterness, so as to enter on his Resurrection. In the first universe, evil had no share; in the second, the effect of evil, immense as it is, is overcome by a love that is greater still.

Christ's Universe Better than that of the First Adam

These mysteries are made known to us, not only in the great theology of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, but are found already expressed in the liturgy and in the Greek Fathers.

In one of the magnificent prayers of the Easter Vigil—omitted in the new liturgy—we find the words: "O God, who didst wonderfully create man, and still more wonderfully redeem him. . . ." It is the same theme as that of the *Exsultet*: "O wonderful tenderness of love! To redeem the slave, you gave your Son. O truly necessary sin of Adam that Christ's death came to destroy! O blessed fault which gained us such and so great a Redeemer!"

St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "The first age of human life was indeed holy in our father, Adam. But holier still is the last age that of the second Adam, Christ, who has regenerated our fallen race by newness of life in the Spirit."

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The finest description is that of St. Francis de Sales:

Our loss has been gain to us, since, in fact, human nature has received more grace by the Redemption of its Savior than it would ever have received through Adam's innocence had he continued therein. For although divine Providence has left in man great marks of severity amid the very grace of its mercy, as, for example, the necessity of dying, diseases, labors, the revolt of sensuality, yet the divine favor hovering over all these is pleased to turn all these miseries to the greater profit of those who love him, causing patience to issue from toil, scorn of the world from the necessity of dying, and a thousand victories from concupiscence; and, as the rainbow touching the aspalathus thorn makes it smell more sweetly than the lily, so the Redemption of our Lord touching our miseries makes them more useful and desirable than original innocence would ever have been. The angels have more joy in heaven, says our Lord, over one penitent sinner than over ninety-nine just that have no need of repentance. In the same way, the state of redemption is worth a hundred times more than that of innocence. It is certain that, sprinkled as we are with our Lord's blood by the hyssop of the cross, we have been restored to a purity incomparably more excellent than that of the snow of innocence. . . .

Such, then, was the first existential state of grace, as compared with what it now is.

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS

The First Existential State: the Earthly Paradise or the State of Adam

1. In what state did God create the first man? How did this state differ from the state of pure nature?
2. How did the Fathers of the Church distinguish between "image" and "likeness" in the phrase "Let us make mankind in our image and likeness" (Gen. 1, 26).
3. What gifts did God give Adam?
4. What are preternatural gifts?
5. What do we mean by religion without intermediary?
6. Was the earthly paradise a myth?
7. What were the immediate effects of the Fall of man?
8. What sin did the Fall of man essentially involve?
9. Why, would you say, did God *permit* the first sin?
10. Will man one day return to the state of the garden of Eden?

VI

The Second Existential State: Christian Grace "By Anticipation" under the Law of Nature and under the Mosaic Law

The Breakdown of Adam's Grace

In the first existential state grace, without reference to any mediation of Christ, established a people of God that was not the Mystical Body of Christ, and so not yet the Church.

After the destruction of the state of innocence, how did God act? Did he withdraw his love from men? On the contrary, he pursued them with his love. He sent his Son so that he might die for them, in order to reconcile heaven and earth, to "recapitulate"—the word is St. Paul's—all things, that is to reassemble, recompose, remold the universe. To the universe of grace centered on the first Adam there succeeded a universe of grace centered on the Word made flesh.

Recapitulation of the Universe in Christ and Christian Grace by Anticipation

Immediately after the fall the mediation of Christ began. It worked in a very hidden manner, by anticipation. This was the age of the expectation of Christ. It was possible for men to be saved by him without knowing of his future coming, except in a very obscure and very imperfect manner. They could be saved if they believed truly, pro-

foundly, by an assent of theological faith, that God is and that he is ready to help. In the faith that *God is* there was contained, although men were not yet able to realize it, faith in the Trinity; and in the faith in a *God ready to help* there was pre-contained faith in the Incarnation and Redemption. This is the great doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews (11, 6): "Without faith, it is impossible to please God. For he who comes to God must believe that God exists, and is a rewarder to those who seek him."

The destruction of the first state of innocence was permitted so that God might show forth his love for us, his boundless love, by giving his Son for the salvation of the world. From then on everything was to be centered on the cross: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself" (John 12, 32); and the evangelist adds: "He said this signifying by what death he was to die."

We have, too, the great passage from St. Paul (Col. 1, 20): God willed "that through him he should reconcile all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross." To the Ephesians he wrote: "So that he may make known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure. And this his good pleasure he purposed in him to be dispensed in the fullness of the times: to *re-establish* all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on the earth." Re-establish . . . the true translation from the Greek is "recapitulate," a compound containing *caput*, head: to gather round a new center, to recenter, if you like, all things in Christ. God allowed the fall only because he held in reserve the remedy of the redemption; the new world remade round Christ would be better than the previous one. So the grace given before the coming

of Christ was already, by anticipation, a Christian grace.

No sooner had man fallen, than God from the heights of heaven poured down grace and forgiveness. He enters on a dialogue with each individual person, he knocks at the door of each man's heart. The vast multitudes of men in prehistoric time were each, according to their inner attitude to God's invitation, in the state either of grace received or else of grace refused. But all grace before Christ was given only in view of his future coming; it was Christian grace by anticipation. It was given because of the great supplication of Christ on the cross which is mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews (5, 7): "For Jesus, in the days of his earthly life, with a loud cry and tears, offered up prayers and supplications to him who was able to save him from death, and was heard because of his reverent submission. And he, Son though he was, learned obedience from the things that he suffered; and when perfected, he became to all who obey him the cause of eternal salvation, called by God a high priest according to the order of Melchisedech." For the souls who opened themselves to the promptings of his grace, Christian by anticipation, there was, even before Christ, a beginning of membership in Christ and his Mystical Body, Christ's Church. In that respect, Christ's Church existed before Christ, in an initial, rudimentary state.

Grace under the Regime of the Law of Nature

It was still hardly visible, hidden in the depths of men's hearts, difficult for the human eye to discern, seen only by God and the angels. To help you understand the hidden way in which grace then worked its way into men's hearts, I suggest this comparison. When you go out on a summer

morning into a meadow, you notice that each blade of grass has its own drop of dew which keeps it from dying of thirst. How has this drop come there? We do not know; it is a mystery. So it is with the grace in each soul. According as it is accepted or refused, it traces, in the world before Christ, the frontier between the city of God and the city of evil.

St. Thomas calls this age the age of the natural law. Why? Because grace came into men's hearts by adapting itself to the movements of nature. When man obeyed the true impulses of his nature to perform good acts, when he chose the morally good, grace was there in secret, bearing him up to make contact with realities of a higher and more mysterious kind. The impulse urging him to acknowledge God's sovereignty, to adore him, to confess his dependence upon him, to admit and be sorry for his faults, came from a source higher than he could conceive, from the very heart of the Trinity. Grace came down into his soul in the guise of the movements of nature, drawing him toward ends far beyond those he could know by his natural powers.

Think of those words of the Gospel (John 3, 8): "The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its sound but dost not know where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." The Spirit of God comes from higher and goes much deeper than we think.

Outward Forms of Worship

The external forms of worship were taken from the surrounding world. Souls interiorly illuminated considered God's witness to himself in cosmic phenomena as symbolic of divine realities. The various events were manifestations of the

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divinity: "hierophanies" (*hieros* = holy; *phanie* = manifestation), as they are called by historians of religion. For example, in the religions of the Siberian nomads, or again, in China, the word for "heavens" signifies the transcendence of God. As we still say "Heaven grant that. . ."

Storms manifested God's anger and the dependence of man liable to be overwhelmed by them. The stability of the rocks evoked that of eternity as compared with the things of time. And these symbols are found in the Bible; for example, "God is my rock," he is my support. In the germination of springtime, in the cycle of the seasons, men read the manifestations of a God who was good and beneficent, toward whom their hearts could be turned by interior grace.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles (14, 7 ff.) that Paul and Barnabas, after arriving at Lystra in Asia Minor and working a miracle among the pagans there, had to prevent them from adoring them as gods in human form: "We also are mortals, human beings like you, bringing to you the good news that you should turn from these vain things to the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all things that are in them. In the generations that are past he let all the nations follow their own ways; and yet he did not leave himself without testimony, bestowing blessings, giving rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. . . ."

The phenomena of nature, said Paul and Barnabas, bore testimony to God and enabled you to acknowledge him by worship. "Filling your hearts with gladness" signifies that, over and above these outward gifts, God gave the Gentiles an interior light enabling them to grasp their inner meaning.

In the same connection St. Paul's words to the Athenians (Acts 17, 26) may be cited: "From one man he has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth, determining their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands; that they should seek God, and perhaps grope after him and find him though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being, as indeed some of your poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'"

Holiness always Possible under the Law of Nature

Such then was the state of the natural law, in which grace, already Christian, was offered in a hidden manner to each soul. Indeed we find in Scripture the names of persons who, though not belonging to the line of the patriarchs, yet lived in holiness; for example, Melchisedech, superior to Abraham because the latter offered tithes to him—which, incidentally, is why Christ is said to be priest, not according to the order of Abraham or Aaron, but according to the order of Melchisedech. Who, in fact, was Melchisedech? Historically nothing is known of him, but he appears in the Bible as someone mysterious, invested with high dignity. Yet he did not belong to the chosen people. The Bible speaks also of Job, who was not a Jew but an Idumaeon; and of the queen of Sheba, who "will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it" for its hostility to the Messias, the queen who "came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon" (Matt. 12, 42).

**Sporadic Mediation of Prophecy and Mediation
of the Sacraments**

Christ was to come as Mediator, to teach, to give his grace through the sacraments. Previous to his

coming, he may be said to have begun already to mediate. A form of teaching was possible: various individuals scattered and hidden in the Gentile world were endowed with prophetic gifts and empowered to proclaim the truth and set things in order when disorder had gone too far.

There were sacraments, too. These were sensible signs chosen by men through the interior inspiration of grace. For example, when parents presented their newborn child to God, theologians hold that he cleansed it from original sin. Yet these sacraments were not like those of the New Law; grace did not pass through them, they were only signs, not causes, of grace; their function was limited to designating the subject on whom grace was conferred.

The mediation of prophetic teaching and of sensible signs served to prepare men under the law of nature for the twofold visible mediation of teaching and sacraments that would be inaugurated later by the Redeemer. The time of religion without intermediary had passed away.

What was offered to men in these times was a very simple revelation: the inscrutable mystery of a God who *is*, in the first place; and who, in the second place, is a *rewarder*, that is to say, beneficent to those who seek him.

The Forces of Evil

We must add that the forces of evil were not inactive. They tended to distort the rites, the sacrifices, the recognition to God in the hierophanies.

What form of distortion was prevalent in the world of the natural law? For most people it was idolatry; for the intellectuals, pantheism. God was not denied, but associated with the things of this world; his transcendence was lost sight of.

Monotheism was the primitive belief, anterior to polytheism. But, in submerging God in the world, men came to divide him just as they divided the world, so that there came to be as many gods as separate lands.

There existed, besides, other forms of distortion. The rites of initiation, for example, were often cruel, immoral, perverse.

Human dignity could be raised above itself by the presence of grace, just as it could be degraded and infected by diabolic perversion. Such was the world of the natural law, its nobility and its depravity.

Grace under the Mosaic Law

But God set up a second regime, centered on a revelation of such power that it set aside a whole people, the little people of the Jews, from the great mass of the world under the natural law. God sent Abraham into exile from the polytheistic environment in which he lived. By a stroke of extraordinary power he manifested himself to him a second time, revealing the mysteries of his infinite transcendence and his wonderful condescension. He is the one God and he is beneficent. As Abraham lay prostrate before him, he promised him a progeny more numerous than the sands of the desert and the stars of heaven. With Abraham and the patriarchs a new world comes into being.

It takes definite form at the moment when the Law is given to Moses. God wishes to prepare a people that will be as it were a cradle to receive his Son at the Incarnation. The people are the Jews. With them, the regime of the Mosaic Law succeeds that of the natural law. Grace goes on knocking at the door of each man's heart even more urgently than in the past.

**Continuity of Prophecy and Divine Institution
of the Sacrament**

What is new is, primarily, the continuity of the prophetic light of revelation. God undertakes to supplement continuously that first revelation made to Abraham, till the moment when, after manifesting himself to his people for nearly two thousand years as the *one* God, so that this idea of his unity should remain ineffaceable in man's memory, he could, in the end, make known to them that the infinite abundance of his unity of being overflows, from eternity, into a Trinity of persons.

Thus, on the one hand, the notion of *Unity* opened out into that of *Trinity*, which was seen to be precontained therein, as is the rose in the bud. And, on the other hand, the notion of God's *providence* for mankind opened out into that of the *Incarnation and Redemption*: God is so beneficent to men as to send his Son Jesus to die for them on the cross—that will be the era of the New Testament.

Besides the continuity of prophecy, what is also new is the institution of the sacraments of the Old Law, such as circumcision and the Paschal Lamb. What, for example, was circumcision originally? All these matters are explained by Père Lagrange in his book on the Semitic religions.¹

All primitive peoples had a profound sense of the value of life, of its generation and preservation. They marked the passing from childhood to adolescence by an initiation ceremony, different among different peoples, a ceremony whose real meaning was religious. With the Semites it was circumcision. What does God do? He consecrates this rite, and makes it the sign of the gathering

¹ M. J. Lagrange, O.P., *Etudes sur les religions semitiques*, Paris, 1905.

of his people, the seal of his alliance with them. The Paschal Lamb, too, had the value of a sacrament. At the moment when the Israelites were about to leave Egypt, they ate the Paschal Lamb whose blood, marking their doors, signified God's protection over their houses; this protection was renewed with each commemorative celebration of the Pasch.

These were true sacraments, indicated and commanded by God himself. But we must be careful! They still were not like those of the New Law, *causes* of grace; like those of the natural law, they were simple *signs* designating those to whom they were applied as potential beneficiaries of the divine goodness.

The Gentiles had to devise sacramental rites for themselves or to choose rites already used in the tribe; in any case, they had a free choice. But in the people of Israel it was God who designated the rites by revelation: "Behold the sign you will take"; this was a greater manifestation of the divine will. In the New Testament, it was to assert itself still more precisely; for now Christ chooses the sacraments, not we; and he makes them instrumental causes, channels, of his grace.

The Same Grace Orientates Jews and Gentiles toward Christ

Grace, then, is Christian by anticipation, whether in the world of natural law, the Gentile world, or in that of the Mosaic Law, the Jewish world. It is more clearly seen in the people to whom God gave more, and from whom he demanded more.

I have compared the regime of natural law to the dew that comes from an unknown source; that of the Mosaic Law is like a stream whose origin and course are clearly seen. If the Israelites were faithful, they would be more fully rewarded; if

they sinned, their punishment would be the more severe. We find this in the Epistle to the Romans (2, 9-12): "Tribulation and anguish shall be visited upon the soul of every man who works evil; of Jew first (because more enlightened) and then of Greek (the Gentiles). But glory and honor and peace shall be awarded to everyone who does good, to Jew first [if he is faithful to the Law, for, since it demands more from him, his life will be nobler], and then to Greek. Because with God there is no respect of persons. For whoever have sinned without the Law, will perish without the Law; and whoever have sinned under the Law, will be judged by the Law."

This doctrine of divine grace present in both these worlds figures in the Sistine Chapel (in those days theology provided artists with their subjects; so we have the mystical Lamb painted by van Eyck). The theme there is the two worlds of the Jews and of the Gentiles approaching the judgment seat of Christ, according to St. Paul's words: "God will judge the hidden secrets of men through Jesus Christ" (Rom. 2, 16). The Sybils symbolize the presence of grace in the Gentile world; in reality, they were little more than are the fortune tellers of today. Still, to the mind of St. Augustine and other Fathers of the Church the Sybils, in the world of the Gentiles, corresponded in some sort to the prophets of the Jews. Thus the presence of grace was affirmed among both Jews and Gentiles, whom Christ, according to St. Paul, was to make a single people in his Church, a people sealed by his blood.

Christianity Existed in an Initial State before Christ

In this way Christianity existed in embryonic form before Christ. Consider the sunlight! Suppose you go out very early, when it is still night.

At a certain moment, things begin to grow light. Whence comes this light, which steadily grows stronger? All at once the sun appears; you realize that, even before it rose, it was giving its light to the world. So Christianity existed before Christ, and not merely virtually; it had begun and it was on the move.

We could take another image: the flower, which, before it blooms, already exists in the stem and the bud. It is easy to meet Rousseau's objection in the *Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard*: either Christianity is necessary for salvation, and you have to consider all the millions of men who lived before Christ to be damned; or else you say they could be saved, in which case Christianity is not necessary for salvation and pagan religions are equally valid. He, no doubt, thought this problem insoluble, but the answer is simple enough: Christianity is necessary for salvation; those who were saved before Christ were saved through him; they constituted, by anticipation, his Mystical Body, his Church. For, even then, grace was Christian.

Such is the second existential state of grace, but the first state of Christian grace. When Christ came, he fused in himself Jews and Gentiles. That is why he is called the "cornerstone," that unites in itself the two façades. St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, a Gentile people (2, 13-18): "But now in Christ Jesus you, who were once afar off, have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, he it is who has made both one, and has broken down the intervening wall of the enclosure, the enmity . . . that of the two he might create in himself one new man, and make peace and reconcile both in one body to God by the cross. . . . And coming, he announced the good tidings of peace to you [Gentiles] who were afar off, and of peace to those

[Jews] who were near, because through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. Therefore, you are now no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are citizens with the saints and members of God's household. . . ." Such was to be the Church in the fullness of reality.

**Christ's Cross Threw Its Shadow over the World
from the Time of the Fall**

We must notice that the law of nature and the Mosaic Law, the one for the Gentiles and the other for the Jews, existed concurrently. This double regime of grace was normal for those days. At the same time, among both Jews and Gentiles, God was working secretly to prepare them for the cross of the Redeemer. According to the Fathers of the Church, both under the law of nature and under the Jewish law, sacrifices offered to God uncontaminated either by human perversity or by diabolic activity were acceptable to him only because he saw in them an adumbration of the future sacrifice of his Son.

If the blood of Abel cried out to God, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews (12, 24) this was because, one day and still more eloquently, the blood of Christ would cry out to God. All that was genuine before Christ came, all the things that were acceptable to God, were so because he saw them already overshadowed by the cross; they were the first rough outline of what he would receive later from the supreme sacrifice of his Son. The Christian graces formed a single people, not yet visibly assembled, but already centered on Jesus. The Church was in course of formation, advancing through the centuries toward the Redeemer. Human dignity was solicited both by divine grace and the forces of perversity; assent and refusal were, then as now, the outcome of a free interior

decision; grace constantly returned to move men's hearts, and those who did not refuse it at the end already belonged to Christ, though perhaps still knowing nothing of him.

**It Is Christian Grace that Is Offered to Children
at the Dawning of Their Moral Life**

St. Thomas puts the case of the justification of a child born and living in pagan surroundings where no missionary has ever been. What happens when he begins to distinguish right and wrong? There comes a moment when he is about to perform his first free act. Not just a preliminary essay in that direction, for there are always tentative gropings first, but a truly free act, conscious and moral, in which he chooses between good and evil, in which, if he chooses the good, it is not out of obedience to his parents, or through habit or fear, but precisely because it is good. He has to choose, says St. Thomas, the *bonum honestum*, which we might translate as the "human" good or what is "noble." It may be in connection with some particular happening. According to St. Thomas, if he chooses the good, he is at that moment secretly given grace; for, since human nature is impaired, no one can choose the morally excellent in matters of ultimate importance without the aid of the grace of Christ. At that moment, says St. Thomas, the child is justified and cleansed from original sin.

Imagine a child, angry with another, who sees him suddenly attacked by a wild animal. Instead of thinking: "so much the worse for him," he says: "no I will go to his help." He chooses the noble part, without more ado. In fact, his impulse comes from the Trinity and bears him on toward the Trinity although he quite certainly has no knowledge of God in three Persons. He may not, per-

haps, even have formulated mentally the distinction between the created and the Uncreated. His heart has made its decision before ever the mind could have completed its reasoning.

Unlike the Christian child, already acquainted with the teachings of revelation, he has to find out the truth bit by bit for himself. I am speaking here of a child born "in the wilds," before the time of Christ. We may say that he has received in advance "the baptism of desire," since he is justified from original sin. By choosing what is good in the merely human order, the only kind he is capable of perceiving, he chooses a greater good than he suspects: his ultimate destiny and the deep mysteries of God.

We may add that this could happen in connection with an act the child thinks good but which is, in reality, not so. If he thinks that it is courageous to steal a sheep from a neighboring tribe and does so thinking it good, his act will be deemed good.

So Christ's redemptive grace was at work even before his coming, illuminating from within all man's sufferings, his emotional conflicts, his warfare with natural forces. Already under the natural law and under the Law of Moses, the cross threw its shadow over the world, and brought it salvation.

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS

The Second Existential State:

Christian Grace "By Anticipation" under the Law of Nature and under the Mosaic Law

1. Was it possible for men to be saved by Christ before his coming?
2. What do we mean by "recapitulation" of all things in Christ?
3. If grace was at work before the coming of Christ, why has the age that preceded him been called the age of the natural law?
4. Was holiness possible before Christ?
5. What did the simple revelation offered to men before our Lord's advent consist of?
6. Which came first, belief in one God or in many?
7. What was the significance of the special revelation given to Abraham and Moses?
8. Were there any true sacraments established by God himself in the Old Law?
9. "That of the two he might create in himself a new man." What do these words of St. Paul signify? (Eph. 2, 15).
10. Would a child, grown up in pagan surroundings and unaware of Christianity, receive a Christian grace on making his first moral choice according to conscience?

VII

The Third Existential State: Christian Grace by Derivation

We have spoken of the age in which Christ's coming was awaited; now we are to consider the age that followed his coming.

The Age of Christ's Presence: the Entire Church Gathered Up in the Virgin Mary

First of all, *while he was actually present in the world*. What was the Church then? There were no hierarchical powers, for these were all centered in Christ himself. Jesus promised to hand them on to his apostles, but so long as he was there, no one had authority. There was the bridegroom, Christ, and the bride, his Church; and the Church at that time consisted solely of the Virgin Mary. The Church will never be holier than it was at that time, and this concentration of grace in our Lady gave the infant Church a complexion of its own, making it a "Marial" Church.

I am not going to speak here of our Lady, but of the state of the new Law, the age when Christ was come. We may call it the *age of the Holy Spirit*, for reasons that we shall shortly discover.

The Age of the Holy Spirit: Christian Grace by Derivation

The Incarnation had its term in Christ, in whom is the fullness of grace: he was "full of grace and

of truth" (John 1, 14); and, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit made this grace of Christ flow out abundantly over the world, so that "of his fullness we have all received" (John 1, 16). Thus the Church, which from the time of the Incarnation was definitely established in Christ, its Head, reached fulfillment in its Body on the day of Pentecost by a kind of pressure exerted by the Holy Spirit on the grace of Christ to make it flow out on mankind. And to the end of time the Holy Spirit will continue to pour out the grace of Christ in his Church.

From the moment of the Annunciation, from the moment that Mary gave her assent and the Incarnation took place, Christ was constituted Mediator of all graces. Till then, grace came directly from God, who gave it in view of the future merits of Christ's Passion; it was Christian grace *by anticipation*. From then on, all graces pass through the sacred humanity of Christ, they are Christ's *by derivation*; so that St. John Damascene could say that Christ's humanity is the "organ of the divinity," and St. Thomas could call it the "instrument conjoined to his divine Person." Just as my hand is an instrument conjoined to my person and a pen or brush are instruments distinct from me, so Christ's humanity is an instrument conjoined to the Person of the Word, and the sacraments, instruments distinct from his Person.

Derivation by Contact and at a Distance

It is because all graces pass through his sacred humanity that Jesus said to the infirm woman, "Who touched me? . . . I perceived that power had gone forth from me" (Luke 8, 46; cf. 6, 19). For the same reason, he said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" (Mark 2, 5; Luke 7, 48, etc.). But Christ lived only in Palestine, and it was there that he

entered into contact with men, by words, by a look (which is, in its way, a touch), by taking St. John to his breast at the Last Supper. It is around Jesus, by *graces of contact*, that the Church began to exist fully and completely.

There were also at that time other people, all over the world, whom the grace of God, passing through the heart of Jesus, touched *at a distance* and not by direct contact.

We say, then, that in these two cases grace was given *by derivation from Christ*, in a superabundant outpouring. We have here a new existential state of grace, the state of Christian grace, no longer by anticipation, but by derivation. And this may occur either by contact or at a distance.

The Mystery of Derivation by Contact

This difference between contact and distance can be seen already in the time of Christ. He often healed the body by contact: putting clay on the eyes of the man born blind (John 9, 6), putting his fingers into the ears of the deaf mute and touching his tongue (Mark 7, 32-33). But sometimes he healed at a distance; for example, the ten lepers who were cured on their way back from meeting Jesus (Luke 17, 12), or the centurion's servant, whom Jesus cured without going to him (Matt. 8, 7-13). We have only to move onto the spiritual plane, and we have the healing of souls both by contact and at a distance.

This derivation of grace at a distance is indeed mysterious. Consider the story of the raising of Lazarus. When Jesus heard he was sick, he remained where he was for another two days, in spite of the appeal of Martha and Mary. Why did he not go at once? He waited till Lazarus was dead and, on his arrival, the first thing Martha said to him was: "Lord, if thou hadst been here,

my brother would not have died." Mary said the same thing (John 11, 21, 32). Surely, had he been there, he would not have been able to resist the entreaties of the two sisters.

The reason for the mystery of the Incarnation is that we might have contact with Jesus. Could not God simply have sent us his graces from heaven, as he did in the days of Paradise? Certainly he could, but he wished to come into touch with us *by a human contact, that could be seen and felt*. Since the fall, man's balance is upset; he is, in a way, under the dominion of the things of sense. They are a temptation to him, and yet he needs them to be able to rise beyond them. So God willed to make of these dangerous things means of salvation for us, to free us from our prison walls; therein lies the whole mystery of the sacramental system. In heaven, this immediate contact will no longer be necessary, since man's state will no longer be impaired; but on earth, since this is his condition, he needs to be touched by the hand of the divine Healer.

**Grace that Is Fully Christian Is the Condition
for a More Intimate Mode of Indwelling
by the Divine Persons**

Grace is fully "Christian" by derivation, made fully like to Christ, making us fully like Christ. And, since grace is correlative with the indwelling of three divine Persons, its strict identification with the Redeemer makes this indwelling more profound, more interior, more intense. Grace, St. Paul explains to the Ephesians (2, 18), by making us like to Christ gives us a new mode of access to the divine Persons: "Through him we both have access [Jews and Gentiles] in one Spirit to the Father." We find in St. John (7, 38) this mysterious passage: "He who believes in me, as the Scrip-

ture says, 'From within him there shall flow rivers of living water.' He [Jesus] said this, however, of the Spirit whom they who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit had not yet been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

This does not mean that the Holy Spirit did not dwell in the just men of the Old Testament, or in Adam, nor in the Angels, but that he did not dwell in them so intimately. It was necessary that Jesus should accomplish his work of redemption, that he should rise from the dead and ascend to heaven; and, once the whole course of the Redeemer, the Head, had been run, the Holy Spirit would come down at Pentecost, and then the Church would begin her course. It was necessary for Christ to enter into his glory for the Spirit to come down with this intimacy and power. Christ would be the dispenser of a new grace, *a new love*, which would be the precondition of *a new mode of indwelling* of the three divine Persons. "If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (John 14, 23).

With Fullness of Mediation Appears Fullness of Grace

We have spoken of the religion without intermediary that existed in the state of original justice, and to which we are sometimes inclined to look back with nostalgic regret. All erroneous ideas become truths when seen in their proper setting! Since the time our nature was wounded, we have had need of mediation. With the Incarnation, mediation attained its fullness; and, since God, who could perfectly well have given grace directly from above, became incarnate and made the heart of Jesus the source of grace, the words of forgiveness now come from a voice on earth: "Thy sins

are forgiven thee" (Mark 2, 5) . . . "thy faith has saved thee . . ." (Matt. 9, 22).

The source of forgiveness has come down into time and space. Grace was never more intense than at the moment of the visible Mediation, and never had it overwhelmed man so powerfully. Mediation, then, is not a screen but a channel. Abraham received a grace that was powerful and profound, but it was grace given by anticipation, whereas the least of Christians has grace that comes to him by derivation. Our dispensation is better than Abraham's.

We might apply what St. Augustine says in a different context: "Abraham was better than I am, but my state is better than his." This explains our Lord's words: "Amen I say to you, among those born of woman there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11, 11). Not, indeed, as to the degree of grace! John the Baptist had a grace far greater than any of us; but he belongs still to the age of the expectation of Christ, he is the finger pointing to Christ, as he appears in the liturgical hymn and in Grünewald's altar piece at Colmar. He is the last of the night-stars, still shining when the day dawns. He belongs to the world of the prophets, and proclaims the New Covenant.

Jesus said likewise (Luke 10, 23): "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For, I say to you, many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and they have not seen it; and to hear what you hear, and they have not heard it." Just before this passage, we read (10, 21): "He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said: 'I praise thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and

didst reveal them to little ones.' " The last age of the world has come; there will be no other.

**The Graces of Contact Come to Us through
the Hierarchy**

When Jesus was about to leave this world, did he withdraw these graces of contact and return man to his former state? No; he established this contact definitively by setting up on earth hierarchical powers, both jurisdictional and sacramental: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28, 19).

Teach: here we have the power of jurisdiction, supported, in different degrees, by prophetic graces.

Baptize: this is the sacramental power. It is *Christ's voice* that continues to instruct us through time; and *Christ's hands* stretching through time and space, that continue to touch us by the sacraments.

When I baptize a child, or rather when Jesus through me baptizes a child, it is just as when he touched and blessed the little children in Palestine. And since the powers of jurisdiction and the sacramental power of order—which makes the priest the ordinary or exclusive minister of the other sacraments, excepting matrimony—belong to the hierarchy, we may say that the Church, in the fullness of her being, possessing grace which is fully Christian and makes us like Christ, issues from the hierarchy. This grace is fully Christian for two reasons. First, it is *orientated*: since the power of jurisdiction gives directives, grace must operate along a prescribed course; secondly, it is *sacramental*.

Christian Grace Is Orientated

Grace requires to be *orientated*. When it really lives in a soul, it wants to be active. It seeks out ways: "Lord, I wish to submit my understanding to you, and to no one else, but what must I *believe*? And I long to know how to *act* as so to please you." To be mistaken in such matters would be disastrous; so an answer is to be expected from outside oneself.

I know quite well that the virtue of faith is never deceived, but the believer himself may often be. I may clutter up my faith with all sorts of things which, without my knowing it, are opposed or alien to it, and it is always dangerous to be deceived about these. So God answers my call: "Yes, I will tell you what to believe and how to act. By my Holy Spirit, Jesus will continue to teach you through those who have jurisdiction." There are still many points on which we may be uncertain, and this may at times cause us great anxiety. It is for the virtue of prudence to decide; but the answer is already given as regards what it is essential for us to know.

Through the powers of jurisdiction grace is orientated in two distinct ways:

In the first, the Church, by her power of proclaiming what Christ taught, speaks as the echo of the Bridegroom's voice: "This is what Christ taught, and I proclaim it to you, not in my name, but in the name of God." Then it is truly God's voice she brings to us, and she is assisted *absolutely, infallibly, unalterably*, to orientate the grace within us. This happens when she defines a doctrine, declares, that is, that something is part of revelation. Admittedly, you will not find this doctrine stated explicitly in Scripture, but you will find there the principle which, developed homogeneous-

ly in the course of time, has given us the truth, for example, of the Immaculate Conception. Of the Assumption too: when the Church tells us that Mary is in heaven, body and soul, that is a revealed truth contained implicitly in the deposit of revelation, as the solution of a problem is contained in its enunciation. It is the same when the Church defines for us that there are in Christ two natures, two wills, two intellects, one divine, the other human. These truths, contained in the deposit, are made explicit in course of time, and the Church, as bearer of the Bridegroom's message, hands them on to us.

What should be our attitude in relation to this message? An obedience of faith, *theological obedience*, for it is on God's authority that I believe, not on that of the Church. The Church, however, is necessary for the exact presentation of the message. I believe on your word, O my God, all that you have revealed. Theological obedience corresponds to what St. Paul demands when he says he is sent out into the world to bring all men to the "obedience to faith" (Rom. 1, 5).

There is a second type of teaching, when the Church, by her canonical power, speaks in her own name as Spouse. She herself decides, for Jesus gave her this power: "He who hears you, hears me, and he who rejects you, rejects me" (Luke 10, 16). The Apostles, on the one hand, speak with the Bridegroom's voice and, on the other, have to settle a number of problems. The Church, too, takes up a definite attitude, even doctrinally, in a whole sphere of matters that are not of faith, or at any rate are not so yet. She may warn us: If you say such and such a thing, you run the risk of denying, some time or other, a truth already defined as of faith, or which later on may be.

For example, Pius XII condemned polygenism.

Why? According to St. Paul, all mankind comes from a single man, Adam; but some people have tried to interpret Adam as a collectivity. That is not what the Apostle meant, said Pius XII, in *Humani Generis*. This he wrote in an encyclical; it is not yet defined as a truth of faith. This is the voice of the Spouse. When the Church speaks on such matters she is assisted to orientate the grace within us, not in an absolute manner, but *prudentially*.

Suppose I bring you a message from someone who has your full confidence; you accept the message without troubling yourself about the person bringing it. If it is an order, you obey by reason of the authority that speaks to you. But I may perhaps go on to say: "I know the content of the message and that you accept it, but I can tell you that its author is right for such and such a reason." In saying this, I am putting forward my own ideas; we are no longer on the first plane. In this way the Church makes her own voice heard, the voice of the Spouse.

And what should be our attitude when we hear her voice? When the Church gives us prudential directives, whether in papal encyclicals or in episcopal utterances, what is required of us is an attitude of "intellectual" obedience, in the case of doctrinal propositions, and of "practical" obedience in disciplinary matters.

Obedience here is not of the theological, but of the moral, order. Would we sin mortally by disobeying? Yes, but it would not be a sin of heresy; it would be a sin of disobedience, against the virtue of prudence. (Whereas, if we disobey the Church when she speaks with the Bridegroom's voice, it would be a sin against faith—that is, of course, if deliberate. It goes without saying that, if a Protestant denies the Immaculate Conception, he may

do so in good faith, without sin. But if I, a Catholic, say: "It has been defined by the Pope, but I do not accept it," then my disobedience is theological, I am guilty of heresy, I make shipwreck of my faith, as was proclaimed by Pius IX of those who should refuse to accept the definition of the Immaculate Conception.)

The prudential assistance given to the canonical power to orientate grace is of various degrees: it can be infallible or fallible.

First of all, there are certain laws to be observed by all Christians. They concern, for example, the conditions for the administration of the sacraments, the obligation of hearing Mass on Sundays, the Friday abstinence, all, in fact, that we call the commandments of the Church, and that are really precise applications of the commandments of God. Whereas Jesus said: "Unless you repent, you will all perish" (Luke 13, 5), the Church applies this in detail by prescribing abstinence from meat on Friday, fasting on certain days, etc. We hold that, as regards all the general prescriptions of Canon Law, the prudential assistance given to the Church is infallible, in other words it will never be against prudence to observe these laws. There might perhaps be better laws than those actually in force. The Church, therefore, may eventually change them; but that does not mean that the previous laws, though less appropriate, were of themselves bad and apt to mislead. For instance, Pius X prescribed first Communion at a very early age. Suppose the rule had been laid down ten years earlier; that might have been a good thing, but it does not mean that the former rule was contrary to prudence.

The Church may pronounce on individual cases. Here, too, she is assisted by the Holy Spirit, but not infallibly. For example, in the question

of whether a marriage was validly contracted or is to be declared null. There is a long procedure to be followed, investigations, interrogations and so on, in the course of which mistakes may be made, or even lies told. It is provided, for example, that, if a medical examination has to be made, and one of the parties chooses his own doctor, the tribunal should appoint another it considers trustworthy. Still mistakes and cases of false evidence may occur, and the Church may come to the wrong conclusion, declaring a marriage invalid when it is valid, or vice-versa. Are we, then, to do without such tribunals? No, that would involve far greater evils. The tribunal is assisted for the generality of cases, not of each individual case. That is what is meant by a prudential assistance that is fallible.

This will suffice to show what is meant by the orientation of grace, and the different kinds of submission required by the directives of the *Magisterium*. The grace of the New Testament is orientated by the voice of Christ which speaks to us, in different accents, through the powers of jurisdiction—emphatic and clear in the pronouncements of the declarative power; subdued, yet recognizable, in those of the canonical power.

It is Sacramental

The grace which derives wholly from Christ is *sacramental*.

Christ is instrumental cause of grace, the instrumental cause conjoined to the divinity, as my hand is conjoined to my person. St. Thomas makes his own the doctrine of the Fathers: God who took Eve from the side of Adam as he lay asleep in the earthly Paradise, also raised up from the second Adam, in his sleep on the cross, the second Eve,

the Church. The sacraments flow from the side of Christ; this is symbolized by the blood and water flowing from his heart, the water representing baptism, the blood the Eucharist. Baptism is the entry into the life of grace; the Eucharist is its consummation, the greatest of the sacraments. Thus the sacraments are, as it were, the prolongation of Christ's humanity, like a mist rising from the earth after rain, spreading over it and making it fertile. They act as instrumental causes separate from the person of Christ, as a tool is something separate from the person using it.

Those who do not belong to the Church, even those who know nothing of Christ, if they are in good faith and have a real desire for God, loving him more than they love themselves, are justified; which means that they have received grace in a hidden manner, the same grace as we have. One thing, however, they lack, something of particular excellence: the special complexion given to grace by the sacraments, which makes it, instead of being just sanctifying grace, a grace which is fully Christian, *sacramental grace*. In those outside the Church grace is as if in a foreign land, a place of exile; whereas the sacraments communicate to us not only the grace of Christ, but also the modalities it has in his heart. What, then, are these?

First of all, in the heart of Jesus grace is in its own chosen territory, as in its connatural place, specially prepared for it. Since the soul of Christ is so close to the person of the Word, grace finds there its true home, and there unfolds itself in perfect freedom. The result is that, to those who have the privilege of receiving it through the sacraments, grace brings a kind of enlargement, the liberty of the children of God. It is transmitted to them as already *humanized* in the heart of Christ; it enters them unforced, it becomes con-

natural to them, seeks to take root in them; it is in them, proportionately speaking, as it is in Christ.

Next, Jesus being Son of God by nature, the grace that fills his heart has a wonderfully *filial* quality. When he communicates it to us by the touch of his sacraments, it is to make us fully sons by adoption of his heavenly Father. God, says St. Paul, has "predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as his sons" (Eph. 1, 5); "The Spirit himself gives testimony to our spirit that we are sons of God. But if we are sons, we are heirs also: heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ; provided, however, we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8, 17); "For those whom he has foreknown he has also predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8, 29).

Sacramental grace is, then, a grace by which we are made Christ's brethren, at the same time as it makes us sons of the Father. If another Person had become incarnate, say the Holy Spirit, grace would have a different complexion, but it would not have been filial to the extent revealed to us in the great passage of the Epistle to the Galatians (4, 4): "When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that he might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.'" From that time on, grace is more intensely filial than ever before. Those who lived before Christ were, indeed, sons of God, but not with the same filial intimacy proper to the new law. When I receive the sacraments, I utter the word "Father" with a quality, an intensity long unknown in the world.

Thirdly and lastly, the grace received by the sacraments is *plenary*, grace in its perfect flowering. Consequently, it is capable of producing a seven-fold result.

Here, by way of parenthesis, albeit a rather long one, we will recall those points of the catechism that deal with the general doctrine of the sacraments.

First of all, to bring out the connection between the seven sacraments, let us compare the phases of the natural life with those of the supernatural. We can distinguish, in the natural life, *birth*, *growth* and *nourishment*. Life must make its appearance, and develop through nourishment. That is all that would be needed if no accident arose, but sickness brings new needs. Then a remedy is needed, and, should the sickness leave behind any weakness, then a stimulant, too, is needed to bring convalescence to an end, a secondary remedy to complete the work of the first. All would then be complete if man were an isolated individual, but he lives in society, which calls for some kind of organization, and so arises the necessity to provide for its continuation.

It is the same in the supernatural order. Birth is *Baptism*; growth of supernatural strength is *Confirmation*; nourishment is given by the *Eucharist*. This would suffice for the fullness of Christian life in the individual, were there no sin, and against sin two remedies are provided: *Penance*, which is able to restore life to the soul, and *Extreme Unction* in case, at the moment it is to appear before God, there still remains some weakness, a lack of transparency to the divine. Lastly, on the supernatural plane too, man lives in society. The organization of this society is provided for by the sacrament of *Orders*; and its continuation by *Marriage*, raised to the dignity of a sacrament, with

two ends, one an earthly one, the other heavenly, to increase the number of the elect.

In addition, three of the sacraments imprint on the soul an ineffaceable *character*, which is a power of validly performing the acts of Christian worship.

Consider the power of *Orders*. Suppose a layman takes bread and wine with the purpose of doing what Christ did, and pronounces the words, "This is my body, this is my blood." Nothing happens. But if the man is a priest, even though in a state of mortal sin, even though a heretic, he can, should he wish, consecrate. The act of Christian worship would be performed sinfully, sacrilegiously, yet validly.

Next, the power given by *Baptism*. If an unbaptized person makes his confession, the absolution given will be invalid, since only Baptism enables one to receive the other sacraments validly.

What power is given by *Confirmation*? The formal power to confess Christ openly by continuing the witness he came into the world to give to the truth.

Here, then, we have three ineffaceable sacramental characters. If a priest apostatizes and later returns to obedience, he may perhaps be forbidden to say Mass and exercise the ministry, but he is still a priest. Likewise, an apostate is not rebaptized, for he is a baptized person once and for all.

The sacraments of *Marriage* and *Extreme Unction* are, in a way, analogous to this. So long as the two parties to a marriage are living, a second union of either is invalid; and, so long as the same illness continues, Extreme Unction is not repeated.

So then three of the sacraments (Orders, Baptism, Confirmation) imprint a *character*—a technical word—and two (Marriage and Extreme Unction) a *mark* which is not indelible, but temporary.

Now suppose I receive one of these sacraments

in a state of mortal sin. What is the result? I commit sacrilege, but the sacrament is valid. If I repent of my sins and make my confession, the grace the sacrament should have given revives. This is what is meant by *reviviscence of the sacrament*. If someone marries in a state of mortal sin, the marriage ceremony has not to be repeated. The priest says to him: "Confess your sins, make a sincere act of contrition; you have received the sacrament, not indeed in a state of holiness but validly, so the grace of the sacrament will come to life in you."

Apart from the "character" or "mark" given by five of the sacraments, all seven give or increase grace. Two are instituted to give grace to those who are without it, Baptism and Penance; for that reason, they are called *sacraments of the dead*. The other five increase grace in those who already have it, and so are known as *sacraments of the living*. But the effects may be reversed. If I receive the sacrament of Penance when already in the state of grace, it does not give me grace but increases it in me. Correspondingly, a sacrament that exists for the increase of grace may, in certain circumstances, give it. I may have an accident that causes amnesia, and, not remembering any more that I am in a state of mortal sin, I go to Communion to thank God for having spared my life. Even if my contrition is not perfect but only imperfect, the Communion I receive in good faith takes away my sin and restores grace. These are examples of the reversal of the ordinary effects of the sacraments that might occur.

This concludes our long parenthesis, and we can now speak of the fullness of grace as making us like Christ when received through the sacraments.

Note, first, that the effect of this grace is not, like that given to Adam, to eliminate, but, since

derived from Christ, to illuminate suffering and death. Jesus did not eliminate suffering and death for himself, but illuminated them; and the grace of the Redemption causes us to follow in his footsteps.

In this connection, Baptism gives us a grace of initiation, which is why St. Paul says (Rom. 6, 4): "We were buried with him by means of baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ has risen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." This means that the moment I was baptized, the grace that was in Jesus Christ flowed out over me, and began to exert in my soul an impulse similar to its impulse in him.

Now Christ came to save the world through the cross. In the grace of Christ there are, as it were, two forces: one, of glory, impelling him toward the Trinity; the other, of the cross, urging him to redeem the world—"I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22, 15). When Christ's grace comes to me it impels me, if I am faithful to it, to follow, on my own level, the path he trod to save the world. The germ of baptismal grace may be choked by my whole line of conduct, but in itself it tends, if I do not oppose it, to perfect itself by the other sacraments and to produce in my life effects like those it produced in the soul of Christ. Redemptive in Christ, it will be co-redemptive in me, summoning me to the great trials and the great deliverances spoken of by St. John of the Cross.

Confirmation empowers me to confess the faith in close unity and profound continuity with the witness born by Jesus to the truth: ". . . This is why . . . I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (John 18, 37). I shall testify to the faith, not just as a free lance, but with a love of

the kind that emanates from that of the Redeemer confessing the truth in the world. The characteristic of the grace of Confirmation, when properly received, is the proclamation of the truth in love.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of the consummation of the spiritual life; what Baptism has sown in the soul the Eucharist develops to maturity. It is sometimes said that we should receive the Eucharist to help us to avoid sin; that is true enough, but only secondary, for its real aim is to perfect the spiritual life. The most genuine Communion are those of the saints.

The sacrament of Penance gives a special grace of purification and, in consequence, a hunger for the Eucharist. That is the proper effect of Penance.

Extreme Unction is the last sacrament given by the Church to the soul about to depart to eternity. It purifies it from the remains of sin, that is from all the weaknesses left by original sin and actual sins, even though forgiven. It prepares the soul for its great meeting with God.

Matrimony gives those who receive it the power to love one another, not only with a mutual human love—itsself a great thing—but as members of Christ. It will give to each of the partners a particularly tender respect for the grace of Christ in the other, or, at least, for the other's call to receive the grace of Christ which brings with it, as we have seen, the indwelling of the Holy Trinity. If each party respects this in the other, the character of their love will be completely Christlike: "This is a great mystery—I mean in reference to Christ and to the Church" (Eph. 5, 32).

As for the sacrament of Orders, the person who exercises its powers as Christ's instrument will be enabled, according to the intensity of grace in him, to administer them with the heart of Jesus himself.

Thus grace, in passing through the sacraments, is enriched with various modalities and hues, like light passing through a window of seven different colors. These different sacramental modalities of sanctifying grace constitute the splendor of the Mystical Body of Christ. They are present already in the least of justified Christians, but in this life they show their power only in the great saints. It is their testimony to the effects in them of sacramental grace that the Church's theology tries to call forth and record, in order to bring out more fully and to illustrate one of her most mysterious and profound doctrines, still too little known, namely, that of sacramental grace as alone being fully Christian and making us like Christ. For us this is still shrouded in the night of faith but, at the last day, at the end of the world, the full beauty of the Church will be revealed, a beauty which will never come to an end.

Such is the third existential state of grace, that of grace by derivation from Christ. Grace, on the one hand orientated by the powers of jurisdiction assisted by Christ. and, on the other, enriched by its passage through the sacraments of the New Law, is thereby enabled to be fully Christian and to make us like Christ. It is this grace that gives the Church her character of freedom, of newness, of eternal youth: "The Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother . . ." (Gal. 4, 26); "We all, with faces unveiled, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed, into his very image from glory to glory, as through the spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3, 18); "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God . . ." (Apoc. 21, 2).

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS

The Third Existential State: Christian Grace by Derivation

1. What is grace by derivation, and what are its characteristics?
2. Illustrate the difference between graces derived by contact and at a distance.
3. How is our dispensation better than Abraham's?
4. Are graces of contact still available to us after Christ's Ascension?
5. In what two ways is grace orientated through the power of jurisdiction?
6. What should be our response to the prudential directives of the Church? Are these directives of the canonical power infallible?
7. What are the special characteristics of the sacramental graces?
8. What sacraments confer a special character on the soul?
9. What is meant by "reviviscence" of the sacrament?
10. Give a brief description of the nature and effects of each of the seven sacraments?

VIII

Fourth and Fifth Existential States: Uncovenanted Christian Graces, Beatifying and Transfiguring Grace

It now remains to speak of grace as it is in souls that are touched by Christ at a distance.

The Apostles Had to Take to the Ends of the Earth The Graces of Contact that Constitute the Church in Her Completed State

In Palestine Christ, through the graces issuing from contact with him, established the Church in its completed state. At that time, too, he sent to each individual soul in all parts of the world hidden graces which, insofar as they were accepted, caused the Church to exist in those parts, in an initial state, imperfect and almost unseen.

Before his Ascension, Jesus sent his Apostles to the whole world: "Go and make disciples of all nations." They were to "be witnesses . . . in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth" (Acts 1, 8). "Behold," he said, "I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28, 20). Wherever the hierarchy exists, with its powers of order and jurisdiction, it dispenses the graces of contact we have spoken of, which constitute the Church in its completed state. And as the disciples were sent by Christ to all nations, the

Church, by right and normally, should exist in its full, perfect and completed form all over the earth.

**Resistance of the Powers of Evil: These Are Active
Even within Christians**

But what actually happened? The complete and final descent of Truth and Love, at the Incarnation and at Pentecost, aroused a corresponding fury in the forces of evil. Arrayed against the evangelical forces of light and love were the forces of error, hatred and falsehood, eager to wage the great warfare spoken of in the Apocalypse, which is to last till the end of time. What are these forces of evil, and in whom do they dwell?

They are at work, first of all, among Christians themselves, in those who should bear witness and fail to do so, who sleep when they should be vigilant, who even betray their Master. They are active in each one of us. Insofar as we deserve the reproach: "You call yourself Christian, and you are no better than others," the witness we ought to bear is clouded over, the light that should pass through us is obstructed. How many there are who watch us, and who would become Christians could they but sense the source of life within us.

A Jewish doctor who professed no belief once said to me: "I have both Catholic and Protestant patients, and others who believe in nothing, and in each group I find some who are admirable and others intolerable. What conclusion do you expect me to draw about your Church?" I could only say that the Catholics he found intolerable would be still more so if they were not Catholics. Do we realize that sometimes a single truly Christian action is enough to shake a soul to its depths?

During the war, there was a countrywoman in France who hid a Chinese Communist. He tried to undermine her faith. She answered him: "You

are a learned man, you have studied a lot; all I know is that Jesus told us to love others as he loved them." One day a number of fugitives, Communists too, fleeing from the German advance, asked this woman for shelter. She gave them her room, and went to sleep in the passage, after giving them all the bedclothes she had. Very early the next day they stole away, taking everything with them. The Chinaman was furious, and watched the woman carefully, but saw not the slightest sign of anger. He there and then decided to become a Catholic, and is now a priest; all through the acts of one poor woman.

Acts like this should make up the daily life of all Christians; men should be able to see the Church through us as through a transparent glass. Gandhi once said that it was not Christians but Hindus who could harm Hinduism. It is Christians and not Hindus who can injure Christianity.

Pre-Christian Religion

The forces of evil are at work too, of course, in those who are not Christians. When the Apostles made their way to the different countries, they came up against the various religions that had arisen from the aberration of paganism. This, as we have said, lay not in denying God, but in submerging him in the universe; so that, with division into separate countries, the divinity also was divided, and even each separate family had its god. This was the case in ancient Greece and Rome, where men had forgotten the divine transcendence. Today, after twenty centuries, these religious structures have not disappeared. Look at all the parts of Africa and Asia that have never been evangelized. There exist whole areas where orientation by the *Magisterium* and sacramental contact cannot penetrate, so that, if there is grace in these parts,

it is not the grace of contact, sacramental and orientated, not fully Christian and making men like Christ. But is there, in fact, grace at all? This is what we shall now try to discover.

Judaism

Besides these unreduced fastnesses of pagan culture, there have arisen in the course of time others which present fresh obstacles in the mission of the hierarchical powers and the spreading of graces of contact. One of these is Judaism. Its error consists in the fact that the Jews, the bearers of the Messianic promise, did not recognize the Messiah when he came. There was, indeed, a "remnant" that formed the Church, made up originally only of Jews, the Virgin Mary and the Apostles. But the mass of the Jewish people, through the fault of its leaders, could not see in the Gospel the fulfillment of the promises made to Israel for a thousand years.

The Jews fell into the error of a branch which, when its flower appears, fails to recognize itself therein, and, in its blindness, rejects it and turns back to its roots. In this way a new religious body was established, the Judaism of the present, which dates back two thousand years. It does not deviate in the same way as the religions of the Gentiles who, as pantheists or polytheists, merged God in the world. Judaism deviates not in denying the transcendence of the Creator, since it actually invokes this transcendence against the Messiah, saying that he blasphemed in proclaiming himself the Son of God (Matt. 26, 63-65).

God, whose plans are beyond the reach of every understanding, had decided, when the time came, to come to the help of his people by sending them more than a temporary savior, more than a prophet: "God so loved the world that he gave his

only-begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John 3, 16). It was this revelation that was a stumbling block to Israel. The mystery of a divine life that superabounds in three Persons, of a divine Person who became incarnate and died on the cross to save the world, was wholly repugnant to it. The people that had for two thousand years confessed the transcendence of creative Love rejected that of redemptive Love. Into such a religious body the Church cannot, through her hierarchy, insert graces that are sacramental and orientated.

Islam

Next, there has arisen the extraordinary religious phenomenon of Islam. How can we define it? It claims to uphold the monotheism of Abraham, and to be descended from him through Israel, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. It accepts the virgin birth of Christ, and acknowledges him as the Word, the Messiah. But the Jews and Christians have distorted the Scriptures; the true Torah and Gospel are preserved in the Koran. Mohammed is the seal of prophecy.

In reality, Islam is not directly derived from Abraham. Mohammed made contact with Judaism as it was after Christ, Judaism closed to the revelation of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and already ossified as it were; this is what he preached to the various pagan peoples. They received, in this way, the revelation of the unity of God, and the place of their pilgrimages was not Jerusalem but Mecca. We may say that this religious institution is an offshoot of Judaism "an acolyte of Judaism."

Jews and Moslems are like brothers at enmity; such is their emotional antipathy to each other. But yet they are alike. Both proclaim a divine

transcendence that excludes the Trinity and the Incarnation. Both entangle the divine revelation concerning the salvation of the world with the temporal destinies of their own people. Here again we see a vast religious institution in which the admixture of grave errors with sublime truths blocks the way to the apostolic message. So the graces of contact that this message alone can bring are ruled out from the beginning.

Dissident Sects

Later the dissident Christian bodies arose. Can we hold that those persons who originated them were in error but blameless? That may possibly have been the case with some. Other leaders were, in all probability, culpable before God, and appear so even to us. These are strictly speaking heresiarchs, who knowingly rent the unity of the Church and of the Christian faith. Thus new bodies were established, retaining many Christian truths, such as respect for the Scriptures and the validity of certain sacraments, that were, nevertheless, schismatic.

We are told that *aqua regia* is the only liquid capable of dissolving gold, so the dissident bodies may be likened to a mixture of gold and *aqua regia*. They retard, with varying effectiveness, the forward movement of the hierarchy in its mission of teaching all nations and baptizing them. As a consequence of the Protestant revolt, many dogmas have been whittled away: the Quakers, for instance, do not even have baptism. These are regions where hindrances are placed to some at least of the riches offered by the *Magisterium* and are therefore closed, wholly or in part, to the graces of contact.

The World of Atheism

As well as the worlds of the pre-Christian religions, of Judaism, Islam, the dissident sects, we have to notice something quite different, the terrible rise of an atheist world. As Nietzsche said: "There are now perhaps ten to twenty million men among the various nations of Europe, who no longer believe in God. Is it too much to ask that they should beckon to one another?" This has now taken place. For more than a century human history has seen a positive atheism rise like a tempest, an antitheism claiming to be the whole of man's life and to change the whole face of the earth. The origin of this atheism is to be found in a wholly deliberate act of choice, an inverted act of faith, a truly religious commitment in reverse.

Uncovenanted Christian Graces

What is God's attitude toward all the religious bodies we have just mentioned? He is Love (1 John 4, 16). He is "the true light which enlightens every man" (John 1, 9). He ascended the cross to draw all men to himself (John 12, 32). God, our Savior, "wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2, 4).

What, then, does he do in face of all the various obstacles to the apostolic preaching? He enters into a dialogue with each of the souls caught in the toils of those worlds where truth and error, light and darkness, are entangled together. Since graces of contact are out of the question, he sends them graces at a distance.

These are themselves "Christian graces by derivation." As such, they are in a way superior to the "Christian graces by anticipation" given in the age that waited for Christ's coming. They directly prepare the soul for heaven, and not just for the

Limbo of the Fathers of the Old Testament. But can it be called normal for grace to come to men at a distance, when Christ two thousand years ago sent his disciples on his mission to the ends of the earth, with the solemn promise of his help? No, it is abnormal that there should be on earth lands and souls not yet affected by the preaching of the Gospel. That God should use a roundabout way, that he should send to places where normal graces of contact do not reach *abnormal uncovenanted graces*, graces at a distance, is a sign at one and the same time of his infinite desire for our salvation and of the power of evil in our world.

To the extent to which these uncovenanted graces are accepted, they set up a regime in which the Church can exist, not of course in its normal and completed state, but in a rudimentary or, rather, abnormal and restricted state.

This idea of restriction is pertinent here, because these souls should have a better fate. They are living in an imperfect regime of uncovenanted graces. This is the fourth existential state of divine grace.

The Church Shares in their Distribution

When given at a distance, the grace that comes from Christ passes, in a sense, over the hierarchy to knock at the hearts of men. Is it, then, really given independently of the Church? Yes, in a sense it is. Yet it is the entire Church that entreats our Lord to send the rays of his grace into the souls she is unable to reach. When we say, "Thy kingdom come!" with a deep sense of the meaning of words, that is what we ask for. Admittedly and rightly we think first of the missionaries who carry the truth and the sacraments to distant lands to establish the Church in its normal state. But

even today people die in regions missionaries have never reached. We pray God that they may be saved. The fully established Church prays, in her holiest members, in her liturgy and wherever she is truly alive, "for the salvation of the whole world" (Offertory of the Mass). While waiting for the time, she says, when I can go and bring them the full message of the Gospel, do thou, O God, go before me and send thy uncovenanted graces to these souls and these lands. Hence she has her share in the distribution of these graces which, wherever they are received, establish her in her rudimentary, imperfect, restricted condition.

They Constitute the Church in an Initial and Unrestricted State

Those who accept these uncovenanted graces are already spiritually part of the Church, but in a rudimentary, restricted fashion. All the factors in these groups that are compounded of error and sin remain outside the Church; and all they have of truth and holiness belong to her. Wherever assent is given to God by complete acceptance of his graces at a distance, the lamp of Christianity is lit. The person in question remains a Buddhist, a Jew, a Moslem or a dissident Christian; he still belongs *corporally* to the religious group of pre-Christian times, or to Judaism, Islam, Protestantism, but he is already *spiritually* of the Church. He will begin, even unawares, to act on his surroundings in order to change them; he will spontaneously stress what is authentic in them and gradually discard the rest. The Church finds in such souls hidden allies and accomplices, and begins to acquire through them, even within these alien groups, a certain visibility.

A Few Examples: from India

I recall the procession of pilgrims in South India who go year by year to the sanctuary of the god Vishnu, whose statue the priests anoint with oil and perfume. A few years ago, the hymns of these pilgrims were translated into English, and parts of them into French as well. They were written by a man of humble rank, in the middle of the seventeenth century of our era. They are superb:

How can our minds grasp him of whose light the sun and moon are but a reflection? This God is our God, soul of souls, close beside us, in us and around us. . . . This God of love can be reached only by love. . . . We have fashioned a Vishnu of stone, but the stone is not Vishnu; adoration is given to Vishnu, and the stone remains in the stone figure. . . . It is your glory, O God, to be called the Savior of sinners. . . . The saints call you the Lord of those who despair; and when I heard this, my heart took courage.

Among these pilgrims there are, doubtless, some who dwell mainly on the words of the hymns and who perform the traditional rites and sacrifices simply as a matter of custom, and others who pay little attention to the meaning of the hymns and whose main concern is with the idolatrous practices. The former, unlike the latter, belong spiritually to Christ and the Church.

From Judaism

Another example is furnished by Judaism. "In view of the Gospel, they are enemies for your sake; but in view of the divine choice, they are most dear for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the call of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11,

28-29). The day will come when God will bring them into the Church. In the errant course they are now pursuing, divine grace never ceases to try to stir their hearts, and we find among them great examples of holiness. Such were the Hassidim—the word means “pious”—who lived in Polish ghettos at the beginning of the eighteenth century, at times in extreme poverty. De Menasce gives an excellent account of them in his book, *Quand Israël aime Dieu*. Some of them even arrived at the idea of co-redeeming love, an idea foreign to Judaism. Though they never spoke of Christ, their utterances have a distinctly Christian resonance. Let us look at one or two passages from the book I have just mentioned.

The window and the looking-glass

A man whose heart was hardened by wealth went to the rabbi Eisig. The rabbi said to him: “Look out of the window, and tell me what you see in the street.” “I see people walking up and down.” Then he gave him a looking-glass: “Look in this and tell me what you see.” The man replied: “I see myself.” “So you don’t see the others any more? Consider that the window and the mirror are both made of glass; but, since the mirror has a coating of silver, you only see yourself in it, while you can see others through the transparent glass of the window. I am very sorry to have to compare you to these two kinds of glass. When you were poor, you saw others and had compassion on them; but, being covered with wealth, you see only yourself. It would be much the best thing for you to scrape off the silver-coating so that you can once again see other people.”

The best way of preaching

. . . is to make yourself feel that you are merely listening, and that the world of the Word is speaking in you without you yourself speaking; for no sooner do you hear yourself speaking than the Word becomes silent!

Pure love

His life (that of Rabbi Dov Beer of Mezritz) began in fearful poverty; his wife found this hard to bear. One day he was so touched by her tears and those of his children that, for the first time, he complained of his wretched state. At once, the legend says, a voice was heard from heaven announcing that his complaining had forfeited him his place in the world to come. At first, he was very much upset, but after a little reflection, he gave signs of great joy. "From now on," he said, "I shall serve God with a purer heart, without hope of reward." Then the heavenly voice was heard again: "Your part in the world to come is now restored to you. But be careful in future not to complain when your children arouse your pity, for your own pity is not keener than God's."

Joy and sadness

The rabbi of Sassow used to say: "What is it to be a hasid? It is to be like a child who is, at the same moment, in tears and yet happy. The man who aims at real holiness should lament when he thinks of his sins and depravity, insofar as he has offended God, and rejoice when he thinks he has been created to serve the Lord of heaven and to keep the commandments he has given us in his faith. Of itself

each is harmful to man, for constant sadness begets melancholy and doubt and, on the other hand, a man who is always cheerful cannot devote himself to the service of God and the keeping of his commandments. So we have to endeavor to be, at one and the same time, sad and joyful, so as to rise to the sphere of true fear and true love."

These devout Jews rediscovered the necessity of suffering for others, already suggested in the revelation of the Old Testament, for example, in the prayer of Abraham interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18, 22-32). Abraham had begun, as it were, to struggle with God: "'If there be fifty just men in the city, will you then destroy the place?' . . . And the Lord said, 'If I find that there are fifty just men in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake' . . . 'What if there be five less than fifty just men?' 'I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there' . . . 'What if twenty be found there?' . . . 'What if ten?' . . . 'I will not destroy it.'" But ten just men could not be found. The prayer of intercession already gives a Christian tonality to the Old Testament, a kind of foreshadowing of co-redemptive prayer.

Consider Moses, too, when he came down from Sinai and saw the people adoring the golden calf. He was angry, and broke the tables of the Law. God threatened to turn away from the people, saying that Moses himself could not tolerate them any longer. But Moses pleaded with God not to destroy them, and to have compassion on them (Exodus 32, 19-31).

Remember also the wonderful fifty-third chapter of Isaia telling of the "man of sorrows" who would bear our iniquities and give his life in expiation and by his sufferings justify multitudes.

With the Old Testament we are dealing with a normal regime, that of Christ's grace by anticipation. At present, with the people of Israel we have an abnormal regime, that of uncovenanted Christian graces. Yet it was these graces that enabled the Hassidim to rediscover the revelation of love proclaimed in the Old Testament in the Canticle of Canticles and in the intimate communications of Osee on the relations of God and his people. At one and the same time, they realized anew the meaning of co-redemptive suffering.

From Islam

As I look at Islam I see, long before the Hassidim who belong roughly to the early seventeenth century, a number of souls who, by Christian graces received at a distance, began also to rediscover the religion of love, in a purely juridical environment dominated by the Koran. One of these was Hallaj (d. 922), who held that the man who had found love should not keep it for himself but proclaim it in the public squares. His arms were cut off, and he was then crucified. It was necessary to safeguard the Koranic legalism from any manifestation of a religion of love.

Certain texts of the time of Hallaj seem to show beyond all doubt the presence of a genuine mysticism of love in Islam. They are like suns shining in the midst of the world of the Koran:

O my God! my secret is known to Thee: I am he who desires Thee (Dzoul, d.859).

To Thee, in my heart, a place is kept apart. All reproach is indifferent to me, since I love Thee (*Ibid*).

For Thy love, I wish to be Thy victim. It is Thy absence I find it impossible to bear (*Ibid*).

Drink thou the wine of His love for thee: in such wise that it will inebriate thee with thy love for Him (*Ibid*).

What a difference there is between him who goes to the feast for the feast's sake and him who goes to it to meet the Beloved! (Yahya, d.872).

An atom of love for God is worth more than seventy years of adoration without love (*Ibid*).

O my God! if Thou askest me at the day of judgment: O my servant, what is it in me that ravished you? I will answer: Lord, Thy goodness to me (*Ibid*).

O my God! Thou knowest I cannot endure hell, and I know I am not good enough for paradise. What strategy can I use, other than thy forgiveness? (*Ibid*).

For thirty years, I went in search of God, and, at the end of that time, on opening my eyes, I discovered it was He who was looking for me (Bisthami, d.875).

On hearing a muezzin calling to prayer and a dog barking, he (Al Nouri, d.907) said: The muezzin calls on God with indifference, by routine because it is his business to do so, while the dog really praises God.

These mystics were drawn spontaneously to stress the place given in the Koran to Jesus, Son of Mary. They said that Mohammed is the greatest of the prophets, but the real saint is Jesus. They rediscovered some of the characteristics of Christian love. The reason for this we know well; Christian but uncovenanted graces crowded into their hearts. These graces may be powerful, but they are hindered from developing. If they came under the beneficent influence of the hierarchy, these graces at a distance would be succeeded by graces of

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contact, sacramental and orientated graces, fully "Christian" and able to make men like Christ. They would be like a rose tree kept for a long time in an unsuitable climate which, suddenly transplanted to a sunny region, can show of what it is capable and blossom to the full.

The Different Erroneous Religions Form Round the Church Zones Less and Less Favorable to the Penetration of Christian Grace

We must emphasize an important aspect of the different religious bodies we have mentioned and within which the Church is able to exist in a rudimentary and restricted way. The further they are from the Church, the less favorable in like proportion are the zones they form around her, to the penetration of Christian graces.

A first zone, nearest to the Church, is represented by *Orthodoxy*. There the seven sacraments are preserved and, in consequence, grace is present in its sacramental richness. Is it orientated? Yes, because the Orthodox possess the Gospel, the Creed, and a great liturgy. But not fully so, because they do not acknowledge the jurisdiction of the sovereign pontiff. They accept, for example, (at any rate some of them do) the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, but only by individual choice, because in their view since the seventh general council the Church, divided between East and West, is no longer capable of defining doctrines. Grace with them, then, is sacramental, but not fully orientated.

A second zone is represented by *Protestantism*, which has preserved faith in the divinity of Christ. Within it is an immense void. Only two sacraments remain, Baptism and Matrimony, and the latter most Protestants have ceased to consider a

sacrament. As to the Last Supper, which they look on as a sacrament, it is no longer one in our view, since they have rejected the mystery of the Real Presence in the Eucharist and broken the continuity of transmission of the power of Order. They can, therefore, have the sacramental graces of Baptism and Matrimony. These are orientated solely in the degree in which they succeed in abiding by the profound meaning of Scripture.

Then there is modern *Judaism*, insofar as it is faithful to the great prophetic proclamation of the divine transcendence and is reserved by God for ultimate return to the Messiah it rejected: "And thus all Israel should be saved, as it is written: 'There will come out of Sion the deliverer and he will turn away impiety from Jacob'" (Rom. 11, 26).

Then *Islam*, a kind of facsimile of Judaism that also venerates the divine transcendence.

Finally, *India*, less pure from the outset, because there is a general climate of near-pantheism; but divine grace is strong enough to overcome all obstacles.

Is the Distinction between Graces of Contact and Graces at a Distance to Persist to the End of Time?

Will this division between graces of contact and graces at a distance persist till the end of time? Judaism has lasted two thousand years in its present state, Islam thirteen centuries, Orthodoxy nine centuries, Protestantism four. These resistance-groups are certainly tenacious. May we hope that all who shall have accepted grace will one day be united under the hierarchy? Or will the cockle right to the end be mingled with the wheat in the Father's field? Is it necessary that there should always be sects, divisions, so that men may not be

proud in their possession of the truth, to keep them on the alert, to make them pray for the world with anguish in their hearts? The answer to these questions rests solely with God.

**Final Existential State of Christian Grace:
Beatifying and Transfiguring Grace**

To conclude, we must say something of the supreme existential state of grace, its state now in heaven, which it will attain at the end of the world.

Whether given by anticipation before Christ, or by derivation after Christ, whether transmitted by contact or at a distance, after death grace will be fully developed, beatifying, transfiguring. All the differences, prevailing in the present world, will be swept away.

Faith and hope will give place to possession and the beatific vision. "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like to him, for we shall see him just as he is" (I John 3, 2). It is through Christ's sacred humanity that the elect will receive this beatifying, supremely Christian grace, which will plunge them directly into the very heart of the Trinity. Then they will see the mystery of the Incarnation, no longer by ascending from Christ's humanity to his divinity, but as God himself sees it, by descending from his divinity to his humanity, to his Mystical Body and to the universe finally glorified.

As the grace which, on Thabor, suddenly sent forth upon Christ its transfiguring rays, so the grace of his Mystical Body, the Church, committed to the world on the morrow of the fall and gathered up in the course of the centuries, will suddenly reveal, at the last moment of time, the fullness of its transfiguring power. It will transfigure

the risen bodies and the entire universe: "For this corruptible body must put on incorruption, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15, 53).

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold the dwelling of God with men, and he will dwell with them. And they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And he who was sitting on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new!" (Apoc. 21, 1-5).

STUDY-CLUB QUESTIONS

**Fourth and Fifth Existential States:
Uncovenanted Christian Graces—
Beatifying and Transfiguring Grace**

1. Did our Lord ever say that the Church should spread throughout the whole earth?
2. How are the forces of evil at work among Christians?
3. Describe briefly the nature of the Judaic and Islamic religions, pointing out some resemblances.
4. What is *positive* atheism?

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5. What graces reach persons belonging to these various non-Catholic groups?
6. Do persons who accept these graces form part of the true Church in any way?
7. What graces is Orthodoxy open to?
8. What are the sacramental graces received by Protestants? Are these graces "orientated"?
9. Will the distinction between graces of contact and at a distance persist until the end of time? Will our Lord's prayer for unity one day be answered?
10. What is transfiguring grace?

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