

AMBROISE GARDEIL, OP

THE TRUE
CHRISTIAN
LIFE 

Thomistic Reflections on Divinization,
Prudence, Religion, and Prayer

Foreword by Matthew Levering
Translated by Matthew K. Miner

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FOREWORD

Matthew Levering

How is it that great Catholic thinkers get forgotten? Let me confess that I am as guilty of such forgetting as anyone. In the case of Ambroise Gardeil, who died in 1931, surely the problem was a generational one. Although he was a keen contributor to the study of Thomas Aquinas, he also employed the great Thomistic commentators. He was therefore a “neo-Scholastic.” The neo-Scholastics were victims of their own success, in the sense that their theological contributions became overshadowed by their ecclesiastical-political battles. A reform movement in the mid-nineteenth century, they eventually came to be seen as repressive and regressive. Although Gardeil had an important influence upon some of the *ressourcement* thinkers who came into their own in the 1940s and 1950s—most notably Yves Congar—there soon came to be a new, unwritten Index of Forbidden Books. All the neo-Scholastics, including Gardeil, were consigned to the Index, and it was assumed their books would be forgotten forever.

When I was a graduate student at Boston College in the 1990s, it was clear that Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange could not be read or cited by anyone who hoped to teach Catholic theology. Fr. Romanus Cessario took me aside to say that Garrigou-Lagrange would be an enduring resource who should be read by all Catholic theologians. Even so, we did not read Garrigou-Lagrange or any neo-Scholastic, so far as I can recall, in Fr. Cessario's courses. Instead, we read Aquinas directly, supplemented by contemporary interpreters and by Fr. Cessario's own excellent lectures. A Dominican professor at Bos-

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ton College warned me that the Toulouse Dominicans and their journal *Revue Thomiste* reflected dangerous conservatism, but the idea of reading neo-Scholastic books was not even imagined.

In those days, it was not solely the neo-Scholastics who were on the unofficial Index in theology departments. Joseph Ratzinger, associated with the church's crackdown against liberation theology, could not be read publicly. Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar were read by some faculty and students, but their works were not taught in courses. At least one brave faculty member, my mentor Fr. Matthew Lamb, publicly participated in a *Communio* reading group. In his teaching, Fr. Lamb focused on Athanasius, Augustine (especially *The City of God* and *On the Trinity*), and Aquinas. He recognized that students in systematic theology were reading only twentieth-century figures, and he worked tirelessly to make the patristic and medieval heritage of the Catholic Church available to young contemporary systematians. Yet, in the two years of coursework required for the doctorate, moral and systematic theologians-in-training generally read little patristic or medieval theology. Such things were for historical theologians.

Moreover, even historical theologians did not read the Thomistic commentators from the period between 1350 and 1950. There were no experts on the faculty to discuss the contributions of such figures. When they were mentioned, it was to blame them for forgetting the Holy Spirit, for turning the Mass into a destructive sacrifice, for their juridical understanding of the church that stamped out its spiritual essence, and for a dreadful rationalism. Young systematians flocked to condemn the juridicism of Robert Bellarmine's ecclesiology, for example, although no one bothered to open a page of Bellarmine.

Clearly, this kind of doctoral training—despite heroic efforts on the part of Fr. Lamb and others—was not likely to hand on the riches of the Catholic theological heritage. But when these doctoral programs were developed in the later 1960s and early 1970s, they

were intended to help the church to start anew rather than to build upon the past. Ratzinger, obviously a strong proponent of Vatican II (as an I), reflected somberly in 1975 that “something of the Kennedy era pervaded the Council, something of the naive optimism of the concept of the great society.... It was precisely the break in historical consciousness, the self-tormenting rejection of the past, that produced the concept of a zero hour in which everything would begin again and all those things that had formerly been done badly would now be done well.”¹ In fact, some things had been done badly by the church over the centuries; I think above all of the terrible treatment of the Jewish people, and surely the animosity toward Protestants of every stripe also needed to stop, as well as other limitations. Ratzinger does not deny that “penance is a necessity for both the individual and the community,” but he affirms that “Christian penance means, not self-rejection, but self-discovery.”²

Ratzinger's description of his own generation's work would be humorous if it was not so painful, and it shows a marvelous humility: “We started out boldly and full of confidence in ourselves: there may have been, in thought and, perhaps, also in reality, many an auto-da-fe of scholarly books that seemed to us to be foolish.... Boldly and certain of victory, we barricaded the door of a time that was past and proclaimed the abrogation and annihilation of all that lay behind it.”³ Put simply, he and his colleagues put on the new Index all their “outmoded schoolbooks,” including the much maligned “manuals” (which, when read today and compared with our own textbooks, often turn out to be full of fascinating and sophisticated theological work), but also Gardeil and many others. Ratzinger concludes with a profound wakeup call: “Gradually we have stopped laughing; gradually we have become aware that behind the closed

1. Joseph Ratzinger, “On the Status of Church and Theology Today,” in his *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (trans. Mary Frances McCarthy, SND (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press, 1987), 365-93, at 371.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, 393.

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doors are concealed those things that we must not lose if we do not want to lose our souls as well.”⁴

If you have opened this book, you are likely among those who recognize the truth of Ratzinger’s words. Some today propose going to the opposite extreme and rejecting all the works of Ratzinger’s generation and of the shapers of Vatican II—and even the conciliar documents themselves. This would be a disaster. Instead, we need now to draw from all the witnesses to the dogmatic mysteries of Catholic faith. Today, ecclesial “self-discovery” means learning to read the whole Catholic dogmatic tradition again, in light of all the councils, including Vatican II.⁵

Many of Gardeil’s works have to do with the moral and spiritual life, as does the present volume that Dr. Matthew Minerd has so graciously given us, *La vraie vie chrétienne*. Consider Gardeil’s 1923 retreat given to consecrated women religious, which was taken down in note form by a participant and checked for accuracy by Gardeil. This book is available already in English as *The Holy Spirit in Christian Life*. Here Gardeil links each gift of the Holy Spirit with a beatitude. One point that Gardeil wishes to drive home is that Christianity is not a mere ideal or set of good works. Rather it is a living relationship with the Lord; not a relationship with someone who is outside us, but with God who dwells within us. Heaven or dwelling with God is not “pie in the sky” or a mere dream about the afterlife. On the contrary, Gardeil states, “The Christian Life, so named because it has been brought to us by Christ our Lord, is our eternal life in heaven begun here and now, with all that constitutes and completes it, with all its elements—save one alone: we do not see God.”⁶ That is a significant missing element indeed, but it does

4. Ibid.

5. See Guy Mansim, OSB, “The Historicity of Dogma and Common Sense: Ambroise Gardeil, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Yves Congar, and the Modern Magisterium,” *Nova et Vetera* (English edition) 18, no. 1 (2010): 111–58.

6. Ambroise Gardeil, OP, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Life* (St. Louis, Mo.: Herder, 1954), i–i.

not mean that God is absent. The life of grace means that we actually “possess God” interiorly even now.⁷

This sounds radical, but of course it is completely biblical. As Gardeil observes, “The Christian life ... is the personal dwelling of God with the soul, which lays itself open to receive him. This is effected by that power which raises up sons to God, of which St John speaks in his Gospel (John i, 12).”⁸ Yet, we must still journey to God by a life of Christ-like love, with all the virtues described in the scriptures. This moral life is not a mere miserable slog, as we bumble our way toward death. Rather “the master of the road” is none other than the Holy Spirit, and “the Holy Spirit leads us” not only through the infused virtues, where we work according to the supernatural virtues given us, but also through the gifts of the Spirit, which “are powers in the soul making it receptive to the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a sail to catch the wind of the Holy Spirit.”⁹ The moral life is our opportunity even now to live within the dynamisms of the Trinity dwelling within us.

In *The Holy Spirit in Christian Life*, Gardeil goes on in his chapters to make this work absolutely concrete for his audience. Consecrated religious and, in a different way, all Christians have to seek to be spiritually detached from or “to renounce our triple concupiscent: independence of the will, worldly goods and pleasures.”¹⁰ In his discussion of the beatitude of desire for justice or righteousness (Mt 5:6), Gardeil begins by inviting his audience to consider, not whether others are being just, but whether we truly “hunger and thirst after justice” for ourselves.¹¹ For if we are not interiorly just, it is unlikely that we will be able to transform our communities along truly just lines. Gardeil urges: “The souls too of the afflicted need us. In them we must see their spirit, and God’s will concerning them,

7. *Ibid.*, 1.

8. *Ibid.*, 3.

9. *Ibid.*, 7.

10. *Ibid.*, 11.

11. *Ibid.*, 45.

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the mysterious dwelling of Jesus Christ in the poor and the sick. Let us give ourselves ever more to this work, and by our unflinching devotion to the miseries of their bodies, deliver their souls to God.”¹²

Consider along the same lines Gardeil's *Le Sens du Christ*, which appeared in English translation in 1954 as *Christ-Consciousness*. This book, too, is a retreat that was written down by a participant and then revised by Gardeil. In brief compass, he treats Christ as our life, our redemption, our justice, our sanctification, and our wisdom. Contemporary Christians spend little time contemplating the cross of Jesus Christ; his resurrection seems a much better source of spiritual nourishment. By contrast, Gardeil urges his audience not to allow the cross to “fade away into the distance.”¹³ Life is not a triumphal march. We must choose whether we will live according to the wisdom of Christ, who “preaches a life from which all possessiveness, all pride, all human satisfaction and ambition are excluded.”¹⁴ Can such a life really be lived? Gardeil is aware that we will experience “weariness” and “casualness” that hinder us from truly giving ourselves in love—from obeying Jesus' clear instruction, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24). Gardeil invites us to look to the cross as to a teacher. He states, “Steep yourself in this sight [the cross] in your contemplation, so that it never leaves you, and you will find in it true guidance for your daily actions. The cross will never teach you wrongly.”¹⁵ What it teaches is simple, says Gardeil: humility and charity.

Gardeil also meditates upon the human search for wisdom. We need to have some sense of why we exist, what the purpose of our life is, what we can and should hope for, what our energies should be directed toward. Gardeil offers the biblical solution: Christ

12. *Ibid.*, 49.

13. Ambrose Gardeil, OP, *Christ-Consciousness* (London: Blackfriars, 1954), 39.

14. *Ibid.*, 38.

15. *Ibid.*, 39.

is “the Wisdom of God. The truth about God, about the created world, about ourselves, about the way we must act, are to be found in Christ, ‘In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ (Col. ii, 3).”¹⁶ Gardeil does not deny that the contemplation of created things can and should reveal the existence of the creator to the mind that seeks wisdom. Nor does he deny that the claim that a crucified man is the revelation of Wisdom seems absurd on the face of it. But, as Gardeil says, what we learn from the cross is that the entirety of creation was made by love for love, and by mercy for mercy. He explains that “creation, especially in its masterpieces, angel and man, shows clearly the divine power, but it does not show us what is most intimate in God, the ocean of his goodness and mercy.”¹⁷ Only Christ reveals the true “ocean” of love and mercy that flows from the divine Wisdom. We become wise when we realize that our purpose is to love, and to love in mercy. Our true destiny is everlasting communion with triune love due to the divine mercy in Christ. At the same time, this realization provides us with wisdom about our sins; only in this way can we understand what divine love and mercy really are. True wisdom is to follow in the footsteps of Christ by pouring out our life in love for others.

Among his many other works, it is to be hoped that Gardeil’s two still-untranslated masterpieces, *Le Donné révélé et la théologie* and *La Structure de lame et l’Expérience mystique*, will soon make their way into English. *Le Donné révélé et la théologie* appeared in a second edition in 1931 with a preface by Marie-Dominique Chenu—although it had its most significant impact not on Chenu but on Yves Congar. Gardeil wrote the book as a response to early twentieth-century Catholic Modernism. He emphasizes that dogmas affirm things about realities that are enduringly true: the one God is three Persons; Jesus Christ is the divine Son made flesh; Jesus rose bodily from the dead. The problem, however, is this: how can

16. *Ibid.*, 32.-33.

17. *Ibid.*, 35.

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finite and culturally contextualized words and concepts bear universal, trans-cultural truth about divine realities? Moreover, there is the further problem of whether God has really revealed what the church claims. God reveals through the mediation of human words and deeds, and how can we know that God is really the source of these? And even if we do actually possess a “revealed Given,” to use Gardeils phrase, how can we know that Catholic doctrines which are not explicitly attested to in scripture—for example, perhaps, doctrines about Mary or the infallibility of the pope—are actually part of the “revealed Given” that Christ bestowed upon the apostles? How do we know that the “development of doctrine” is not mere invention, and how is it that a development can be distinguished from a doctrinal corruption?

Gardeils book offers an answer to such questions in two parts. Part i contains five sections. First, he addresses how it is that we affirm the real. In other words, how do we make judgments of being, and how do we know that our knowledge truly attains to the reality rather than simply reflecting our own mind? Second, he examines the question of the mode of divine revelation, both as realized in the human subjects interiority and as a social reality. Third, he asks what the relationship is between divine revelation and the propositional judgments termed “dogma.” Here he advances the notion of a collective, enduring “common sense” that ensures that dogmatic formulas are neither too technical nor too symbolic to be apprehended by the minds of believers. Human intelligence ensures that the basic point of dogmatic statements can be understood by ordinary minds without technical theological or metaphysical training, so that believers are united to the revealed realities. Fourth, he investigates the metaphysical relativity of dogmatic formulas, given that philosophical language from particular epochs is employed by the church. Fifth, he examines the historical relativity of dogma, by considering the development of doctrine over the centuries. He argues that the church intuits the whole of what is given in divine rev-

elation, thereby ensuring that the growth in the number of doctrines does not signal discontinuity with the original gift. In part 2., then, he turns to the theological task, inquiring in four sections into the theological “given,” theological science, theological systems, and the status of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Gardeil’s second work, *La structure de lame et jexperience mystique*, appeared in two lengthy volumes in 1927. In this book, the issue is the relationship of nature and grace, which had been foregrounded by Catholic Modernists such as George Tyrrell and which had been an issue throughout the nineteenth century. This was due in part to competing currents in German Idealism: on the one hand, Kant’s denial that the human mind can know God; on the other, Hegel’s affirmation that human spirit actually is the unfolding of the divine Spirit. Behind the nature-grace issue is the question of whether a revelation actually needs to come from God: could not “revelation” simply bubble up from the resources of the human spirit itself? What Christians call “grace” has traditionally indicated a divine movement in the soul. But is “grace” actually the human spirit itself, on the basis of its own resources, coming into its fullness in particular historical epochs?

If so, then the historical inbreaking of Christ, the incarnate Word of God, could be redescribed as simply the highest achievement of human nature—with the result that theologians would no longer need to address historical details about Second Temple Judaism, the Council of Nicaea, and so on. Christianity would be simply the unfolding of human consciousness in a manner congruent with the world’s other religions and philosophies. The truth of dogma would not need to be insisted upon in a manner in tension with philosophical “universal” or the historicist “particular.”

How then does Gardeil approach his topic? In parts 1 and 1 of *La structure* (the first volume), Gardeil explores the mind as the receptive subject of our divine life, with attention especially to the teachings of Augustine and Aquinas, often thought to be opponents

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on the structure of the mind and on human intellection in general. He devotes significant analysis to Augustine's *De Trinitate* and the image of the Trinity in the mind. He also examines Augustine on creation and on the relationship of rational nature to its supernatural elevation, in light of original sin and the whole question of "obediential potency." Although most of his pages here are devoted to Augustine, he treats Aquinas as well, investigating the question of an "innate natural inclination" to the supernatural, as well as the status of an "elicited" natural desire to see God. He explores what grounds the mind's "obediential potency" to supernatural elevation. He also examines "sanctifying grace": what kind of ontological reality is it, and does it add anything to the formal participation in God that characterizes created being? Does the image of God in us become somehow more radically a divine image, and how can this be so if the created image is as such already open to supernatural elevation?

In parts 3 and 4 *of La structure* (the second volume), Gardeil first turns to various commentarial viewpoints on the divine indwelling, as well as to Aquinas's theology of the interior state of the just soul. He then inquires into what "mystical knowledge" is. Can the soul know its own substance experientially? Does the holy soul have a "habitual" knowledge and love of God? How does the intentionality of living faith relate to supernatural contemplation? Gardeil engages such topics as the dark night of the soul and the question of whether mystical experience is active or passive. He concludes by discussing whether Christian mystical experience is an immediate experience of and union with God.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the articulation of the relationship of nature and grace has been in flux in the realm of the sacraments and the moral life. When nature and grace are not properly distinguished, Christians fail to apprehend what grace makes possible. The life of holiness and the life of prayer are the first to suffer: we assume that we have no option but to be merely the fallen,

half-agnostic creatures that sin has rendered us. The status of dogma has also been a hot topic since the Council. For many Catholics, the best we can do is gesture toward the ineffable, in words inextricably bound up with particular historical contexts and cultures. On this view, it is a narrow fundamentalism to imagine that the beliefs of one era of the church will apply to a new era with its vastly different cultures and outlooks; and it follows that the dogmas of Catholic faith must be changed whenever the dogmas cease to reflect the changing world. Of course, the real power of Christian faith is lost in this reductive approach.

In our time, therefore, Gardeil's work remains as instructive as ever; and when his work is read, many silly nostrums about so-called neo-Scholasticism dissolve once and for all. His work should be read in light of the whole Catholic tradition and in light of our biblical faith. It will not do to retrieve Gardeil as though his work should be set in opposition to the core teachings of the Council; this would only mirror the error of those who suppose that the Council shuts the door on the pre-conciliar past. We can retrieve him, instead, along lines that he himself sketches in *La vraie vie chrétienne*, beautifully translated and introduced by Dr. Minerd. Let us seek a true Christian life; let us form our moral judgments by infused prudence; let us learn true "religion" and true prayer. When we do so, there will be joy and enrichment, not despair or mere retrenchment, in our retrieval of Gardeil.

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Although propriety requires the translator to disappear behind the text that he or she has translated, I nonetheless believe circumstances can render it becoming to explain the inspiration for translating a given text, especially when it has escaped translation for multiple decades. After all, a translator would not spend time rendering into English a little-known work written almost a century ago in French unless he or she thought that it had currency for readers today. Thus, without presenting a scholarly introduction, I wish to provide some introductory reflections on what I believe are the most important themes that *La vraie vie chrétienne* presents for the reader today. First, however, I will provide a few comments concerning the author of this work.

Though not well known in the English-speaking Catholic world of today, Fr. Ambroise Gardeil, OP (1859-1931), was a man of great influence on French Thomism in the twentieth century.¹ His impact could be felt ubiquitously in the Francophone Thomist world, extending to thinkers such as Jacques Maritain, Charles Cardinal Journet, Marie-Michel Labourdette, OP, Marie-Dominique Chenu, OP,

1. For a complete bibliography of Fr. Gardcil's work, H.-D. Gardeil, "Le Père Ambroise Gardeil (1859-1931)," *Bulletin thomiste* 8 (October 1931): 69*-91'. Also, see Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "In memoriam: Le Pere A. Gardeil," *Revue thomiste* 64 (1931): 797-808; H.-D. Gardeil, *Loeuvre théologique du Père Ambroise Gardeil* (Paris: Soisy-sur-Seine, 1956). Though Gardeil is certainly acknowledged by scholars studying the influences exercised upon those trained in the Francophone Dominican world of the early twentieth century, it is striking that he is not noted at all in a recent, learned introductory text such as Rowlands *Catholic Theology*, a point that is quite stunning given the fact that Gardeil was of great influence upon figures whom Rowland discusses at length. See Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 1017).

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Yves Congar, OP, and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, as well as American theologians like Joseph Clifford Fenton and Emmanuel Doronzo, OMI. Particularly concerned with matters of theological methodology, Fr. Gardeil's works *La crédibilité et l'apologétique. Le donné révélé et la théologie*, as well as his briefer *La notion du lieu théologique* and *La certitude probable*, would influence Francophone Thomistic fundamental theology profoundly. Likewise a master of the interior life, Gardeil's texts *Les dons du Saint-Esprit dans les saints dominicains*, *Le Saint-Esprit dans la vie chrétienne*, *Le sens du Christ? La structure de l'âme et l'expérience mystique*, numerous articles, as well as this volume, plunge the reader into the depths whence the divinized life of grace flow forth. It is unfortunate that his profound, yet accessible, works are of limited availability in English. This current translation aims to fill one of these lacunae.

The posthumous context of this volume's original publication is masterfully explained in the introduction provided by Fr. Gardeil's nephew Henri-Dominique Gardeil, OP, at the time of its publication in 1937.¹ I will leave the reader to discover those points in the younger Fr. Gardeil's essay, which is at once an explanation of the unfinished work *La vraie vie chrétienne* as well as an edifying reflection in its own right.

Stylistically, the chapters of *La vraie vie chrétienne* do not get lost in Scholastic details and academic debates, even though Fr. Gardeil was well aware of what was at stake in such important discussions. Instead, the texts gathered in this volume present learned (though nontechnical) reflections on the fundamental principles of the spiritual theology of divinization, the task of infused prudence in the Christian life, and the master lines of the virtue of religion. This kind of reflective and spiritual style was standard for Fr. Gar-

2. These three volumes have been translated into English. See Ambroise Gardeil, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Dominican Saints*, trans. Anselm Townsend (Providence, R.I.: Cluny Media, 2017); *Vie Holy Spirit in Christian Life* (London: Blackfriars, 1953); *Christ-Consciousness*, trans. Preacheress of Carisbrook (London: Blackfriars, 1954).

deil, as explained by Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange in his *In memoriam* remarks written at the time of the former's death:

Fr. Gardeil was one of those people who believe that the living explanation of St. Thomas's *Summa theologiae* consists above all in emphasizing the great principles that illuminate everything and in drawing attention to the loftiest summits in this mountain range, that is, to roughly fifty articles that provide the key to the entire work. He passed upward from conclusions to principles more than he descended from principles to conclusions. Listening to some of his courses, one indeed understood why it is commonly said that St. Thomas learned more in prayer than in study—not, perhaps, that he would have grasped new conclusions but, rather, because it is in prayer that the soul is lifted up to contemplation of the superior principles that have been often cited but whose elevation and radiation had not been yet seen well enough. One then perceives in an instant that they virtually contain entire treatises, and thus is brought about the unification of knowledge, which is far more precious than is the material multiplicity of conclusions.³

The opening chapter of *La vraie vie chrétienne* forcefully presents the supernatural character of our Christian life, reflectively showing how one will never understand the Christian vocation aright if one fails to see that it is neither a mere self-concerned escape from hell, nor a vocation of mere moral rectitude, nor even a life of worship. Instead, it is a life of divinization, or as the Christian East expresses it, a life of *theosis*. This supernatural Christian life formally and eminently contains all of the three aforementioned aspects, and yet, springing from intrinsically supernatural divine sources in grace and the theological virtues, the Christian life is a supernatural radiation of the intimate life of the Trinity, participated in by the believer. It is *here* that one discusses the lofty sources of Christian redemption, morality, and worship. Yes, the Christian vocation is a life of moral perfection, but not of *our* moral perfection. It is the perfection of God, truly participated in by us through

5. Garrigou-Lagrange, "In memoriam," 800 (my translation).

grace. And indeed, the entire order of justice hangs upon the subordination of all the *moral* virtues to the virtue of religion, yet the rectitude of supernatural religion itself relies upon its higher sources, namely the divine life of faith, hope, and charity by which we appropriate for ourselves acts that are truly divine and supernatural *quoad substantiam*. All worship, insofar as it is strictly considered as an act of justice, is supernatural only *quoad modum finalitatis*? Yes, let us never forget the moral and cultic duties of the Christian, and yet let us always bear in mind that the soul animating our activities as Christians is the divinizing life of grace, the theological virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The second, lengthier chapter of Fr. Gardeil's text is a reflection on our personal supernatural self-government through infused prudence. In an unfinished set of essays in *Revue des jeunes*, Fr. Gardeil reflects on natural prudence and its role in moral self-government.⁵ The reflections are excellent and merit reading. However, the Christian must reflect more deeply than the sage insights on (*ppov^a-u*; found in the sixth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*). Our moral self-government is not undertaken merely within the bounds of our natural ends. No, we search for our actions' means ultimately in light of charity—whence comes the Thomist doctrine of the infused moral virtues. The activity of infused prudence, therefore, is a wholly personal yet supernatural self-governance. It remains distinct from (though not opposed to) the modality of the Spirit's gift of counsel whereby the soul is passively moved by inspirations that come from on high. The gifts prepare us for receiving the passive supernatural governance of our actions by the Holy Spirit himself. Yet, in the

4. On this important point, see Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "Miracles and Grace—Two Very Different Forms of the Supernatural," in *The Sense of Mystery: Clarity and Obscurity in the Intellectual Life*, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Academic, 1017), 199-116.

5. The completed portion can be found in Matthew K. Miner, "Intelligence and Morality: Translation and Comments on an Article by Ambroise Gardeil, O.P.," *Nova et Vetera* (English edition) 16, no. 1 (Spring 1018): 643-64.

perfection of nature by grace, we also have supernaturally-directed practical reason: infused prudence and the supernatural, personal self-government that it enables.

So many moral debates sit astride the supposed divide between universal norms and particular circumstanced actions. As concerns our personal self-government (whether natural or supernatural), the ore of efficacious moral rectitude comes into full, purified existence within the forge of prudence. To borrow a phrase from Fr. Gardeil, this virtue (whether natural or supernatural), at once moral and intellectual, is “tactical.” A vital, subjective descent must be made from the universal dictates of *synderesis*, faith, and moral philosophy and theology. This descent is brought about through prudence, which—presupposing the rectitude of the other moral and theological virtues concerning the ends of action itself, and with a well-honed rectitude regarding the means and armed with a vast array of ancillary virtues—leads the agent to the full perfection of self-command. The moral objects of virtuous ends thus become “circumstanced,” passing into existence for *this agent in these circumstances*.

The universal and the “personal-circumstantial” dimensions are united in the command of prudence, and without *at all* renouncing the *objective* standards of morality, we thus become aware of the hidden, personal, and *subjective* depths wherein moral rectitude is born. Without succumbing to *subjectivism*, one must rightly assert that human agency is a true “participated theonomy.”⁶ Each part of the expression must be retained: *participated*, that is, finitely reflecting the eternal law of which the natural law and the law of grace are participations; *theo-*, that is, God-derived, not merely *zzzz*tanomous, self-derived dictates of pure practical reason; *nomy*, that is, truly a rule of law brought about by the agent over his or her providential destiny. We are true participators in providence, with all the grandeur and strenuous difficulty that come with that participation. The

6. See John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, Encyclical Letter, August 6, 1993, par. 41; available at www.vatican.va.

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activity of prudence is "an act of virtue, of great virtue," and in the most difficult and opaque of circumstances, the agent, like one who has come to full age in the Spirit, must remember that

we must not fear to get out of our rut and break free from the routine that makes our judgments mechanical. In short, we must not fear to be far-seeing and to judge from on high. Therefore, learning to judge is a travail and sometimes a true martyrdom. Nonetheless, charity requires it, for the very grandeur of its aspiration, God [loved for His own sake and] above all, finds its true equal only when all things are set into motion and requisitioned in His service.⁷

Finally, a very lengthy third section of this text deals with topics related to the virtue of religion, the capstone of justice.⁸ For St. Thomas, religion is the virtue by which particular *human acts* are ordered to God in repayment of the incalculable benefits that we have received from him. Thus, it is primarily concerned with a human reality, though that reality is ordered to our ultimate end in a necessary manner. That is, a religious act would not be a religious act if it were not an activity ordered to God's glory (whereas an act of temperance is not formally concerned with God's glory, though in the Christian life it must be extrinsically ordered to charity so as to be meritorious).⁹ Yet religion remains quite a human virtue, fortifying our creaturely will so that it may be ready to render some paltry response to the divine bounty shown us. It is not *formally* divine like the theological virtues. Only the latter unite us *directly* to the trinitarian life in its supernatural grandeur. Though certainly not the

7. See 121 below.

8. This section of Fr. Gardcils text should be read as primarily being concerned with the infused virtue of religion, though the point is less thematic than in the chapter on infused prudence. Granted, much of what he says about the infused virtues would hold, analogically, for their acquired counterparts.

9. However, the acquired moral virtues, *so as to exist fully as virtues in an unqualified manner*, must be ordered to the ultimate end, simply speaking. For this reason, one can say that their passive participation in the order of charity renders the latter to be, as it were, their form. See S7T1-II, q. z], a. 8; also, see Cajetan's commentary on this article.

subjectively uncreated grace of the hypostatic union, by their formal object, the theological virtues are like vitally-appropriated, created echoes of the uncreated life of the Trinity, in whose uncreated life we participate operatively in the orders of knowledge and love. In other words, flowing from grace in the substance of our souls, they are operative-intentional participations in the uncreated divinity.

Such delimitation and subordination of the virtue of religion is not prejudicial to this important quality in our moral organism. Such distinctions help us to see the loftiness of our ultimate end, thus preventing us from reducing it to mere cultic acts (as important as those are).¹⁰ Moreover, such distinctions remind us that there are important, irreducible tasks to be undertaken, out of justice, in the order of religion. Situated at the highest point of the moral virtues concerned with the ends of human activities, religion, with its direct, if not utterly immediate, connection to God (as the end of the cultic acts elicited by religion) provides a point of vital contact

io. Remembering, of course, an important point made by Jacques and Raissa Maritain in *Liturgy and Contemplation*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1960): 15-16: "Thus liturgical worship is in itself an end of very great dignity; and yet there is a higher end—an end for which, and the long for which, it must dispose souls. As we have noted earlier [in *Liturgy and Contemplation*, before this particular selection], liturgical worship implies the exercise of the theological virtues—it lives on faith, hope and charity, which give rise to and govern the acts of religion. But of itself it is a work—the noblest, most resplendent, and holiest work—of the moral virtue which is the virtue of religion. And it asks of those who take part in it that they ascend to the extent that they are able, towards that summit where the theological virtues produce, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, an interior act which surpasses every operation of the human being externally manifested, in particular those operations which express by voice and gesture our union with the community of the faithful. But is there not in Catholic worship something which surpasses the human order altogether? Yes, certainly. Not only indeed is it essential to Christian worship, to worship in spirit and truth, to put into play the three theological virtues; but God Himself intervenes in the worship which is rendered to Him, God Himself is present at the center of the liturgy. The center of the liturgy is Holy Mass, the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated on the altar, the unbloody immolation in which, through the ministry of the earthly priest, the Eternal Priest offers Himself as a victim to His Father; the center of the liturgy is an act of an infinite and infinitely transcendent value, an act properly divine, without common measure with the highest works of grace in the human soul: because it is an act of God (using the instrumentality of the priest), not an act of man."

between the theological virtues and the whole of our moral activity. Thus much is to be gained in reflecting with Fr. Gardeil on this virtue in itself, as well as in its primary act, namely devotion, and the prayer that is elicited by it. Through its mediation, the radiation of the theological virtues finds, as it were, its first creaturely refraction over the whole of our little, finite lives.

Thus, at a time after decades of undisputedly tumultuous theological discussions in the Catholic world, this volume is offered now in English as providing a reflection on three master principles of the Christian life: divinization and the theological virtues as constituting the order of ultimate ends; religion as constituting the keystone of the moral virtues, ordering all their ends within the domain of morality as such; and infused prudence as constituting perfection in the order of means and the execution of our supernatural, personal self-government. What is said here should be supplemented by what Fr. Gardeil has written elsewhere regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, the illuminative power of the aforementioned master principles is formidable for understanding the Thomist position regarding our supernatural perfection. In light of these principles, let one, in Fr. Gardeil's own words, build upon the sure foundation of the teacher of many great minds of past generations of Thomists. *Alius vero superaedificet!*

In the body of the text, I have generally used the Revised Standard Version or the Douay-Rheims translation of scripture for passages cited by Fr. Gardeil in French and Latin respectively. All such citations are marked clearly with "RSV" or "DR." On several occasions, I translated the text myself, given rhetorical necessities in Fr. Gardeil's text. Furthermore, all direct citations of Aquinas were taken from Fr. Gardeil's own translation because of his own voice built into these translations. To avoid losing this stylistic effect, I have chosen to translate all such passages from the French instead of from the Latin.

Furthermore, no publishing project occurs in a vacuum. I owe

thanks to my wife Courtney, who encouraged this project in the midst of an already quite busy schedule and gracefully suffered the creeping of such work into many small crevices in our shared schedule. Moreover, particular thanks are owed to Mr. David Capan, whose keen eyes caught many points to be reviewed and corrected throughout the process of drafting this translation. Likewise, I should like to express my gratitude to Fr. Cajetan Cuddy, who kindly helped me review some tricky turns of phrase while I was drafting the translation. Gratitude is also owed to Matthew Levering for his kind encouragement of the work, as well as for his willingness to write his excellent introduction to the volume. Last but not least, I owe thanks to the ever-helpful staff at The Catholic University of America Press, without whom this work would not be in print in so lovely a form.

This translation is dedicated to Fr. Jerome Purta, OSB, who has been for me a humble, yet divinely luminous, example of the silent foretaste of heaven given to us, *in aenigmate*, in the gift of grace.

THE TRUE
CHRISTIAN
LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Henri-Dominique Gardeil, OP

Among the manuscripts left behind by Fr. Gardeil, there is a voluminous bundle of eight hundred to nine hundred pages, carefully classified, constituting the first draft of a comprehensive work on the Christian life. He had embarked upon this work and carried it out during the years that immediately followed the [First World] War. Fr. Gardeil's activity was progressively directed toward more limited objectives because of the difficulties he encountered as his work concerning the question of grace developed. We received the fruit of this new orientation of his activity in his *La structure de lame et j'experience mystique*, which was published in 1917. This powerful synthesis guided the reader from the very foundations of the supernatural life to its supreme act. Unfortunately, however, the benefits that we gained from this labor came at the cost of a much vaster work (or at least led to the irretrievable incompleteness thereof). No matter how powerful, rich, and already theologically precise we might have judged this draft to be, we would have acted against the express intention of its author were we to have published it in this draft form. Nonetheless, we did not desire to retain for ourselves alone the rich reflections on the Christian life contained in the bequest left to us.

Thanks to Jacques Maritain's gracious initiative, we are able to publish anew, in the collection that he directs, a series of articles by Fr. Gardeil that appeared about fifteen years ago concerning "our personal and supernatural self-government." This republication seemed to present us with an occasion to fulfill some part of our aforementioned desire. Indeed, in Fr. Gardeil's thought, these ar-

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tides should have been situated within his great synthesis on the Christian life. By bringing them together with some other fragments that were published elsewhere (or were heretofore unpublished), we have assembled everything (or nearly everything) that we possess of a definitive text of the work which he did, in fact, begin. Beyond such a gathering of texts, our only remaining task was to attempt to present the generative inspiration and organization of the original plan. Such a presentation is what we will attempt to provide in this introduction.

Doubtlessly, in the rapid exposition that we have resigned ourselves to providing in this introduction, we have lost much of what is best in the work, in particular, the rich analyses of supernatural psychology and those beautiful, developed reflections on the formulas of Scripture in which Fr. Gardeil excelled. Nonetheless, we hope that the plan—or more precisely, and using a word that he loved, the overall *structure*—merited being retained by itself. Indeed, is not *structure* what is most especially lacking in many works of spirituality that are otherwise worthy of esteem for what they materially contain?

For the sake of clarity (and in order to make these pages more immediately useful) we thought that the best thing to do was to provide a continuous, sequential exposition [of Fr. Gardeil's projected text], followed by a systematic table of the work. In this preliminary exposition, we will focus above all on presenting the interconnections between the principal ideas, setting aside detailed discussions concerning the matters at hand. To provide this kind of overview of the interconnections, we usually only needed to retain the prologues and conclusions of the successive chapters planned by Fr. Gardeil, presenting them in an almost literal form. Therefore, in this introduction, the reader will indeed often find before himself the very text and—we hope—the most profound thought of Fr. Gardeil.¹ In the composition of the table that follows our nar-

i. With the exception of the citations of texts belonging to printed works, we believed that we could permit ourselves to not place quotation marks around passages drawn from

rative exposition, we descend into the paragraph divisions of the text, even though we had the impression (and in certain cases clear evidence) that the organization of the final elements was not always definitively set. When we believe our doubts are well-founded and also bear on a point of particular interest, we will express them to the reader.

The draft text that we possess does not completely cover the full extent of the projected work. A chapter of the first part and perhaps half of the second were not written. We were able to partly supply for these gaps by utilizing the text of a retreat preached by Fr. Gardeil on the subject of the Christian life.

Alongside the aforementioned articles on our personal and supernatural self-government, we also reproduce in this volume two other articles that appeared in *Vie spirituelle* which needed to be integrated into the introduction of the work, as well as a lengthy, unpublished chapter on prayer which Fr. Gardeil left behind as a finished draft.

We are fully aware of the imperfect character of this reconstruction attempt which, moreover, was bewildering in its complexity. (Indeed, this will be our excuse for publishing it [as is].) Nonetheless, even in this state, may it be of use to those who love the truth so much that they desire to "live the truth." By means of a work that Fr. Gardeil first and foremost lived, may this volume also make a little better known this man who perceived with such penetration the requirements of the superior order that true wisdom imposes: *sapientis est ordinare*.

Finally, whatever these pages may be, they are a very modest and very reverent homage to the Master who primarily deserves credit for this publication: Jacques Maritain.

Fr. Gardeil, except in the case of some particularly expressive formulations. Any other way of proceeding would have made our typographic layout far too cumbersome.

4 INTRODUCTION

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE

“Every Christian knows something about the Christian life, because he leads it. However, it is most often the case that he does not understand its foundation and essential dignity and, consequently, does not live his life in the manner that he ought to live it, so as to be a complete, and above all, perfect, Christian.”² Quite justly, this synthesis of spirituality should have borne the title that we have happily reproduced at the head of this volume, “The True Christian Life,” for its goal was to substitute the true conception of the Christian life (i.e., one that corresponds to its essence) for false or merely diminished conceptions thereof. What, therefore, is this “true life” to which the Christian is called? In short, it is “the divine life—I mean the life that God Himself lives—communicated to man, adapted to his faculties, and finally, vitally lived by him, as such. That is, it is lived as a divine life.”³ *Carissimi nunc sumus filii Dei.*⁴ Beloved, even now we are children of God! Indeed, if we are still now living as people who only see from afar, *aspicientes a longe*, we already foundationally live the life that will find its fulfillment in the *facie ad faciem* of blessed eternity. We are children of God and are called to reproduce, even now, the very life of Our Heavenly Father. This is our destiny. How will we bring it about?

The life of God, our model, unfurls in two spheres. Its first focal point is found in itself, namely His intimate life, a life of self-knowledge and self-love, a fruitful activity, finding its perfection in the mysterious interchange of the three divine Persons. Next, God's life has, as it were, a second, external radiation in the creative and governing activity whereby the divine goodness pours forth, as though it were impelled by an intimate urge to expand outward. In a

2. Ambroise Gardcil, “Idée fondamentale de la vie Chrétienne,” *La vie spirituelle* i (October 10, 1919): 20. [Tr. note: reference page below, 50]

3. *Ibid.*, 73.

4. *1jn* 3:1-2.

parallel manner, the life of the child of God has two acts. First, there is the intimate life by which he knows, loves, and possesses God as He knows Himself, loves Himself, and possesses Himself. Second, there is his life of governance by which he makes his animating spirit pass into his actions and external relations. This latter form of life is the child of God's self-government.

Particular attention must be paid to this second parallelism by which our entire extra-theological life finds itself rendered similar to the divine governing activity. We believe this idea has hardly ever been as systematically utilized as it is here.⁵ Perhaps Fr. Gardeil found his inspiration in the text of the *De regimine principum* which he was aware of for many years. We find him citing it in the *Revue thomiste* in 1896:

The small-scale government of man is what has a greater likeness to the divine government. This resemblance is why man is called a small world (*minor mundus*, a microcosm). Indeed, just as all bodily creation and all spiritual powers are included within in the divine government, so too are man's bodily members and the other powers of his soul governed by reason. Thus, in a way, reason is related to man as God is to the world.⁶

Sic quodammodo se habet ratio in homine sicut Deus in mundo. Second only to the *Filii Dei*, this text could serve as the work's epigraph, for it presides over its organization along with the earlier text. We will be sons of God first of all because we participate in His intimate life, and this will, of course, be what is essential. However, we will also be such sons when we submit our little interior world to the government of our supernaturalized reason, for then we will imitate

5. It would be interesting and fruitful to look into how much has been made of this application of the analogy of governance to the personal conduct of man in the Christian tradition and even in merely natural moral philosophy. Here, let it suffice for us to recall that Plato already used it, not only in the famed analogy of the chariot, but even more systematically in the *Republic* by his proposed parallelism between the state and the individual.

6. See Ambrose Gardeil, "Levolutionisme et les principes de S. Thomas," *Revue thomiste* 4 (1896): 245.

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our Father in His ruling over the great universe through the efficacious activity of His divine government.

Just as every study of the divine life obviously must be divided into [God's] intimate life and [His] external life (i.e., creation and government), so too according to the [intrinsic] order of things, the life of the Christian, the child of God, must be sequentially envisioned in the two moments of its assimilation to its divine model (i.e., the intimate life [of the Christian] and [his] external life, considering the latter solely in relation to his self-government). For this reason, Fr. Gardeil divided his work into two parts, each bearing a title. The first is "Our Divine Life," and the second, "Our Divine Self-Government," for the government exercised by a child of God can itself be nothing but divine.⁷

PART I: OUR DIVINE LIFE

Our divine life can be considered at three successive moments taking place as it blossoms forth. In its deepest sources, we have the soul divinized by grace. At the level of its essential activities, there is the exercise of the theological virtues. Finally, at its terminus and culmination, there is the loftiest activity to which we can lay claim: the contemplative life. Therefore, this first part of Fr. Gardeil's text is naturally divided into three books, respectively devoted to the "lofty sources" of our divine life, its "exercise," and its "culmination."

7. Sometimes he will write, "the *supernatural* government," which is equivalent [to "our divine self-government"]. At other times, he will write, "the personal and supernatural government" [of oneself], which has the drawback of excluding government by the gifts from the formula, even though the gifts should, in fact, be treated under the same title. On some other pages, "the education of oneself" can be found. We believe that "government" is preferable [to "education"] because it better indicates the similarity [of man's own self-governance] to God's governing and, likewise, because it more precisely expresses the way that this activity of our divine life is exercised. Therefore, we have chosen to retain this title, "Our Divine Self-Government," for the second part of the work. Fr. Gardeil seemed to prefer it, and in any case, it seems to be the title best corresponding to his intentions.

BOOK I: THE LOFTY SOURCES OF
THE DIVINE LIFE

Grace does not destroy nature. It perfects it. This theological axiom invites us to look on grace not as something foreign within our soul but rather as something which discovers a ready terrain in our soul, a capacity to receive it. This capacity will be the “toothing stone”⁸ for the divine life, as well as its “insertion point” into our proper life [*qua* human]. Once sanctifying grace is received into the soul, it renders us capable of truly exercising, ourselves, acts reserved to the life of God as though they were indeed our own acts.

The first chapter of this work is dedicated to the question of the “receptive subject” of our divine life, and the developed form of Fr. Gardeil’s treatment of this topic came to occupy nearly the entire first volume of *La structure de lame et ^experience mystique?* Fr. Gardeil had a particular fondness for this topic, for he perceived that it not only contains what one could call a “theoretical interest,” but also contains the very meaning of our human life [*la valeur de vie*]. An entire drama plays out in this question concerning obediential potency, an issue that seems so technical! Let our nature not be open to the divine [life]: then, the latter will never be able adapt itself to our nature, except in an external manner; thus, *we* will not be children of God and *we* will not be those who live as children of God. However, let the desire for the divine be included [in our nature] as a positive demand for this divine [life] and, behold: the “gratuity” that is so essential to the gift of God will thus be compromised. No! We must simultaneously hold that our nature has a fundamental capacity for the divine [life] (and even that our nature would remain in some way incomplete without it) and yet, also, that

8. [Tr. note: in architecture, a “toothing stone” (*pierre dattente*) is a projection from a wall that allows future construction to be built in continuity with the foundation of the older construction.]

9. See Gardeil, *La structure de lame et ^experience mystique* (Paris: Gabalda, 192.7), 1:1-352. (*^Mens, the Receptive Subject of Our Divine Life*”).

our nature remains an utter beggar in relation to the supernatural order. This is the source of a lesson in humility that Fr. Gardeil loved to draw from the consideration of this fundamental poverty of our natural being, an ontological poverty that places the “gratuity” of grace in such a beautiful light. However, this poverty is nonetheless the poverty of a nature that is not opposed to being begotten to the life of a child of God, and this is why our soul’s cry of humility will very quickly transform into a hymn of hope: “I will sing and I will be concerned with the spotless way when you come to me, O My God.”¹⁰

Regarding this question, we refer the reader to the very thorough study found in *La structure de lame et l'expérience mystique*. However, we do not fail to note with pleasure that the three stages of Fr. Gardeil’s future demonstration in *La structure* are already specified with great precision in the draft of “La vraie vie chrétienne.” First, our soul belongs “to the order of spirits,” which already reveals that it has, as it were, a remote predisposition to the perfect Spirit’s life. Second, “the human spirit is made to live the divine life.” It has in itself the capacity (i.e., an obediential potency) for it. Third, and more profoundly still, in the living works of our soul’s original nature, we find this bounded and mute life of knowledge and love, an image of the Trinitarian life, to which it destines us as though by a “substantial desire [we<].”

The study of the “receptive subject” (i.e., the material cause) of the supernaturalized soul was followed (in the retreat that we mentioned above) by a conference on the final cause of our divine life. The corresponding chapter was not written in the draft of “La vraie vie chrétienne.” Moreover, in the subsequent alterations to the plan, we can see some hesitation regarding where it should be placed in the overall work. Sometimes, it comes before the material cause, sometimes after. We believe that the second order should prevail in

io. Ps 100[101]:1–2.

a work of this sort, which is, properly speaking, one of spirituality and not of theological science. Its concern is with the Christian life, of our life. [In such a work,] it is fitting to first present the human person (that is, the subject), even though, from a superior point of view, primacy should be given to consideration of the end.

With the third chapter dedicated to the efficient cause [of our souls supernaturalized life], we reach one of the interesting (although, in truth, very straightforward) efforts undertaken in the project of "La vraie vie chrétienne," namely, Fr. Gardeil's gathering together of the entire spiritual content of the *Tertiapars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, placing all of this content under the heading, "The efficient cause of our supernatural life": Christ, the sacraments, and the Church as well, which normally should be studied, like the sacraments, in the midst of Christology. In short, the work being undertaken is the work of our redemption, a work that proceeded in stages. If we consider it from the perspective of its temporal development, it can be entitled "The history of the human soul," a history comprised of, as it were, two great acts (in which, moreover, the first act constantly dominates the second): Christ's activity is the principal cause of our elevation to the divine life and, prolonging this activity, the Church's activity and that of the sacraments are the instrumental cause of this same elevation. We are living beings, and in our depths, our personal act of living faith, by which we personally adhere to the order of salvation established by and in Christ, will need to correspond to this merciful initiative of the superior life pouring out upon us. With Fr. Gardeil, let us revisit some of these points.

The first grace and the Fall are the (unhappily necessary) preludes to our soul's spiritual history. In order to understand the Christian life, let us never forget this initial failure and the wounds that it left

ii. Here, and throughout this work, we take the word "spirituality" in the precise and technical sense that was defined, under the inspiration of Jacques Maritain, by Antoine Lemonyer in "La théologie spirituelle comme science particluire," *La vie spirituelle* (Supplément) 30 (March i, 1932): 158-66.

in our nature. Our grace will not be only a grace that elevates us [to the supernatural life of God] (*gratia elevans*), but will also be a grace that heals [the wounds suffered through the Fall], *sanans*. For this reason, our divine life will not simply be the development of our faculties at the loftiness of their task but, instead, will be a perpetual struggle to conquer the kingdom of the spirit.

However, is not this original Fall from grace, of which we are the victim without having been responsible for it, a scandal? Fr. Gardeil corrects this sort of question, noting that we should rather be astonished at the fact that humanity could still live after this rupture. By rights, Adam had to die, for not only his grace but also his soul lived only through a wholly special action [exercised] by God (as is the case for every spirit). Indeed, we should instead admire the forbearance of the Creator who did not drive His creature away when he turned away from Him, who did not allow the creature's work of voluntary destruction to play out to its bitter end, who sustained His creature in being (and us with him) despite himself and unwillingly, and who, finally, scarcely a moment after the proclamation of the punishment, hinted that the communication of the divine life would perhaps one day be restored to man. Instead of us complaining about this strife-filled state in which we find ourselves possessing the divine life and about the division that tears us apart, we should understand that we here have a motive for infinite gratitude, for despite everything, this restitution of our eternal destinies, this raft after the shipwreck, was not owed to us. Indeed, in our persons and our possessions, we should have sunk into the disaster that our first father had provoked.

Therefore, we were doomed to destruction—"natura filii irae," as St. Paul forcefully says.¹² And yet, what a drama of love has therefore taken place within the heart of God! As on the first day, when the mysterious words reverberated, "Let us make man in our image

and likeness," the Trinity holds council. Will it be said that God, who is "so rich in mercy," will be, as it were, eternally defeated, indeed defeated on the human soul's field of choice? Will the Word of God, who is the splendor of the beloved Father, allow the Father's face to be, as it were, overshadowed? From the moment man separated himself from Him, he has unhappily exhausted himself in futile sacrifices that fail to bend the divine justice. However, if the Son, He who is equal in all things to the Father, offers Himself in order to reestablish justice, is He not certain of His victory? It is done, His decision is made, and behold, He announces it to His Father: "Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire; but thou hast given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required. Then I said, 'Lo, I come.'"¹³

This is the *nimia caritas*, our God's "exceedingly great" charity,¹⁴ whose fruits were, after the Incarnation of the Word and the wonders of His earthly life, the "greatest proof of love" given on the Cross.

After [Christ's] redemptive death, the history of the distribution of the divine life began. This distribution will find its suitable environment and ordinary instrument in the Church and the sacraments. However, it will always owe its saving power to the superior efficacy of the causality exercised by Christ our "Head." Fr. Gardeil gladly develops this Pauline analogy of the Head. For him there is nothing more telling than this analogy of the Head and His members, which "says everything" and so "intensely" expresses our unity with and dependence upon our sole principle of life. [To present Fr. Gardeil's thought on this in full], we would need to fully cite those pages [of his work] in which all of St. Paul's Christology is found, rethought, and assimilated by a theologian who always had a kind of choice friendship with the great Apostle. In place of such a lengthy citation, we prefer another, briefer page that quite excellently reveals the character of the "spiritual reading" that "La vraie vie chrétienne" intended

13. Ps 40:6-7 (RSV). [Tr. note: the original cites Ps 34:7.]

14. Eph 1:4.

to maintain underneath all of its theological rigor. Invariably in the distribution of this divine life, what is at stake is so-called operative grace. Is it not on equal footing with the so-called cooperative grace of the ordinary government of Christ the Head? Hence, it is no longer an exceptional thing—if only we knew how to take note of it!

Every time that we awaken to our spiritual soul's life, each morning at least, we are faced with a moment when our divinized souls are under the touch of an utterly pure contact with Christ. Under our sleeping sense faculties, the spiritual work was interrupted. Our soul, along with our intellect and will, as well as their divine energies of grace, faith, hope, charity, virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, were all at rest. Only the Holy Trinity dwelled in its depths, keeping watch, and with it, in the heavens, Christ the Savior. Suddenly, the time of awakening arrives, and while we take up our senses, God and His Christ gently shake our spiritual faculties as well as the supernatural virtues placed in them, making them once more take up the interrupted course of their divinized life. Oh! Be you aware of the things of God, you mothers who teach your children how, at this first moment, chasing away the "phantoms of the night," to place themselves into the state of consent to operative grace "by offering their heart to our Good God and to Christ the Savior." Let us be faithful to this devotion, coming from what is most profound, most true, and most important in the doctrine of grace. Indeed, through operative grace well received, we launch forth in the divine life for an entire day. Under its persistent action, we find the holy thoughts, the noble and divine loves, and the prudent and powerful actions that are shaken up and set into motion, all heaping up under the pressure, to ensure a day that is entirely under the sway of Christ the Head, a day dedicated to uniting ourselves more closely to Him.

This influence of Christ the Head reaches us only through the intermediary of the Church and the sacraments, which play the role of an instrumental cause in the distribution of the divine life. In the version of the text that we possess, Fr. Gardeil only barely sketched

out this section, which had its place marked out here. Doubtlessly, he would have presented the Church in her office as the minister [*administrateur*] of the sacraments. However, he also would have presented her in her office as a “servant” of the object of faith, her primary role being to furnish the true object for the movement of living faith by which we fasten ourselves to Christ and become one body with Him. As regards the sacraments, instead of considering the particularities of each one, we must consider the organism that they constitute around the Eucharist, which is their center and focal point. Above all, we must not forget that the profound source of their efficacy is loftier and that the sacramental life must be situated and lived in its “broader environment” [*grand milieu*] between its principle, the impulse of Christ the Savior, and its terminus, the believers incorporation into Christ the Savior. *Through Him, with Him, and finally, in Him*—this is the substance of our history. Let us recall this fact so that we may not linger in the “ritual vicinities” of this life and go straight to what constitutes its foundation and its sole value: *Mihi vivere Christus est* [for me, to live is Christ].¹⁵ Under the pressure of this intense sense for the unification of the entire economy of grace in Christ, Fr. Gardeil placed at the head of his instructions on the sacraments the evocative text from Isaiah: “*Haurietis aquas in gaudio defontibus Salvatoris* [In joy, you will draw waters from the fountains of the Savior].”¹⁶

Up to now, we have seen the divine life in which we will participate, so to speak, descend toward us. Will we remain inert and passive, like [nonliving] things, under this benevolent influx? No, we will not, for we are living beings, and we must receive life in a vital manner. Our incorporation into Christ will not take place without our involvement.

St. Paul says the word that summarizes all of the soul's various movements by which the Christian is united to his Head so as to

15. Phil 1:11.

16. Is 11:1.

live under His influence and with His support. Through faith (understood as living faith) the soul stands united to Christ and forms a single body with Him, animated by one and the same divine life. Through faith, Christ dwells in our hearts, rooted and founded as we are in charity. In order to draw the divine life to us, all that we can do (but, also, what we must constantly do) is direct toward Him the cry of our poverty that is the act of living faith. Here, we can only recall, in support of this law of justification through faith, all the scenes in the Gospel wherein the Lord, in order to communicate His bodily and spiritual gifts, elicits the faith of those who have recourse to Him. *“Credo, Domine”*

The relevant and practical lesson to be drawn from this exposition concerning “the spiritual history of the human soul” is that, in its current state, the only meaning that exists for its life is for it to unite this life to Christ through living faith and to place this capital act at the center of all the actions by which it strives to live the divine life. For “there is no other name under heaven by which we are to be saved.” Therefore, the ultimate end of Christ’s action is the divine life into which He, so to speak, “directly transfers” those who are “incorporated” into Him. Living faith is the means that we make use of, in order to place ourselves into a receptive disposition for this action. However, how is this incorporation into Christ brought about and perpetuated? The act of faith is intermittent. Our incorporation into Christ is permanent. Here, we are faced with the secret of the gift of God.

With the chapter on sanctifying grace, which is quite properly called the gift of God, the study of the “lofty sources” of the divine life is brought to its completion. The formal cause, which through the efficient causes activity pours forth into the subject that is adapted to it, here joins back to the *ena*, the first principle of this entire movement. The child of God stands at the terminus, now capable of participating in His Father’s life. Here, we find ourselves anew before a text that was only in draft form in the manuscript, “La

vraie vie chrétienne,” then later being taken up by Fr. Gardeil in *La structure de Vâme et l'expérience mystique*.

We find it quite difficult to specify whether Fr. Gardeil would have taken up his earlier distribution of the subject, which was organized under the three headings of “Graces Reparative Activity,” “Grace’s Super-Elevating Activity,” and the “Indwelling of the Holy Trinity,” or if he would have preferred the more metaphysical division that he developed in *La structure*, dividing the topic into ontological grace and objective grace. In any case, there can be no doubt that he would have remained the champion of the forthright realism concerning grace which is so dear to St. Thomas’s disciples.

We do indeed possess the principles of our divine life within ourselves. The source of this life is ours, and the soul’s movement brought about under its pressure is autonomous. Through grace, we live the divine life as truly living beings, as a source and not as mere channels of the spiritual life. Indeed, grace is the fountain of water in us, flowing forth unto eternal life, *«5 aquae salientis in vitam aeternam?»* of which Our Lord spoke. These are truths that we must not fear to recall, for the entire meaning of our divine filiation and, ultimately, the entire meaning of the depths of our life, depend upon them. Now, how many souls remain only vaguely aware of these notions which are fundamental and fruitful for the spiritual life?

Through grace, we are truly made participants in God’s life. However, grace is still something of the order of creatures. Could we not dream of an even greater gift, namely, God’s self-gift to the soul? The very words of the Word of God made Man authorize us to do so: “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”¹⁸ Here, we are speaking about the irruption of what the theologians termed “objective grace,” an irruption taking place in the depths of the soul when it is faced with subjective grace, causing the interior

17. Jn 4:14.

18. Jn 14:23 (RSV).

state known under the expression, “the intimate indwelling of God in the souls of the just.” Here, in order to remember that we have thus arrived at one of the themes of spiritual reflection that were most dear to Fr. Gardeil, we need only recall the powerful study of this topic undertaken in *La structure de l’âme et l’expérience mystique*, as well as the austere analyses found in his final theological labor devoted to the topic of the divine missions.¹⁹ Such are the riches that the gift of God brings with itself into the soul. A possession that is just as real as the heavenly possession [of beatitude] even though it is now obscure, the free enjoyment of the divine Persons’ mutual presence [*société*], and God’s interior presence within His little creature who has been sanctified by Him—behold what is contained in this simple expression: “The Grace of God is eternal life.”²⁰

BOOK 1: THE EXERCISE OF THE DIVINE LIFE

We must now descend onto the terrain upon which this divine life is exercised. The soul contains the secret call to this life, which has its source in sanctifying grace, whence it pours forth, and its interior inspiration in the Holy Trinity who dwells within us.

If our God thus comes into us, He does not, indeed, come so that He may remain inactive there. He comes so that He may internally stir up and provoke within our divinized souls acts that, sustained by His self-communication of His nature to us, will reproduce the reserved acts which are His own, proper life, to the degree that we are capable of bringing them forth. The acts of faith, hope, and love of God are acts through which we will, as it were, provide an outlet for the internal propulsion of God who thus finds a new expansion for His intimate life through us and in us.

19. Sec Gardeil, *La structure de l’âme et l’expérience mystique*, 1:1-87. Also, see Ambroise Gardeil, “L’expérience mystique pure dans le cadre des ‘Missions divines,’” *La vie spirituelle* (Supplement) 31 (June 1931), 12.9-47; (July), 1-21; (September), 65-77; (October), 1-19.

20. Rom 6:23.

These virtues are called “God-fashioned” [*theologale*].^{xi} St. Thomas used the term “theological” [*théologique*] in order to express the fact that God alone is their object, the rule of their activity and their proper motive. Whereas some kind of matter that is, as it were, external to God always enters into the acts of the moral virtues (even into the acts of the loftier ones such as religion), the acts of the theological virtues wholly consist in an utterly pure relation of our most elevated faculties (i.e., of those that totalize man as such) to God such as He is in Himself and for the sake of God alone.

In sum, this is the prologue with which Fr. Gardeil introduced the second book of “Our Divine Life.” Above all, we must retain this prologue’s affirmation of the essentially theological character of our life of faith, hope, and love. “God alone at the culmination; God alone at the root; God alone animating the trajectory of each of these virtues.” In the theological life, everything takes place spiritually between God who attracts the soul and the soul that gives itself to God. The theological life constitutes, so to speak, a “dominance [*mainmise*] over acts that are reserved to God, an “appropriation” of these acts. It is the divine life carried out by us without an intermediary. This point concerning the wholly divine purity of our God-fashioned [*théologale*] life (and, therefore, concerning its incomparable excellence) dominates all the pages of this second book which, in sum, is completely dedicated to developing this thought in detail.

Already, as regards the life of faith, we perceive God at every point of its emergence. He is here, first of all, at the terminus of

xi. [Tr. note: I have made the choice to sometimes translate this as “God-fashioned” or as “theological,” depending on the context. In English, a similar ambiguity technically exists. (“Theological,” especially when used by Thomists, could be interpreted as falling to the level of “virtual revelation,” the discursive human activity of “theologizing,” an act at once natural *I* acquired in its activity and yet radically and formally supernatural in its source, formal object, and ultimate light for resolving its truths. This is *not* the sense of “theological” belonging to the classical term “theological virtues.”) In any case, the expression “theological virtue” has the status of being a technical term as well, and where it does not distract, I use that expression instead of the rendering which I have chosen for other cases of *theologale*.]

the first rousing of our intellect awakened by grace, which orients this power toward the first truth as toward its proper good. This is St. Thomas's notion of *credere in Deum*, "to believe in God [*croire en Dieu*]" It is the "act of our mind's [*esprit*] love" which, in advance, places us in accord with the divine Truth, rendering us attentive and submissive to His law. This Truth comes to make Himself known, revealing Himself, and our mind, already efficaciously stretched out toward God, will adhere to Him with joy. However, the divine Truth was spoken through the prophets and above all through the mouth of the Son who is substantial, incarnate Truth. Wholly assured regarding the truth of this word and now touched anew by grace, the intellect—in search of the truth that fulfills it—has recognized the salvation contained in this message, the very word of God. It immediately submits itself through an interior movement. It "believes God [*croit Dieu*]" *credere Deo*.

However, adherence to the divine word is not yet a terminus in itself. The testimony has content, and this content is God, God Himself, in all of His reality, with His nature, His attributes, His intimate life, His activities in nature, and above all His mercy in the work of our salvation, laying at the root of His activity. Granted, all this still exists in obscurity. However, this obscurity for a divinized intellect has its lights, and even though it is mysteriously driven along, it gives itself to the divine reality in full awareness, thus "believing in a God [*croit Dieu*]" *credere Deum*?! The circuit of faith is now complete. As is clear, none of its detours have led it outside of the God-oriented perspectives that immediately ruled each of them: first of all, by way of being the supreme good of our mind, [from the perspective] of the end; likewise, as the first revealing truth; and finally, as the object that fulfills our intellectual power. Under the

11. [Tr. note: see *Summa Theologiae* (referred to by Fr. Gardeil as *ST*) II-II, q. 2, a. 2. Here, instead of following Fr. Gardeil's French translations, I have followed the 1920 Blackfriars translation for rendering these three aspects of the act of faith. Note that in the article in question, the Latin progression is *credere Detim, credere Deo, credere in Detun.*]

sway of this threefold influence exercised by God, who has taken hold of our mind [*esprit*], what can the Christians life henceforth be? It is a life akin to God's very own life. "He who believes in me will have eternal life." Through faith, we gain access to eternal life.²³

In the life of Christian hope, we proportionally find the threefold movement that we found in faiths conquest of its object, and here again at each moment we find our fulcrum point in God Himself. First of all, here our heart, informed by our faith, is awakened under the attraction of the marvelous goods that faith presents to it. This is the "desire for God [*désir de dieu*]" *spes de Deo*, that is at the root of hope (as belief in God was at faiths point of departure). Although this includes our own felicity within its perspectives, this desire does not seek after such felicity outside of God. In its deepest roots, our hope is a theological virtue. Quite precisely speaking, this desire proceeds from a desire for the God who beatifies. But how, therefore, will this be brought about? The Virgin Mary's own question to the angel at the Annunciation is also the question raised by our desire for God. And the fitting response in both cases is: "The Divine Spirit will descend upon you and the power of the Most-High will overshadow you." Within our heart, God the Beatifier has activated an impulse full of desire. God the Helper [*auxiliauteur*] intervenes so that He may give this impulse the propulsive and regulative energy that will make this first movement efficacious and victorious.

Thus, our desire for God has discovered the fulcrum point that will not fail it in its own impotency: God Himself. As a guarantee of this hope, we have the promises (and, indeed, already the realizations) that run throughout the Old and New Testaments, up to the ultimate gift of Jesus our Savior. "Hope in God [*l'espoir en Dieu*]" is the heart's movement, placing its fulcrum point on the omnip-

15. For the complete development of the process of faith, see "L'intention de la foi" in Ambroise Gardeil, *La crédibilité et l'apologetique*, 7rd ed. (Paris: Lecoffre, 1918), 11–31. [Tr. note: likely citing an earlier edition of the text, page 15 is cited in the original French.]

otence of God the Helper. Thus sustained, our initial desire can now turn back toward God the Beatifier and be converted into this self-assured tendency: “to place one’s hope in God [TespererDieu]” which is already a true form of possession. This is the “hope that does not deceive” about which St. Paul, the Apostle of hope, wrote these hymns of triumph that manifest the surety of hope with such radiance: “But who therefore will separate us from Christ’s love?... I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor heights, nor depths, that, in a word, no creature, will be able to separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus our Savior.” Yes, I am sure of it, so much so, that we can already say that we are saved through hope. Having become, as it were, unchanging in his hope, *immobilis a spe Evangelii*, the Christian is thereby fixed upon the intimate depths of God, which the night of faith still conceals from him. His hope penetrates behind the veil of the divine mystery, *incedentem usque ad interior velaminis*, remaining there in unconquerable expectation, *expectantes beatam spem*. How could it be otherwise? God is there at the immediate culmination of his life and is the one who calls him. God is present at the deepest roots of his willing, sustaining him in his ardent desire for beatitude, intertwining with this His omnipotence, which ultimately corresponds to the fidelities of His good will. Just as the old man Simeon, holding in his arms God the Savior who had descended to the earth, allowed the canticle of the ultimate departure to escape from his heart, so too does the life of a person who possesses God in hope likewise run its course, coming to its completion in a radiant *Nunc dimittis, Domine, servum tuum in pace* [Lord, now you send forth Your servant in peace].

Our taking possession of the divine [life] through hope does not yet mark out the most elevated degree of our assimilation to Him. Indeed, the love of hope does not exhaust the treasures of the divine riches with which we are intimately in contact through faith. Without a doubt, to hope in the possession of God is already “to

love God.” However, it is to love Him in terms of the outpouring of His infinite goodness over us. Hope does not yet involve loving Him as much as He is loveable, solely for His supreme perfection, because He is God, without regard to whatever might particularize His perfection. The perfect love of God is what charity is. Through the theological virtue of charity, the Christian loves God for His own sake, solely because He is God.

Like the acts of faith and hope, the act of charity takes place between God and God. God first of all stands at its ultimate goal, in virtue of His infinite goodness, loved for His own sake, through pure benevolence. From this perspective, the act of charity enjoys superiority over the acts of the two other theological virtues: it perfectly attains its object. By contrast, our faiths glance remains in the shadows, and however assured that hope’s embrace may be, it is not yet effective possession. Faith and hope are virtues of *viatores* that will give way to something better in heaven. Charity is what will not pass away. In an utterly true manner, we already love God in this world with a love that belongs to the next. The only difference will be one of perfection, when the [Beatific] vision of God will provoke in us enjoyment of Him in an eruption of love [i.e., Beatific charity].

Thus, how is such love possible for us? How can we be so bold as to claim that we can imitate the infinite act by which the infinite One loves Himself? Here again, at the root of our activity, God’s special intervention comes to supply for our insufficiency. First of all, in order to specify the meaning of this intervention, let us recall that God’s love, which is the first cause’s love, is creative. This love is the source of sanctifying grace which gives us the foundation that makes us radically capable of the divine life. On the basis of this first bounty, this love must give us the energies required for our new state as children of God, above all the power of charity’s love, to which the other theological virtues lead and in whose service they labor.

This explanation is certainly acceptable, for it directly relates

the divine effect here in question to the only cause that would be proportioned to it, namely the creative omnipotence of God's love. And nonetheless, however satisfying it may be for a philosophical mind, it has not seemed to still the hearts of the saints who, reading the Gospel and the writings of the apostles, suspect that there is something greater yet here. Very often, Scripture insists on the divine character of the act of love, as though the act by which God loves Himself were placed, in kind, at our disposition, as though we were to love God with God's heart—as though, according to the naive expression of a mystic, God had given us a heart transplant. Indeed, in this we find what the Savior said when, in the supreme word of the supreme prayer, He asked His Father that the love by which the Father loves Him might exist in the disciples. St. John, the disciple of love, does not run dry on this subject. And St. Paul gave us the consummate expression of this doctrine by revealing to us that God's love is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[This love has been poured forth] by the Holy Spirit, says the Apostle, specifying that He has been "given" to us. Even though the three Persons equally dwell within us, the Holy Spirit has the particular characteristic of being a gift present in us. We make use of this gift by placing ourselves under His influence, so that God's love (the substance of which He possesses) may expand in us. Therefore, God is truly the one who is at the root of our charity's love, just as He constituted its terminus. He is there in the very virtue of charity and is also there through the coming of His Spirit. It is truly by the heart of our God that, right now, we love God and render unto Him the love that He has for us.

Therefore, through the life of the theological virtues, we are plunged into God on all sides. Setting forth from Him, we arrive back at Him. We exist in the midst of the divine life. We have now determined the focal point of our true Christian life. Have we measured its complete perimeter? When a focal point or vital principle

has attained its full development, its only remaining aspiration is to become a cause in its own turn. A perfect being has the property of causing, producing, and radiating [its vitality] around itself. Therefore, we must expect to see our intimate life as a child of God overflow and spill forth. Finding its object in things external to God, every part of this radiation will thus become external to our theological life, although it will forever find its origin in it. We will find this again when we pass on to our study of the Christians self-government. However, there is one way that our intimate life of love for God extends itself, already addressing beings that are not Him. I am speaking about love for our neighbors, fraternal charity, a theological virtue in its essence, though one that deploys its activity in the midst of the limitations and contingencies of created things. To respond to the special requirements of this virtue, placed on the borders between the life of the theological virtues and that of the moral virtues, Fr. Gardeil divided the study of it into two chapters. The first of these chapters, on the “essence” of fraternal charity, finds its place here, in the theological life, whereas the second chapter, concerning its acts, will be inserted into [his discussion of] the personal education of our will under the rule of prudence.

Therefore, fraternal charity understood as a theological virtue, [namely precisely] as [supernatural] “charity,” must be discussed here. And, indeed, every effort undertaken in this chapter strives to emphasize the truly God-fashioned *théological* character of this virtue and to manifest its unity with charity toward God. The “solidarity” of these two loves is self-evident as soon as we are aware of the requirements of friendship. Indeed, the law of friendship requires a friend to extend his affection for his friend to everything that touches on the latter, to everything which he reasonably holds as being his good. Now, from all eternity, God has His friendships—indeed, righteous [*justes*], true, and legitimate friendships, because they are divine. Therefore, if we claim to truly love God, we are not permitted to separate that which is united in His heart. We must take God

in His entirety, with everything that He loves, that is, with all men, as He has paternal affection for all. The second commandment is similar to the first. Moreover, all this, which is very marvelous, belongs to the common domain of spirituality. Let us push even further and behold the fact that Christ took upon Himself the obvious conclusion, which we just recalled, in order that He may give it, with His authority as the Son, in His own person, a new and now utterly immediate and pressingly urgent foundation. On His lips, the duty to love ones brothers takes on the proportions of being a new commandment: *mandatum novum*. Here, we come to one of those marvelous passages of the work that we are analyzing, where theological wisdom, without losing any of its power [*vertu*], regains all the simplicity of the Christian life and of the Gospels language. Here, Fr. Gardeil is concerned with acknowledging the new foundation that Christ has come to bring to our fraternal charity by, so to speak, interposing His person between the person of our neighbor and the invisible God.

To understand these matters aright, we must bear in mind this truth, namely, that the eternal Son of God is one with His Father. Therefore, he who loves the Son, loves the Father. Now, he who loves his neighbor loves the Son. Our Lord asserted this identification repeatedly in His Gospel. Above all, let us recall the moving depiction of the judgment [day], as well as its conclusion: "Truly, I say to you, every time that you do these things for one of these little ones, you do them for me."²⁴

You do them for me! God says it, and does so by pledging His truth. Just as the omnipotent Christ consecrated bread as His body, He consecrated the poor as another self. And here the full extent and depth of Gods design are uncovered before us. The object of our love for God remains unknown for us, and this fact presents the great difficulty that frustrates this love and disconcerts us. Doubtlessly, Jesus

24. See Mt 25:32-46. [Tr. note: Fr. Gardeil cites only verse 46 at the end of this passage.]

Christ filled the gulf. Nobody has seen God. The Son who is in the Father's bosom has described Him to us. He has done even more than this. In Him, we have touched the Word of Life with our hands! However, this humanized vision of our God itself only existed for a few moments, after which Jesus Christ departed, becoming in His own turn an invisible object of faith for us. Nonetheless, He did not completely depart, and we here come into contact with the visible remnants of the God-Man's presence: the Eucharist and the Church, next to which our neighbor finds his place. "This is my body"—"He who hears you, hears me"—"You do them to me": the three creative utterances which consecrate those things that substitute for our Savior God's physical *réelle* presence, each corresponding to a particular need felt by our soul, which wishes to love God.

Thus, in order to retain from this synthetic outlook only that which currently is of interest to us, let us say that love of our neighbor contains love for Jesus Christ and that love of Jesus Christ includes love of God. The chain is continuous and is gripped in the Master's hand. The close connection is what bestows originality on the new commandment, a mysterious gradation of three loves that comes to its conclusion by placing these two precepts of love at the door of our poor human hearts, the second of which disappears into the first.

Thus, we can understand—and this is the final reflection in this chapter—how fraternal love has the remarkable property of being the sign or, as it were, a seal of the authenticity of our life of charity: "You will be known as my disciples by the love you have for one another." This is quite a precious sign, for we truly need to know if we are God's friends. It is a sign that does not deceive, for how could we therefore love our neighbor sincerely and effectively, passing over all of our nature's aversions, revulsions, and forms of egoism in the exercise of this charity, if we did not have the love of God at the depths of our hearts, this love having fraternal charity as its consummation, its full flowering, its indisputable countercheck, and its inimitable seal?

BOOK 3: THE CULMINATION OF THE DIVINE LIFE

This book is less complete than the preceding ones. A kind of uncertainty already hovers over its title. Strictly speaking, the title that it seems would have prevailed, concerning a “culmination of the divine life,” corresponds only to the last chapter, which discusses the contemplative life as a kind of epilogue. The two first chapters form an ensemble apart, which can be unified under the general theme of the preservation and growth of [our] divine life.

Knowing both how to preserve one's life and to enable its growth are utterly important matters. Now, therefore, what is our soul's life on the supernatural level if not charity? Every activity is ultimately related to it. We know this already for the other theological virtues. Faith places it in relation with its object. It has its light and, as it were, its eye. Hope carries our heart and our will toward it by the attraction of the divine goods. By the attractions and bonds of a superior personal good, it supports and holds it firm in the midst of hardships. Fraternal charity proves it and gives it the occasion of furnishing itself with a proof of its truth and its reality. At a further distance, as we will see, the infused moral virtues provide a kind of detail-work for the divine inspiration which comes to them from charity, and by a kind of reverberation, their merit is reabsorbed to the benefit of the master virtue that animates them. Therefore, as regards the preservation and growth of our divine life, everything is reduced to the preservation and growth of charity.

Fr. Gardeil divided this portion into three sections: the first treating the growth of this virtue, the second treating maladies of it, and the third treating its death. Merely calling our attention to the thorny question concerning maladies of charity (i.e., the question of venial sin), he resolved this issue in a particularly excellent manner. As is well known, venial sin does not diminish charity. However, it does introduce into our soul what we must call “divergent tendencies.” Alongside the great focal point of the love of God, it favors the formation of independent focal points of activity whose pres-

sure will slow down and hinder the exercise of charity, and if they develop to excess, they will even be able to lead to mortal sin, which represents a complete overturning of our life. Thus, we can indeed designate the effects of venial sin in the soul by using the very accurate expression, "divergent tendencies."

[In Fr. Gardeil's plan,] the study of the gifts of the Holy Spirit immediately follows that of the laws of charity, and at first glance, its insertion here seems somewhat artificial. Because the gifts are really a question of powers [which the Christian has], would it not have been better to situate this study next to the study concerned with the virtues? Nonetheless, the order that was adopted has a deeper foundation. Let us look at it a little bit more closely, for we find ourselves faced with a question concerning the very function of the gifts in our Christian life.

Our life of charity is exposed to various vicissitudes. (This is the conclusion which emerges from the preceding chapter.) Its growth depends on our free will's cooperation. Divergent tendencies emerge within its substructures. Venial sin, welcomed with complacency and transformed into a kind of gentle habit, comes along and builds an imperceptible slope for it, preparing for and priming mortal sin. In turn, mortal sin will come to destroy the entire organism of the Christian life in a single stroke. However perfect God's gift may be from the perspective of its divine causes, from the perspective of the end to which it predestines us and from the perspective of the loftiness to which it elevates us, we must nonetheless note that it contains a kind of inferiority. Moreover, this inferiority is inevitable as long as the life of glory has not absorbed all of our mortal energies.

Does a remedy not exist? What do we need in order for our divine life to be safeguarded against the menaces posed by our independence and in order for us to be armed against the forms of laziness, concupiscence, and revolts that plague our nature? A comparison between the divine life and the order of [the natural] moral life will perhaps place us on the path toward an answer.

However inferior in its ideal and in its proper worth our [nat-

ural] moral life may be in comparison to our divine life, this moral life nonetheless has one superiority over our divine life, namely, the fact that we have full possession of all its energies and springs, including its first principle, namely reason. Let deficiencies or a general infirmity come to be produced in the inferior powers [*vertus*] of this organism and, nonetheless, these latter can, at any moment, again take up contact with the mother faculty, reason, which dwells in their midst, sympathizing with them, since they are nothing other than her offspring.

There is nothing comparable to this in the dynamism of the divine life. The Holy Spirit is its principle, and even though He resides in us through grace, nonetheless, He is not there like a power that is placed at the disposal of our own whims. His dignity as a divine Person demands that He direct His work as though from the outside. The charity that He has granted us is doubtlessly something that belongs to us, but His rule over our wills (and, consequently, over all our activity) is, as we know, far from being perfectly assured. Such is our inferior situation [in the supernatural order] in comparison to the rational moral life.

In order for us to again find the advantages of the latter, we would need the Holy Spirit to become our own, as reason is our own, if not in Himself (which is impossible), at least in His action. We would need to have a claim on His inspirations and would need to have a means for capturing His energies and for using them. Such is our divine life's desire in the state of relative instability, bound as it is by its necessary separation from its first principle. Out of the wealth of His infinite goodness, our God has granted this desire. The provision of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit corresponds to this magnificent act of God's will.

Therefore, the *raison d'être* of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is found in the need for there to be a supplement for the infirmity of the human will, which is imperfectly under charity's sway, as well as in the need for there to be a divine assurance for the preservation and

progress of the tendency toward eternal life constituted by this virtue. Therefore, in the organism of our spiritual life, their place indeed exists here in relation to the deficiencies observed in our charity's activity and in response to these deficiencies.

Moreover, by introducing the study of the gifts through a discussion of their reason or final cause, this approach has the advantage of noting, from the outset, their essential character as auxiliaries to the virtues (and in particular their character as auxiliaries to charity). Even after the intervention of these direct touches by the divine Spirit in our spiritual life, this life nonetheless always maintains its focal point in charity. However excellent the gifts may be as regards their mode of activity, absolutely speaking, they are not, for all that, the best thing in the Christian.

Fr. Gardeil, who had studied this activity of the gifts with the greatest predilection,²⁵ loved to consider them in their unity as constituting our supernatural self-government by the Holy Spirit, a government that is superimposed upon the "personal" self-government we exercise by means of our infused virtues. Therefore, there are two principal "ways of leading the divine life."²⁶ The first involves us taking the reins of our interior government, with the settled intention of leading our life in accord with charity's goals and, through that, the goals of the Holy Spirit who has placed charity in us—this is our active and supernatural personal self-government. The second way of leading the divine life is that of acting only through self-abandonment to the divine Spirit's personal inspirations, allowing ourselves to be led by Him—this is [our] government by the Holy Spirit.

15. Already in 1903, Fr. Gardeil had published a work of spirituality on this subject: *Les dons de Dieu Saint-Esprit dans les saints dominicains*. Some years later, he composed the article "Dons du Saint Esprit" for the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*. Finally, our supernatural self-government by the Holy Spirit was the object of numerous retreats which he gave to religious communities. *Vie spirituelle* is currently publishing the text of these retreats. [Tr. note: in English, one may consult Ambroise Gardeil, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Dominican Saints*, trans. Anselm Townsend (Providence, R.I.: Cluny Media, 1017). Also, see Ambroise Gardeil, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Life* (London: Blackfriars, 1953).]

26. [Tr. note: there is no closing quotation mark in the original.]

Moreover, these two manners of self-government are not opposed to each other but, instead, complement one another. The Spirit of God who inspires both of them could not be opposed to Himself. In our personal self-government, the divine Spirit acts as the rule of our charity, which, if we are indeed faithful, merely diffuses into the details of our life the central inspiration that charity places into it. The best sign that one is acting under the Holy Spirit's inspiration is the agreement of this inspiration with the dictates of supernaturalized prudence. The mode is what is different, not the results. This represents an exceptional synopsis of the unity maintained by the conduct of the Christian life in the very midst of its various processes.

We cannot dream of descending into a detailed and complete study of the gifts. In this first part, Fr. Gardeil retained only those points directly connected to the theological virtues, reserving the practical gifts for his discussion of our personal self-government. According to this division, the gift of fear (which simultaneously serves hope, a theological virtue, and temperance, a moral virtue) needed to appear two times in his exposition.

With "The Contemplative Life," we reach the epilogue of this first part of "The True Christian Life." To find Fr. Gardeil's thought on this subject, one must look to the fourth part of *La structure de lame et l'experience mystique* and to the supplementary articles appearing after the publication of that text.²⁷ The draft that we have in our possession concerning these points remains quite rudimentary, and it was far exceeded by the aforementioned studies. However, in *La structure* he affirms, in the clearest manner possible, that the normal fruition of our divine life is found in contemplation, including the ultimate upsurge of our charity that the gift of Wisdom brings

27. [Tr. note: see "Examen de conscience," *Revue thomiste* 28 (1928): 156-80; 29 (1929): 70-84, 270-87, 581-99; "A propos d'un cahier du R. P. Romeyer," *Revue thomiste* 19 (1919): 520-32; "Questions de nomenclature en matiere de contemplation," *Revue thomiste* 15 (1931): 717-48.]

about in an interior experience of God: “The life of the righteous soul is the whole of the Christian life, a life of the theological virtues, the infused moral virtues, and the gifts, a life that is alternatively active and contemplative. However, its normal fruition and consummation on earth is found in mystical experience, doubtlessly, not always *defacto* but [certainly] *de lure*?™

PART 2: OUR DIVINE SELF-GOVERNMENT

The divine life is concentrated in the exercise of the theological virtues, whose object, motive, and mover are God Himself [precisely] as He is in Himself. This life is born in the superior part of ourselves, our reason and will, and there it develops. However, man is not a pure spirit. He is the human composite formed of a spiritual soul and an organized body, in potency to the sensible life that is brought to actuality by his soul. Although the inferior portion of this life (i.e., its purely organic reactions and movements) is submitted to the motions of our rational faculties only in an indirect and somewhat external manner, this is not the case for our senses and sensible passions, both of which are under the will's sway. For this reason, the Christian's sensibility constitutes a terrain prepared for the deployment of the divine life dwelling in the superior part of the soul. It is not the only terrain. The intellect, which is the proper seat of faith, nonetheless retains its connatural activity in relation to objects that are not God. Whether it considers these objects speculatively or is fixed on those forms of its knowledge that are capable of directing practical affairs, reason is under the influence of the supernatural will, which is guided by faith and inflamed by divine charity. This is another terrain prepared for receiving the influence that strives to break forth from the divine life.

Finally, the will itself is not completely absorbed by God. It has

its own objects in addition to Him. Indeed, we have already seen it transfiguring our relations of friendship with our neighbors through fraternal charity. However, these relations of friendship are not the only ones that we maintain with the world around us. Among such relations, we find ones that, in a sense, are more fundamental, namely those of justice. Indeed, here again, guided by faith and animated by the love of God, our will finds within itself a terrain accessible to the divine life's inspirations.

Thus, our divine life finds itself faced with an entire domain that lies open and unfurled before it, one that is external to this divine life but nonetheless is not foreign to it, for that life holds sway over it. How could it not take possession of it? It must do so, for it is the essential reason [for our activity]. Our divine life is an intense focal point, and every focal point, by its very nature, irradiates. If it remained concentrated in the superior part of the soul, the God who is its very nourishment would be all-too-restricted. This God is an absolute Master. He is the Lord of all things. The whole man belongs to Him, not only the summits of man's soul. Reigning over these summits through the theological virtues, He aspires, of Himself, to reign over the entire life that is accessible to the will's influence. Therefore, we must create interior "outlets" for our God by governing the entirety of our sensible, rational, and external life (or by letting ourselves be governed by our divine life's inspiration), in order to elevate it, as much as is possible, to the lofty heights of that divine life.

There is another motive for this deification of our human activity, one that is accidental, though no less urgent. If our divine life does not take possession of its full domain, to whom will this domain belong? Doubtlessly, it will belong to us, for we cannot avoid living in this region of objects that are natural to our mind and our senses, this region in which we form relations with all the beings that surround us (no matter how secondary this region may be). However, if we allow this life to have its independence, do we not

risk seeing the birth, growth, and accumulation of dispositions that are contrary to the divine life? On account of the solidarity holding together the parts of our being, an inferior way of life will necessarily reverberate all the way up to the terrain of our superior life, which such inferiority will tend to turn away from its own ends. Therefore, as a [kind of necessary] complement, our divine life calls for our divine self-government over our mind, sensibility, and external relations. It calls for this not only for the sake of the “outlets” that are thus opened for the superabundant life of the theological virtues, but also calls for it in order that our divine life may have an indispensable safeguard for its peace and security.

Given that we have already spoken about it, we need not here return to Fr. Gardeil's remarkable unification of our entire moral life under the idea of a government analogically imitating the divine government. When this self-government has its principle in a reason that is supernaturalized and animated by charity, it is called our “personal” government, for we are the ones who take the conduct of our activities into our hands (while being subject, of course, to the Holy Spirit's superior and primary direction). This personal self-government is the object of the first book of this second part.

BOOK I: “OUR PERSONAL AND SUPERNATURAL SELF-GOVERNMENT”

Charity is the first and universal mover of this entire aroused mass of activities that exert themselves in its service. By right of primacy of control, infused prudence holds in its hands the impulses of charity that are destined to assure our personal supernatural government, and for this reason, in relation to the activities incorporated in this government, it is a general mover. Therefore, the supreme principle for the unification of our action is our charity. In turn, our entire personal government is unified by our prudence acting on behalf of the ends of charity.²⁹

29. See 77 below.

In these lines, we are presented with the central pillars of our government, placed here in their exact configuration. At the summit, there is the first mover, charity, fitting us to the superior ends of our life, and at its service there is prudence, which also is a general mover in relation to our activities belonging to the finite order, laying underneath our very activities in each of our powers.

Strictly speaking, our charity's intentions are part of our divine life and were studied in their own proper place. However, let us emphasize the extreme importance of affirming that charity exists at the very foundation of our moral life. The latter does not need to choose our life's ends. It presupposes them as something already determined and also presupposes that we are in motion toward them. In relation to our prudence and above it, our charity remains the first mover of our entire life. To use Fr. Gardeil's excellent image, it is our life's "immobile axis." Thus, under the supreme rule of charity, our entire God-fashioned [*théologique*] and moral divine life finds its sure source of unity.

Therefore, immediately under charity in the order of the moral life, our "faculty of government," prudence, reigns. It is a tactical faculty," orienting our superior intentions through the maze of contingencies belonging to the created order. The articles wherein Fr. Gardeil studied this virtue are reproduced in this volume, so we need only refer to them here in this introduction.

Beneath prudence there are the faculties whose activity must be ruled in conformity with the superior intentions of our charity: the concupiscible and irascible sense appetites, as well as our will, inasmuch as its activity is concerned with created objects (a point that we encountered earlier). Disordered by sin, this entire inferior world is rendered docile to our master faculties' injunctions only at the price of undergoing an education. Fr. Gardeil undertook a detailed study of this education in two chapters, the first being dedicated to the education of the will and the second to the education of the passions.

The complete title of the first of these chapters is “The Education of the Will by Fraternal Charity and Justice.” Why this? In his supernatural morality, St. Thomas here only speaks about justice. He connected fraternal charity to charity toward God, these two loves being integral aspects of the theological virtue of charity, and indeed, we followed him when we discussed the double radiation of charity in relation to the theological virtues. Therefore, why speak again about fraternal charity in our personal and divine self-government by prudence? We do this because even though the inspiration animating fraternal charity, serving as a reinforcement for it and so to speak as its substance, is wholly God-fashioned [*théologale*], the proximate object in which this virtue is materialized is something existing outside of God (if one can speak in such a manner). For this reason, it gives rise to special duties on our part. Without ever forgetting that the sentiment that is the soul of our fraternal charity remains identical with our love for God, when it comes to how we express it, we will need to take into account those to whom this fraternal charity is addressed or the circumstances in which it will need to be externalized. Here, prudence has something to say. However, take heed that we are not speaking about fraternal charity, which in itself is a theological virtue and therefore is superior to prudence, which is engaged in following the requirements of the golden mean. Instead, we are speaking about the body in which fraternal charity must indeed be incarnated so that it may reach this new object which itself has a body.

This last remark has important consequences, for it provides fraternal charity's prudential government with a mode of exercise that is only encountered here. In relation to the other virtues, prudence will have a dominating character. Possessing charity's intentions and speaking in their name, prudence imposes itself with a lofty authority upon the exercise of our entire supernatural morality. However, in contrast, prudence's command constitutes a form of “service” in relation to fraternal charity. Here, it is dealing with a superior virtue.

All proportions maintained, it finds itself in the same condition as do the superior gifts of the Holy Spirit (i.e., wisdom, intelligence, and knowledge) in relation to divine charity. It disposes and orders everything but does so without an imperious character, listening closely, so that it may do nothing contrary to the inspirations of the love of God which here are the masters and so that it may foster and support them—the word is apposite—not so that it may rule them. And when the golden mean which it suggests according to its own lights gives way under the superior pressure of charity, it understands and submits itself. Would that this be understood and that people would no longer be astonished before so many saints' holy imprudences which, in reality, were only irruptions of a better form of prudence, having no other rule than the divine good.

The prologue to this chapter on the supernatural government of the will leads to a second clarification that is no less practical, nor less urgent. There, we are told that we will first discuss the education of the will by charity because of this virtue's important affinities with the divine life that place us into society with God. Without a doubt, considering matters from our own perspective, there seems to be something fundamental about justice. It is the daily bread of our social life, its necessary and indispensable nourishment. Fraternal charity seems to us to be the result of a kind of excess, a kind of seasoning. However, this is only an appearance. Hence, we must not consider these matters from the perspective of human utility but rather from the perspective of the dignity that they confer upon the children of God. Whatever brings us closer to God (i.e., that in which the divine life, existing in us through grace, is more fully realized) is more fundamental. Now, there can be no doubt that fraternal charity, which even in its practical materializations draws its life from the same spirit as the love of God, would be superior to justice from this perspective, for justice is only inspired by charity. It is aroused by charity, which itself is filtered for justice by prudence, without justice tapping into charity at the same source.

Given that the virtue of religion is the summit of justice, we could be led to think (at least from this perspective) that justice would be set above the works of fraternal charity. However, this would again be an illusion. When it is considered in its external expression, the virtue of religion resembles fraternal charity in the fact that both have a matter that is referred to God—in the former case sacrifices or prayers, in the latter case works of mercy. However, they do not refer these external matters to God in the same way. Religion refers its works to God as though God were a duty to whom we must make satisfaction—a duty of great importance, no doubt, even an incomparable one, a duty of divine excellence, but one duty among other duties all the same. Charity refers its works to God such as He is in Himself—directly, without considering anything other than the perfect Good that it solely proposes to itself, namely that of loving by doing its works. A work of charity is merely an act of love of God which only accidentally differs from a direct act of love of God. It does not look to satisfy a duty. It attains God Himself.

Therefore, absolutely speaking, fraternal charity, which is a direct expansion of a theological virtue, is superior to justice, even in its loftiest expression in religion. This affirmation, which is recommended both by the best philosophy of human action and by the Master's word, will be retained by all those who intend to lead "the true Christian life."

Fraternal charity can be considered from two perspectives. On the one hand, it can be considered in its proper act, namely to love one's neighbor as oneself through the love of God. On the other hand, it can be considered in its interior effects ([i.e.,]³⁰ joy caused by the neighbors good, union of hearts or concord, and mercy for the unfortunate [*les malheureux*]) or in its external effects ([i.e.,]³¹ beneficence, alms, and fraternal correction of others' faults). In all these manifestations, fraternal charity, which is divine in its founda-

30. [Tr. note: see *ST* II-II, qq. 2.8-30.]

31. [Tr. note: see *S7* II-II, qq. 31-53.]

tion, must take into account a particular material element that will require a tactical education adapted to it by prudence. Therefore, we must successively study the government of the very act of fraternal love, then the government of its internal acts, and finally the government of the external acts that are commonly called works of charity.

These tasks belonging to the divine education of our fraternal charity by the virtue of prudence seem to have been an object of particularly special consideration, as well as an object of, as it were, a kind of predilection on the part of Fr. Gardeil. This is already clear if we merely consider the material importance bestowed on this chapter (nearly two hundred pages in draft) as well as the richness of the supernatural psychological analyses filling these pages. We also can sense attention and predilection in the tone that is used in speaking about these matters by a man who had spiritual ministry to religious vowed to works of mercy as one of his dearest occupations.

The dominating characteristic of these pages is the remarkable discretion with which he brings together the necessary discernments of prudence and the imperious requirements of authentic charity. He presents neither blind zeal nor the false moderation that would like to pass as wisdom while, in reality, being nothing but empty-heartedness. For example, consider the conduct that will need to be maintained in the work of educating oneself in fraternal peace.

Concord lies in the natural line of charity's development. Nonetheless, however logical this development may be, we must not believe that it just establishes itself without any exertion. It requires a generous effort in seeking out a friend's will, attentive perceptiveness in order to indeed encounter it, ingenious artfulness in order for it to be served as it wishes to be served, as well as an effort at tactfulness, measure, and the very spirit of sacrifice so that we may avoid imposing our own, egoistic will on the pretext of a union of hearts. Sometimes in friendship, even supernatural friendships, there are good tyrants, who do not even suspect the violence that they impose on their brothers, even with the best will, for their love of their own

good is so natural to them. Only a poorly founded peace arises from such methods. If our agreement is not fully spontaneous on both sides, if a domineering spirit gains entrance on one side (a spirit of personal expedencies and, as it were, of annexation) and a more or less consensual and timid passivity on the other, the resulting peace is merely apparent. It is not peace founded on the mutual willing of the good inspired by charity. How many unions have dissolved because they were, at bottom, only a monologue?

This deficiency in a true spirit of supernatural charity at the foundation of our friendships can come from the other person (or persons). Therefore, for the person who remains faithful to charity's requirements, the situation is one that is as delicate as it is arduous. Although our foundational attitude in such a case must remain intransigent in what regards the superior principles of a Christian friendship, we can (and must) soften it by acts of consideration that will be a consolation for us and, perhaps, a seed of salvation for our brethren. Do not let yourself be unnerved by evil but, according to the Apostle's advice, conquer evil by good. This is the secret of the true conduct to be taken in such a case. We must undertake a complete education. We must maintain true interior peace in ourselves by having frequent recourse to God who gives peace. We must let this peace overflow into charitable sentiments for our lost brother. To the degree that he leaves us the possibility for it, we must give him our heart, our sympathy, and our kindness in matters that are indifferent or permitted. In this way, we set aside for the future a focal point for concord which, becoming broader in scope, will perhaps involve a complete recovery of peace. If we succeed, according to St. Paul's expression, we will have won our brother's soul, and the peace thus reclaimed will be all the better situated, given that it will be the fruit of our merits before God and of our tears.

Sadly, we do not always act in this way. Far from bearing the Christian measure in those oppositions that are indispensable obligations for us, we seek out and multiply the motives for severing

our relations with others. Christian souls are united on the substance of life. They will with a common accord the good that is related to God's honor or to our neighbor's benefit. But, behold, one of them believes that this good should be realized in one particular manner and by a given means, and another person has a contrary opinion. Nothing here contradicts the principle of charity, for it is not a question of what is necessary for salvation. Nonetheless, each person defends his opinion with such pertinacity that discord results from it. They are mistaken in acting thus, declares St. Thomas, for concord, which is an effect of charity, is a union of wills and not of opinions.³²

Nonetheless, in such a case of rivalry, an utterly simple line of conduct exists, one that reconciles everything. Without renouncing the opinions that we believe to be the truth, can we not (and must we not) recognize their nature as opinions and hence moderate the tone of our oppositions and disputes, so that we may preserve the paramount rights of charity and concord among brethren? As St. Paul says, do not press in matters of food to the point of leading this brother, for whom Christ died, to lose his soul.

This disciplined conduct of our souls on the paths of peace is obviously less easy than indulging in the drives of our temperament and passions. It requires us to continuously have a grasp upon our soul, self-surveillance, and an acuity of conscience. It is a question of knowing whether we are governed by our passions or whether our love of God is what will remain our master. From the perspective of our personal and divine self-government, in the radiation of charity, there can be no hesitation in the matter.

Now, let us hear Fr. Gardeil attack these false forms of prudence that choke off the impulses of our zeal for our brethren instead of orienting these impulses. Here, it is a question of the duty of fraternal correction. This urgent obligation of charity and work of mercy placed in relief among all the works of mercy by the Gospel is not

32. See 57¹¹-11, q. 37, a. 1.

experienced frequently enough among Christians. People are not sufficiently aware of how much it commandeers and calls for the cooperation of faithful souls, all in the very name of the love that God has placed in our hearts.

We are here faced with a poor wretch who is plagued with the greatest of miseries, namely, the misery of sin. Knowing what we know, perhaps being able to heal it by means of counsel, could we truly maintain fraternal charity in our heart if we did not come to his aid? If this were a material hardship, we would not hesitate, and here, his soul is at stake!

In these general terms, there can be no doubt about this matter. Likewise, did not the Gospel settle it definitively: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother"⁵³ The matter is clear. It seems that the Christian soul does not have a means for evading it. Nonetheless, it is evaded, and there is not a word in the Gospel that arouses more repugnance, more prevarication, and more flat-out rejections. Such rejections are either objections against the precept itself, which is declared to be impossible or barely practical, or they are exceptions enlisted for particular situations and particular consequences that are unpalatable from a given perspective. It is quite easy to command charity. In reality, what it commands is not realizable. Things have reached the point that most modern casuists, after recognizing the precept in the ideal, strive to water it down so much that almost nothing remains in practice.

This is not how these matters were understood by the great doctors St. Augustine and St. Thomas. The former goes so far as to tell us that if we fail to correct our sinful brother, we become worse than he! The latter energetically maintains the principle and the practice. However, for him, this practice is submitted to the government of prudence and, thus understood, all its disadvantages can be avoided

53. Mt 18:15 (RSV).

when it is understood in this context. Charity commands; prudence directs and executes. Here, we return to the general order of these studies: our personal and supernatural self-government applied to charity.

When, on the contrary, passing down from these evangelical summits concerning the precept of fraternal correction as interpreted by St. Augustine and St. Thomas, we then descend to the conclusions presented by contemporary moralists concerning the same question, the soul, which thought that the Lord's command provided an outlet for its charity for one's brothers, experiences an uneasy feeling.

It learns that individuals are rarely bound to perform fraternal correction. Men learn that they are only bound to perform it if they are connected to their brother by a special familiarity and that they can (and must) omit even secret correction in most cases: "Plerumque non expedit [It is not expedient in the majority of cases]." I say that the Christian soul experiences an uneasy feeling when faced with these declarations because one thus wonders what was the purpose of the Lord's precept: "Si frater tuus... [If you see your brother in sin...]." Here, He is speaking not of blood relations, nor of personal friends but, rather, as for alms (of which fraternal correction is a particular case) of all our brethren in God.

I must say that this burial of the precept of fraternal correction does not take place without a tomb being built for the prophet. Oh, "per se," the precept obliges; it can be a grave sin for one to break it. The unanimous consent of theologians and the very nature of the matter warns us of its gravity, "Cum res in se sit gravis ... [When the matter is weighty in itself...]." But, nonetheless, I am profoundly surprised when I then see an evangelical precept practically hollowed out. I had imagined that such a precept might have been given so that it may be put into practice.

"But," it will be said, "all the conditions required for such an obligation to hold are rarely found all together in our experience."

Do not point out this fact to our Lord! He would not have failed to make His precept practical! Like one of our Masters [in moral theology], He would have added to the precept, “Si frater tuus,” these words, “si commode possumus [if we can do so in a suitable manner].” Let this word, “commode,” stay in its place! We are speaking here of the imperious virtue *par excellence*, the virtue of charity, concerning which the Apostle said that it suffers all things, hopes all things, and bears all things—and here you come, singing to us, “si commode possumus ...” Indeed, I know that there are very serious drawbacks that dispense us from the precept. The very first such drawback is the possibility of making my brother worse, and there doubtlessly are other true dangers. However, is this a reason for disfiguring it and, immediately after having cited it, for introducing into it these words, “si commode possumus,” an expression that is as unfortunate as it is intrinsically false? The *per accidens* exists, but it must not figure into the law. The law: the imperious requirements of fraternal charity brought to its fullness by Christ’s word. Following such premises, it is easy to conclude: “raro: saltern sub grave [rarely: even in risk of mortal sin]”³⁴ ... but also “evacuatur caritas [charity is purged out].”

We felt obligated to cite these passages, the only polemical ones that can be read in the manuscript of “La vraie vie chrétienne.” Perhaps their author would have, “out of fraternal charity,” softened their tone in its definitive redaction. As they stand, they have the advantage of drawing our attention more fully to the imperious rigor which can be maintained in the rule of charity, even under the regime of prudential government.

34. [Tr. note: this reading of the Latin is based on the context of the text that likely lies under this section, Ioannis P. Gury and Antonius Ballenni, *Compendium theologie moralis* (Rome: Typis Civilitatis Catholicae, 1869), no. 135,1* (1:1-5): “Privati inter se raro ad correctionem tenentur, *saltern sub gravi*, nisi sint familiariter inter se coniuncti; quia raro omnes requisitae conditiones reperiuntur.” This text is frequently consulted in a work edited by Fr. Gardeil, namely, Reginald Beaudouin, *Tractatus de conscientia*, ed. Ambroise Gardeil (Tournai: Desclée, 1911).]

The supernatural education of ourselves through fraternal charity has a summit, namely mercy, which makes us resemble God even more. A considerable amount has been written on the characteristics of the saints. The characteristic of God, if one can so speak, is mercy, for He is overflowing goodness precisely because He is Pure Act (that is, infinite goodness). Therefore, it is sovereignly proper for Him, doubtlessly not to be saddened, but rather, to remedy all miseries, which is the sign of a complete and effective mercy. Also, is there no more efficacious a proof of the Gospel's divine character than the idea of the merciful Christ? Therefore, if the ultimate end of our personal and divine government, of itself, is to make us resemble God, we will be able to reach this end more fully through this trait. And this is why it is written, "Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful."

Mercy has such excellence that some have thought that this provides a motive for preferring mercy to charity itself. Obviously, this idea is mistaken. In itself, mercy is more perfect, given that it is the attribute of God that places the accent on His perfect Goodness itself. However, for us, it is more perfect to be united to the perfect One through charity than to resemble Him by imitating, through mercy, the perfection of His activity. It remains the case that among all the virtues that are related to our neighbors, mercy holds the very first place. It is the culminating point of fraternal charity and of the entire active Christian life ("summa disciplinae christianae," as St. Ambrose says), for we will find nothing superior to the act by which we bend ourselves over nonbeing and poverty so that we may fill in the former and enrich the latter.

Having begun in the domain of our acts of fraternal charity, the supernatural education of our will is continued and brought to its completion through justice. This next chapter was the last one that Fr. Gardeil began to draft. It was projected as including five sections: first of all, an overview study highlighting the fundamental nature of justice, then a particular study of the aspects that give birth to the different objects with which this virtue must deal.

And first [among these particular aspects]: God Himself, to whom the virtue of religion renders justice. It is not a strict form of justice, for we cannot render to God something that equals what we owe Him. For this reason, St. Thomas placed the study of religion only after his discussion of the cardinal virtue of justice. In moral science, this is how things must be. However, in a study whose proper object is the progressive supernatural education of the child of God, it is better to begin with religion, which addressing itself to God like the theological virtues, establishes a natural transition between the theological virtues and the other moral virtues.

After religion, legal justice, the superior and general form of justice, will be treated. Indeed, it is important to fix this universal aspect of justice (which is too neglected in treatises on the supernatural life) in the child of God's will before passing on to the particular objects of right that it will oversee. Strict particular justice will be the object of a fourth section, the fifth being dedicated to the annexed virtues of filial piety, respect, obedience, gratitude, and so forth. With the exception of how the virtue of religion is discussed in a different location (a modification justified above), this quite clearly is the same order as St. Thomas's treatise on justice in the *Summa Theologiae*.

Further on [in this current volume], the reader will find the chapters on religion in general, devotion, and prayer, the only chapters [of this section] that were written in their entirety. The manuscript concluded with some notes (of little importance, in any case) related to legal justice. The chapter on the education of the passions remained to be written, as well as the subsequent book which, paralleling the final book of the first part, treated the "culmination of our supernatural self-government" under three headings: concerning its growth, concerning the active gifts, and an epilogue concerning the active life, bringing the work to completion.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

“Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.”³⁵

This is how Fr. Gardeil introduced the synthetic conference of the retreat which we have already used on several occasions. We can think of no better way to bring this study to a close than by gathering together the most important thoughts from this conference, which we believe, in its essentials, expresses what would have been the definitive conclusion to “La vraie vie chrétienne.”

“Tell her, then, to help me,” *die ut me adiuvet*. Martha’s words suggest to us the true formula for the synthesis of the Christian life, namely, the mutual aid that the contemplative and active lives give each other so that we may arrive at the outcome of the complete, supernaturalized Christian life and construct what Fr. Gardeil liked to call “the complete Christian.” Let us see this masterpiece come to fruition.

God’s grace is what comes first, conferring the divine life upon us and making us live eternal life: “Beloved, we are God’s children now”³⁶ and St. Paul to Timothy: “Take hold of eternal life.”³⁷ “Take hold”—we are not here speaking about the end of our days. Right now, the grace springing from baptism gives us this power since these acts of God’s life flow from it, adapted to each of our powers [*vertus*]. It is like the trunk from which the entire Christian life will soar upward—grace given freely, giving rise to a foundational humility in the depths of the Christian soul, a humility that is practical and not only speculative. “But by the grace of God I am what I am,”³⁸ said St. Paul. With God’s grace, I can do all things; without God’s grace, I can do nothing.

Now, how will the active and contemplative lives assist one an-

35. Lk 10:40 (RSV).

36. iJn}:(RSV).

37.1 Tm 6:11.

38.1 Cor 15:10 (RSV).

other in bringing about the full integration of our complete supernatural life within our souls?

The three virtues of faith, hope, and charity come forth from our soul in a state of grace, going directly to God who is their object. Because they are founded on the divine nature participated in by us, they know the route to Him. Therefore, they quite naturally expand outward toward God. This is the entire forward march of the contemplative life.

This is what first happens. After having received the ability, through faith, to believe what God is, we are fastened to this sovereign Good, thus hoping in Him. This leads us to feel the need to find our rest in Him. At the end of this movement of taking rest, we find expressed between Him and us what takes place between friends: mutual intimacy, a mutual resting in each other [*complaisance*]. Our faith's first revelations do not delay in seeming too poor for our love, which places our faith in motion anew so that it may tell us more fully about the perfections of Him whom we love. Faith, thus impelled from within by charity, is no longer the simple living faith which is above all occupied with assenting. It is a warm glance, permeated with love and inspired by it, with which we remain before the face of our God, looking upon Him and loving Him, experiencing the need to be with Him. This state constitutes what is called the simple prayer [*oraison*] of faith.

However, something new is produced in the soul. Now, the movements of love that are carried toward God under the divine Spirit's inspiration, in their own turn become lights, divinations, and divine allurements. It is no longer mere faith. Faith is forever there as the foundation, but these are the acts of understanding, knowledge [*science*], and wisdom, direct fruits of the Spirit of God. The soul has thus entered into the mystical life properly so called, and if the grace is given for it, it will be elevated all the way up to this delight-filled experience of God in which our entire Christian life attains its loftiest summit on earth.

Let us now descend back downward. Or, rather, let us look upon the slopes of this utterly straight line that the contemplative soul would like to follow in order that it may be united more quickly to its God. There we encounter this whole world of external and, above all, internal, creation that is our earthly environment. There we find a task to be accomplished, one that presses upon us with urgency. Let the mastery of these forces, which are indifferent and often hostile to our divine life, not belong to us and the divine life will find itself impeded, if not arrested, in its impulse, or perhaps, even turned away from its goal. This is the work of our supernatural self-government, with which we have become familiar, a government that consists in making charity's spirit penetrate our entire life. It is a fruitful work on two counts, for all the while freeing our divine life from the imperfections that hinder its development, it is paid back, so to speak, in the form of merits for the benefit of this same divine life.

Therefore, behold the mutual aid that the contemplative and active lives lend to one another. The first, the contemplative life, is the principle, the animating life, and as it were, the mother of the second. There is no active life without the contemplative life. However, there is no complete contemplative life without the active life, nor is the contemplative life even practically possible without it. Indeed, the ways of God must be cleared out. Moreover, according to an even loftier order of necessity, the fullness of our superior life must spill over, thus finding in this external radiation, as it were, an overflowing perfection, as well as precious wages for growth as long as the time for meritorious work on earth has not come to its end.

You see how all this is organized in God's thought and how it must all constitute a single life in us. The two parts of this life react on one another through charity, which is their bond, forming, as it were, a living cycle between them. The impulse coming from the theological virtues spreads out into the moral virtues, turns back, and returns to the theological virtues in which it facilitates the exercise of a loftier contemplation which once again triggers off toward

the active life ... it is a perpetual circle. Mary and Martha are made to mutually assist one another, each one maintaining, of course, her own proper function in the divine work in which they collaborate.

Let us cast a final glance over the masterpiece of our complete supernatural life. This masterpiece is the "complete Christian," who was so dear to Fr. Gardeil. Doubtlessly, he is not yet perfect since he has not yet arrived at the end of his journey. Nonetheless, he mounts upward. His charity grows from upward bound to upward bound by the conjoined labor of his active and contemplative lives. It will grow up to the day when, having arrived at the degree of fullness that was accorded to him, a fullness which St. Paul calls the "measure of our predestination,"³⁹ it will raise us up to vision of God face-to-face.

Le Saulchoir, December 25, 1933

Fr. H.-D. Gardeil, OP

y). See Eph 4:7 and 13. [Tr. note: Fr. Gardeil cites chapter 6, but this seems to be correct, as it reads (RSV): "But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift ... until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."]

Note: For the analytic table of the work outlined in the Introduction, see the Appendix, p. 179.

Henri-Dominique Gardeil (1900-1974), the nephew of Fr. Ambroise Gardeil, managed the publication of a number of his uncle's works posthumously. In addition to his own publications in Thomistic philosophy and theology, he was the author of a volume on the work of his uncle: *L'œuvre théologique du Père Ambroise Gardeil* (Étiolles par Soisy-sur-Seine: Le Saulchoir, 1956).

1 THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEA OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Agnosce, o christiane, dignitatem tuam

[Recognize, O Christian, your dignity]

—Pope St. Leo, Sermon i, on the
Nativity of the Lord

According to Pascal's dictum, right thinking is the principle of all morality. At the very least, the Christian life is a superior moral life. Therefore, at the outset of ascetical theology, it is pivotal that we form a correct idea of this life, going all the way to its foundations. This chapter aims to sketch out an overview of this fundamental idea.

THREE INCOMPLETE CONCEPTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Someone may believe himself to be a perfect Christian and, moreover, not fail to be a good Christian in the conventional sense of the word and yet, nonetheless, remain self-deceived, if he wholly lacks a complete and comprehensive idea of this life which is his own. St. Paul's words concerning some of his disciples are applicable to such a person: "If someone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know."¹ Every Christian knows something about the Christian life, because he leads it. However, it

1. See i Cor 8:1.

is most often the case that he does not understand its foundation and essential dignity and, consequently, does not live his life in the manner that he ought to live it, so as to be a complete, and above all, perfect, Christian. He does not live knowingly.

Without claiming to give a final and unalterable classification, the incomplete ideas of the Christian life that are most frequently encountered among Christians can be reduced to three principal headings: the self-serving idea of the Christian life, the moral idea thereof, and the religious idea of it. Note that I do not claim that these ideas are false but only that they inadequately express the reality that they claim to represent.

The self-serving idea of the Christian life. This idea is not false. Indeed, far from it. Indeed, our Lord appeals to it in the Gospel, and the Church, in her most genuine decisions, has defended it and indicated that it is true, in opposition to the disparagements of certain innovators. We need only to recall the parables of the talents and of the minas, where Christ's disciple is compared to a steward doing well by the goods of his master, remembering the sentence that sanctions the management of the good servants: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master."²

Moreover, the Council of Trent defined that the just man does not sin when he does good in view of eternal recompense,³ and Pope Innocent XII specified that even those who are perfect neither can nor ought to be disinterested in the latter.⁴ Nonetheless, it is true that this excludes insisting solely upon recompense, making it the only motive for Christian conduct. Such a reduction would give way to envy, as was said by a nonbeliever, "burning paradise for the

i. Mt 2.5:21 (RSV).

3. Denzinger, 10th ed., 1841, 1300, 1303, 1327, 1351. [Tr. note: in the 43rd edition, see nos. 2310, 2513, 2551, 2555. "The first number in the 10th-edition sequence of citations (1841) refers to Pius IX's encyclical *Etsi Ahda Luctuosa*, which does not have a corresponding number in the 43rd edition.]

4. See *ibid.*, 1337. [Tr. note: in the 43rd edition, see no. 2361.]

love of God." To tell a child that he will go to hell if he is not wise is nothing but the truth and a saving message—provided that one does not remain there. To preach heaven and hell remains most necessary and most prudent [*avise'*], given human weakness, provided that such preaching be only an introduction to the matter.

When the Christian life is understood in terms of rightly understood [self]interest, results can be obtained, but this does not go very far. If this is one's only perspective, the idea of the Christian life even risks being distorted, for as we will see, the profound fountainhead of this life is divine charity. To the degree that fear or personal interest practically exclude charity's disinterested outlook, this fear and [self]interest cannot be salvific. Through such an outlook, the eminent dignity of Christianity is exposed to nonbelievers' critiques, claiming that our morality comes down to rightly understood [self-]interest, that any required sacrifices are undertaken only if they provide us with an exchange note for heaven, and that all of Christianity's superiority, in the end, consists in bedazzling our juvenile eyes with hope in a greater and more attractive pleasure than those which that earth can offer us. I believe that this one-upmanship and avowed mercantilism are not encountered in true Christian lives (even if they happen to exist at certain moments, as happens in some converts under the sway of fear or hope). Our fear does not exclude the love of God, nor does our hope fail to take it into account. Nonetheless, it remains the case that, although the ideal of a good Christian accountant may be saving and even noble, it does not exhaust the Gospel's content. Likewise, if the soul takes up residence there, it does not find itself in an advantageous environment. Rather, it draws its true advantage from, so to speak, traversing this outlook, so that it may advance toward what brings dignity, nobility, and true joy to our life.

The idea of a superior form of moral conduct. Will this loftier and more comprehensive idea be that of a superior form of moral conduct, one that is more sublime than human morals? Such an

outlook led a philosopher like Kant and a militant unbeliever like Matthew Arnold to imagine that the Christian life could be sustained by mere reason. To their eyes, the Gospel seemed to present a superior moral order,⁵ a sublime solution to the problem of human conduct, bearing its proof in itself.

Transposed onto the terrain of the Christian life of the faithful, this conception is sanctioned by the important expression of Christ: "If you wish to enter into life, observe the commandments";⁶ "He who loves me will keep and observe my commandments."⁷ According to this outlook, the Christian life is defined as a life of duty, dominated by a perfect moral law coming from the Master. Indeed, this outlook seems to be completely situated within the domain of God's love, which itself is the first commandment. It is truly realized by the very fact of being faithful to the divine command. The Christian life thus seems to reside in the practice of the evangelical law. It is essentially a moral life, wholly under the sway of the divine command. It is service of God and nothing else. And it assuredly has an incomparable dignity, on account of the motive for such a life: the will of the sovereign ruler of all things, including of all consciences.

Therefore, would the Christian's complete dignity be found here? Assuredly, this idea of life has its grandeur. Rationally speaking, there is nothing greater than doing one's duty because it is Duty. If we add the fact that Christian duty prevails over morality, both by the sublimity of the model that it proposes (namely, the perfection of God Himself) and through its utterly complete and exact understanding of our duties, as well as through the uncompromising demands that it manifests in particular as regards our internal acts, thoughts, and desires,⁸ it is clear that Kant, Matthew Arnold, and

5. Religion within the bounds of mere reason. [Tr. note: see Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, trans. Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).]

6. See Mt 19:17.

7. See Jn 14:11.

8. See Mt 5:11, 18, etc.

so many others have only rendered justice to it by proclaiming it to be the perfect and definitive morality. Here indeed the perfect rule of human life is realized, one worthy of this name, fulfilling the hopes expressed by Aristotle: "But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us."⁹

And nonetheless, there is an element in the Christian life that overflows this ever-so-sublime conception. Indeed, every morality is essentially a rule of life ordered to our own perfection, and then, ultimately to the good of the civic order of which we are members. When it has brought us to the level of its rational ideal, the end is attained. This end is nothing other than ourselves developing ourselves, as Aristotle says, doing so in accord with what is best in us. Therefore, it is on the level of our human sort of perfection. The fact that we could imagine that such perfection imitates a divine ideal does not make us pass beyond our own life. The rule of life has been elevated, but the forced constriction that we must impose upon the divine perfection so that it may exist at our level is proof that we have not passed beyond the bounds of a human life. Ultimately, at the end of the work by which we assimilate ourselves to this rule we only find ourselves. We are the ones who have become similar to God according to a human (and, therefore, very distant) measure. The goal of our labor is our own perfection. Moreover, the fact that the rule of life traced upon us emanates from a divine legislator is still here something external to the moral law itself. This doubtlessly elevates its authority and its guarantees, but it does so without changing our end (at least explicitly), which forever remains our personal perfection. Now, it seems that the Christian life presents

9. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X.7. [Tr. note: taken from *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross and J. O. Urmson, in Aristotle, *Collected Works*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1177831-35.]

itself above all as a form of religion. It does not aim at our own perfection as much as at rendering homage to the divine excellence by various means, among which our moral perfection is numbered. God is not only the Christians model and legislator. God is his end. Therefore, the conception of the Christian life as our ultimate rightly understood [self-] interest, along with the moral conception thereof, must be completed by the religious idea, which is fundamental here.

The religious idea of the Christian life. Through religion it seems that we stop looking at and within ourselves for the end of our life (and this is why the virtue of religion is ranked first among the moral virtues). The religious intention penetrates all our activity, elevating it to the loftiness of a form of worship. There are particular acts of this worship that have no other meaning than that of being an act of homage rendered to the Divinity: acts such as prayer, adoration, devotion, and sacrifice. However, in the Christian person, worship is not restricted to these particular acts. The religious intention penetrates the whole of life. "Whatever you eat or drink," said St. Paul, "do all things for God's glory." The whole of life, the moral life, thus acquires the dignity of being a divine service and a religious office. The excellence of the divine being is at once its end and its measure. Nothing is nobler, nor more legitimate than this. There is nothing that bears witness to an intellect that is more informed and more aware of the true place of man in this universe, where God is first and man second.

This religious aspect of the Christian life is so clear and avowed that it is the only aspect that most men see in Christianity and [very often is the only one that] survives the previous one. How many contemporary men (including Christians) only imperfectly realize that Christianity must hold sway over their interior life and is a moral life making demands on all their strivings, yet nonetheless continue to profess it through the material observances of the worship required by it! How many have never penetrated into its living

depths or have ceased to live there, though they still retain something of its religious practices and external rituals. A quite curious symbol of this recognition of the religious character of Christianity is found in the behavior of the French state, which formerly was Christian, then was ruled by concordat, and finally became a lay state. The state is still aware of the existence of forms of worship, but the Christian life no longer vivifies French political society. Like the rudimentary, useless organs, whose survival attests to a past phase of a being's evolution, the administration of forms of worship survives, testifying by its presence that, once upon a time, France was officially a Christian nation.

To the degree that religious ritual is thus detached from its living foundations (i.e., from the Christian life conceived as a journey toward our future destiny or as a superior moral life, divine in its origin and ideal), the true Christian religion finds itself in the throes of decay. At the worst extreme, nothing remains but mere ritual, the material practice being incarnated in atavistic devotions that sometimes tend toward superstition. However, taking into account these urgent aims and the practice of evangelical morality, these *defacto* deformations remove nothing of the value of the way of life that adds to these two merits that of rendering homage, worship, and divine service to God.

Therefore, will such a life express the complete idea of the Christian life in all of its eminent dignity?

Humanly speaking, yes, for this constitutes the most complete form of life which man can conceive [on his own]. And there can be no doubt that its standard is in accord with the Gospel. However, is this the whole of the Gospel? After having manifested the insufficiency of the preceding conceptions of the Christian life, the answer to this question will reveal the fundamental reason for this insufficiency.

When we speak about the Christian life, we must not disregard the idea formed about it by its first author, Jesus Christ. Now, while

Jesus often praised service of God in all its forms—self-serving service, moral service, and religious service—He never thought to enclose the whole of the Christian life within this service. Much to the contrary, He defined this life by vigorously contrasting the idea of friendship with God to the idea of serving God. “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”¹⁰ The originality of our Christian lives is built upon the idea of a life shared with God, bound together in friendship and nourished on a gracious communication in the secrets of the divine life.¹¹

Obviously, this exceeds the loftiest aims of reason. It represents a gratuitous initiative on the part of the sovereign Good. Can man attribute it to himself? In a moment, we will attempt to provide an account of this matter. In the meantime, we cannot doubt that what the wise and All-Powerful God intends to make out of the life of His creatures exceeds the limits of what they are foundationally capable of, as well as the limits of their vital resources. Therefore, we deceive ourselves when we appreciate the Christian life only from reason's limited perspective, as do our philosophers, and when we consider it as being a service (even the noblest form of service). It must no longer be considered in relation to the natural resources and requirements of our human mores but must instead be considered purely and simply as it is presented to us by its founder.

Once this perspective has been admitted upon a divinely authorized hypothesis, the preceding conceptual lacunae reveal themselves in all of their crudeness. The idea of an externally imposed moral duty does not fail to oppress our free spontaneity, even though this duty would place preoccupations with our rightly understood [self-]interest on a secondary level so that we may be bound in obedience to the legislator and even though it would be

10 .Jn 15:15 (RSV).

11 . See ST 15, a. 1.

brought to completion by a religious inspiration. Such a conception is that of the centurion who looks upon the Son of God and sees a kind of superior centurion, thus transforming a life lived for God into a kind of commanded service. *Die verboz* only say the word. "For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go, and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."¹² Along with Jesus, we must admire this great confidence. However, we must—also with Him—know how to pass beyond the nobility of service, so that we may make room for a kind of life that is greater still, for in that life one seeks less to laboriously make oneself equal to the rights of the divine authority than to open the way for the spontaneous activity of God's love. Such is the nature of the Christian life, born of a profound union of outlooks, desires, and wills, cemented in the soul by friendship with God, and pouring itself forth in a kind of gracious collaboration rendered by the creature to the will of his Creator. In such a life, love is no longer parked among the duties of the good servant. Rather, it is the profound and, as it were, essential root of life, its inspiration and its sole rule. The idea of service to God placed the divine mover of our life outside of us. Now, however, He has passed within.

As a more spontaneous form of life, it is simultaneously happier and more fruitful. However perfect and benevolent an external authority may be, whatever is done under the action of such an authority is always difficult. To serve is an ungrateful thing. For certain austere souls who look upon God and above all see a judge, a legislator, and a demanding master, the idea of service leads to anxieties, dissatisfactions, fear of God, and discouragements, along with their inevitable consequence: disgust for fruitful work. "He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where

you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.”¹³ This is nothing like what is found in the life that flows out of a soul having a shared life with God, remaining sensitive to the divine prevariances:

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us?¹⁴

In such a life, everything flows out as from a wellspring—from the daily work of sanctification, all the way to eternal life. Our God is no longer outside but, rather, is within us. This life literally (and, indeed, etymologically) is a life of enthusiasm. What a difference separates this life from that lived by the best of servants! And however sublime the pretensions of someone like Kant or Matthew Arnold may be, how poor do they appear in the presence of these fortifying perspectives which nonetheless are—and He who is its divine founder assures us of this fact—only the pure and original idea and reality of the Christian life!

Having thus briefly contrasted the true and complete notion of the Christian life to incomplete ideas formed about it, in the next section of this chapter, we will sketch out this fundamental idea in itself and for itself.

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE

What, therefore, is the true Christian life?

The Christian life is the divine life—I mean the life that God

B- Mr 15:14-15 (RSV).

14. Rom 8:50 (RSV).

Himself lives—communicated to man, adapted to his faculties, and finally, vitally lived by him, as such. That is, it is lived as a divine life.

We will first study its communication, then its adaptation, and finally its vitality.¹⁵

The communication of the very life of God to man can be understood only if we know in advance something about God's life. Whence, we have the following division for this question: God's intimate life; and its communication to man.

GODS INTIMATE LIFE

As I said, the Christian life is the very life of God, the same life as that which God lives in His intimate depths.

Therefore, it is not the life of God the Creator or the legislator, a life that adds nothing to God but simply manifests Him, a life in which He engages Himself only in an imperfect manner. In order to imitate the Creator, the Christian life is not necessary. Philosophy suffices for such an imitation. By rising up to God and His attributes by way of His works, it finds the source of rational morality together with its supreme ideal, as well as the divine motive of natural religion. However, Christianity exceeds all of this.

Therefore, in what does this intimate life of God consist? It exists in two degrees, or rather, we come to know about it through these two degrees.

God is infinitely perfect. His profound life is the life of the perfect One, the life of Him who lacks nothing. For us, living requires us to seize for ourselves the good that can perfect us. This is the reason why external activity is important for us. It is the condition for entering into possession of the goods that bring our being to fulfillment and thereby bring us felicity. In God, by contrast, perfection is eternally existent at the terminus [of its full actuality and "fulfillment"]. As we said earlier, creation adds nothing to Him. If we may

15. In qq. J-4.

dare co speak in such a manner, He only needs co cake noe of whac He is in Himself so chac His life may be fulfilled. Who can express che incensity of such a life which consics in consciously possessing che fullness of che Good, of chis Good, which, when refracted inco several rays, suffices for criggering off in humanicy our hunger and chirse for happiness, as well as man's cireless and passionace search for ic? God finds in Himself, as in ics source, rhe perfecc Good. To be happy, He only needs co concemplace Himself from an adequate perspeccive and co love Himself by an infinice love. This beacitude of concemplacion and self-love is whac His life is!

Buc chis does noc express che whole of whac His life is. The fullness of che divine perfeccion cannoc be chus actualized in chis knowledge and love wichouc bearing wichin chis accivity che law of perfeccion chac is che law of che divine being. However relacive che fullness of accivity may be in a creacure, chis fullness is affirmed by fecundicy, by che produccion of a work chac bears rhe imprint of its cause. The full scope of this fullness is realized when the effect re-produces its cause in all that characterizes it. The standard case of such fullness of activity is paternity, which, in the noblest of crea- tures, on the basis of one personality, leads to another personality that is equal and similar to its cause.

If we are permitted to transpose to the perfect One the laws of perfection belonging to the domain of imperfect beings—and such a transposition is permitted¹⁶—we will therefore say that knowledge and love are fruitful in God and that in unfurling themselves they realize the law of perfect activity on their level of infinite perfection, thus leading to Persons who are alike and equal, in all things, to the source from whom they emanate. However, there will be one difference, namely that the Persons having emanated from the active power of the perfect One in no way are beings that would be superadded to His being, as though He would no longer be the perfect One

16. See *STI*, q. 4, a. 3, and q. 13, aa. 1-6.

without such a superaddition. Therefore, all this activity unfurls, all the way to its terminus, within the very heart of the perfect One.

This is the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, the mystery of the One Being of God in the Trinity of Persons. This is the mystery of God's intimate life, as it has been revealed by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

From all eternity, God contemplates His sovereign perfection, and in contemplating Himself, He begets His Son, the Word of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, and from all eternity, the Son contemplates the perfection of the Father. Likewise, the Father and the Son, contemplating their indivisible perfection both in each other, from all eternity love each other infinitely. And from this act of mutual love, according to the law of fecundity that is the law of life in its perfection, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, pours forth as the fruit of this love, and the Spirit contemplates and loves the Father and the Son. Moreover, in this mutual communion [*soc/ete*] of knowledge and love of the perfect One, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are infinitely happy. Expressed in a stammering manner, this is revelation's last word about God's intimate life. We would forever be unaware of it—for “nobody has seen God”—if “the only Son who exists in the Father's bosom had not revealed Him to us.”¹⁷

THE COMMUNICATION OF THE INTIMATE LIFE OF GOD TO THE CREATURE

Clearly, if this intimate life of God should be communicated to the creature, such a communication could only take place in a creature capable of knowledge and love (that is, a knowledge capable of being aware of the perfect One and a love capable of loving the attractions of the sovereign Good). This is why, except for angels and men, every creature is closed off to the communication of the intimate life of God.

17. i Jn 4:11. [Tr. note: see also jn 1:18.]

Now, this communication is realized at two degrees. First, there is the degree at which the being who can be elevated to these lofty heights finds himself at its terminus and fully enjoys it: the blessed life. Otherwise, one is still on the way and aspires to it from afar: the Christian life [of wayfarers], properly speaking.

The blessed life. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."¹⁸ St. John describes the state of the elect in heaven to his children in these terms. And behold how St. Paul contrasts this same state to the present Christian life: "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood."¹⁹ As I am seen! As I am! The blessed see God face to face, such as He is: *sicicuti est*. That is, the very object of the intimate life of God has become the object of their life. The blessed know and love God just as God knows Himself and loves Himself such as He is. They see Him and by this vision are assimilated to Him such as He is in His essence and therefore are assimilated to Him in the perfection of His essence, though also in His intimate life as Father, Son, and Spirit. Certainly, given that they remain finite in their mode of being and life, they do not comprehend this divine object, who is infinite in His own mode of being and life. But nonetheless, they see Him completely, without any intermediary. The horizon of their intellectual life is exactly the same as the intimate life of God, He who is blessed.

Whence comes their gaze's power? Without any doubt, it comes from what God communicates to them of His own intellectual light: "In thy light do we see light,"²⁰ says the Psalmist. Their intellect is divinized, deformed. And this is what St. John did not fail to note as being the prelude to the vision. First, he says we will be like unto Him, and only thereafter says, "and we will see God as He is."²¹

18. iJn3:i(RSV).

19. i Cor 13:11 (RSV).

20. Ps 36:10 (RSV). [Tr. note: Fr. Gardeil cites Ps 15:10.]

21. See 57¹, q. 12.

It goes without saying that love vibrates in unison. However, here, the blessed find themselves forearmed prior to entering into beatitude. The divine love, the love by which God loves Himself, is communicated to the human person on earth. One and the same love follows him to heaven. *Caritas nunquam excidit*, charity never passes away. In heaven, it is measured by face-to-face vision and becomes more intense and more beatifying. That is the only difference between it and charity here-below.

Thus, the blessed person sees and loves God, entering into the intimacy of the perfect One in a manner similar to God Himself. However, the likeness of the two lives does not stop there, for the blessed person thus participates in the life of the three divine Persons. He is an active associate in this august mystery. How could it be otherwise, given that his life is perfect and because, being perfect, it must be fruitful? Through his vision of the divine essence, he is vitally associated with the generation of the Word, for the reality that his act of knowledge encounters is God Himself and not a representation, as is the case for us now. Through his love, he is vitally associated with the procession of the Holy Spirit, for the reality that his act of love grasps is the sovereign Good, that is, again, God, though God [existing] as the terminus of love. Thus, on the level of finite being, the blessed person reproduces something of God's infinite life, thanks to the divine form that has, to a certain degree, become his own. Plunged into God, both by the root of his divinized being and by the terminus of his activity, as well as by the very act that unites his power to its terminus, the blessed person, on his creaturely level, quite literally lives the entire life of God.

The Christian life. Now, to understand our Christian life in its full truth, it suffices simply to cast a kind of glance in hindsight over what we just said. *Facie ad faciem*, face to face—behold, the state of the blessed person. *Aspicientes a longe*, looking from afar, and as in a still-indistinct image, *in speculo*, *in enigmate*—such is the Christian [life of wayfarers]. Nonetheless, the foundational life is the same,

for the Christian life does not regard this heavenly life as a prospective future from which it would be separated by the distressing abyss of death. The Christian life is eternal life already begun. From here-below, it is a divine life. *Apprehende vitam aeternam*, grasp hold of eternal life, says St. Paul to his dear disciple Timothy.²²

How readily we forget this fact. Yet, how sure we must be that it is true! Too often, we conceive of the Christian life as though it were an earthly life in its present tenor, casting the divine hereafter into the next world. And on the basis of such a conception, a temptation arises in so many Christian souls—and is it only a temptation?—namely, to divide our life into two parts. One such part would be the only one that counts in practice. Indeed, it would be life for us, a tangible and quite real life, one that is passed in pursuing the ends and enjoyments of this world. The other part would still need to be considered as something lying in the future, though in so distant a future that we would believe that we always could put off thinking about it. How incalculable are the forms of negligence, spiritual torpor, and dissipation entailed by such a separation! What calamity arises from the doubts it raises concerning the very foundation of our life, as well as the discouragements and practical unbelief occasioned by it! What desolation is provoked by it at the last moment when the final hour approaches, bringing forth anxieties, regrets, and ultimately forms of despair at feeling oneself so little prepared and nonetheless so close to the end! It is high time for us to return to the thoughts that are truest, most saving, most generative, and most comforted by inner peace. The truth that will free us is contained in these few words: “Christian, pay heed to the fact that here-below you are called upon to live a life akin to the life of God Himself and that your current life is a divine life.” *Carissimi, nunc sumus filii Dei*^ *apprehende vitam aeternam*X [Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God. Grasp hold of eternal life!]

11. i Tm 6:11.

13 .i Jn 3:1. [Tr. note: Fr. Gardeil wrongly cites i Jn 1:1-i.J

What an astonishing paradox! God and man—we are so different. Nonetheless, the paradox is a fact, the Christian fact, founded on the appearance of Christ, God on earth, the man in Whom eternal life, the life that is next to the Father, was made manifest to all. “For we have seen this life with our own eyes, and touched it with our hands,” as St. John exclaims.²⁴ Now the Son of God did not keep this divine life for Himself, for He gave the power to become sons of God in their own turn to all those who believe in His name, who are not born of the flesh, nor of blood, but of God Himself,²⁵ in order that our life may be shared in communion with the Father and the Son Jesus Christ so that our joy may be complete like theirs.²⁶

And this communication is, in fact, realized: *Maria optimam partem elegit*, Mary has chosen the better part. Why? Because at the feet of the divine Master, her only life is her God. He is everything for her. She is thus seized by that which is the foundation of eternal life, of the life of God which has no other nourishment than God Himself, of the life of the God-Man and the blessed in heaven whose only life is God. Martha is the one who lives in God's service. Her part is good, but not “the best,” for it is not the absolute life. The service of God only exists for a time. However elevated it may be in its forms, it does not pass beyond the threshold of death: “As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.”²⁷ Mary is the one who already lives the definitive life, the life of heaven, the life akin to the intimate life of God, eternal life. This is why “her part will not be taken away from her.” Death cannot come: “Charity does not die.” There is no disturbing hiatus at this solemn moment, no dissolution of continuity. The last beating of our divinized heart on earth is merely one with the first great beating of this same heart amid the splendors of the saints: *Caritas nunquam excidit*.

24. See *ibid.*

25. See Jn 1:12.

26. See 1 Jn 1:3-4.

27. 1 Cor 13:8 (RSV).

The life that Christ brought to earth, the simple Christian life, so unknown in its grandeur, is therefore the life of God Himself, transplanted, acclimated, and naturalized in the arid soil of the human soul. It is an apprenticeship in eternal life, though one that already contains the entire value of eternity.²⁸

HOW THE DIVINE LIFE IS ADAPTED TO OUR CREATURELY LIFE

“Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be.”²⁹ The divine life in us is necessarily adapted. It is molded to our situation as wayfarers, *viatores*, our state of beings *route* toward the perfect state, *in virum perfectum, in aetate plenitudinis Christi*TM “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”³¹

“The whole creation,” says the same St. Paul, “has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons,³² their glorious freedom.”³³ “For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”³⁴ Summarizing all of this, St. James writes: “Of His own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.”³⁵

What we must note in these words is that our journey toward

18. *Quotiam vitam aeternam dedit nobis Deus* [And this is the testimony that God hath given to us: eternal life], i Jn 5:11 (DR).

19. i Jn 5:1 (RSV).

30. Eph 4:13.

31.1 Cor 15:11 (RSV).

31. Rom 8:11-2.3 (RSV).

33. Rom 8:11.

34. Rom 8:14-15 (RSV).

35. Jas 1:18 (RSV).

eternal life is not represented as a journey toward a foreign destination. Rather, it is represented as a form of growth. "We are now sons of God." Let this word, "now," be instructive! The life that currently develops itself within us is the same life as that which will be encountered at the culminating point. At first, this life is sketched out; then it is realized. At first it is adapted to our imperfect state; then, it is freed from its bonds and blossoms forth on high into the fullness of the divine filiation. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ... and those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified."³⁶ With neither a shock nor an interruption, all this follows in the life of the just man in harmony with God's infallible foresight.

In what does the necessary imperfection of our present state consist? It consists in the fact that we still can neither see God nor possess Him effectively. This is the very condition of the state of a being *in via*. God cannot change this in any way. On the other hand, if God gives us the divine energy for it, nothing can prevent us from loving God such as He is. Indeed, love abstracts from the presence or distance of its object. It is as real in one case as in the other.³⁷ Thus, of the two acts (i.e., contemplation and love) constituting God's blessed life, the acts by which He, so to speak, takes hold of Himself, one of them can exist for us from the time of our life here-below, namely, love, because it includes distance, whereas the other act escapes us, namely, vision, which indeed must be replaced by a substitute, faith, for it is a necessary condition for love. And naturally, the imperfection inherent to our current capacities for knowing God will flow over on to the possession of God that we can have here-below—whence comes hope. Thus, we quite precisely see the nature of the divine life's imperfect character, such as it is acclimated in us by the Christian life.

36. Rom 8:19-30 (RSV).

37. See Sni-II, q. i, aa. 3 and 4.

And, nonetheless, in its essence, it is the divine life. By faith, God places in us certain knowledge of what He is in Himself, a knowledge which stands in the place of the [Beatific] vision. Consequently, the love of God as He is in Himself can be born in our hearts. This love finds its object and complete nourishment in faith's announcement. Total possession alone remains incomplete. However, given that faith promises it to us with certitude and guarantees us God's efficacious help so that we may arrive at it, our hope is firm and equal to an anticipated possession. Whence the expression of the Apostle: *Spe gaudentes*, let us rejoice in hope.³⁸

Thus, through the exercise of the theological virtues, to the degree that it is possible in our current state, we appropriate to ourselves the divine acts by which God lives of Himself, the acts by which the blessed are associated with His life and live by Him. We know Him such as He knows Himself and with the same certitude, for by faith we believe in Him who sees Himself. Thus, so to speak, we seize the divine knowledge for ourselves.³⁹ We possess Him such as He possesses Himself, and we rejoice in anticipation of this possession. His infinitely loveable goodness is the immediate object and sole rule of our charity, for faith has placed us into contact with it, in all that it is. Thus, in its object and its mode (namely, to love, without measure, the infinite Good), our hearts life coincides with our glorious God's life of love and that of the blessed in heaven.⁴⁰

The likeness goes further still. Like the life of the blessed in heaven, this Christian life, which is exercised through the theological virtues, reflects the splendors of the Trinitarian life, as much as we can in our vespertinal state. "The Word of God," says St. Thomas, "is born of God through the knowledge that He has of Himself, and Love proceeds from God because He loves Himself... the Divine Image is again found in the word that man conceives in knowing

38. See Rom 11:11.

39. STII-II, q. 4, a. 8, ad i.

40. These insights will be developed later in particular articles.

God and in the love that is derived from this knowledge. And therefore, the divine image exists in the human soul inasmuch as it attains God or is capable of attaining Him."⁴¹ Now, by faith as well as the love of hope and, above all, of charity, we attain God in a superior manner through knowledge and love. Therefore, in these acts we strive to imitate the Word's generation and the Holy Spirit's procession. Thus, the Christian is likewise associated with God's life in what is most intimate to it. That is, he is associated with the Trinitarian life.

Therefore, the exercise of the theological virtues constitutes a life of a sublime order, which decidedly can be compared with neither the order of a life of service which is concerned with serving in order to receive a recompense, nor with the service of the moral life, nor with the service of worship. Certainly, this superior life is not unaware of the assurances of eternal felicity, a motive [*ressort*] directing the life of the faithful servant. However, recompense does not enter into his perspective as though it were the simple result of a faithfully observed contract, *Do ut des* [I give so that you may give]. Rather, such recompense presents itself as this life's normal blossoming and fruition, a self-evident crowning of the present life, which calls for this crowning and tends toward it. *Eo quod nolumus expoliari sed supervestiri ut absorbeatur quod mortale est vita* [Because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life].⁴² Is not the foundational bent of our life to be clad with what it is that we imagine [*revêtu de notre fiction*] and have the definitive life absorb what is mortal in our own? Likewise, this divine life is a moral life, but it is such without precisely seeking it: it is a moral life in an eminent manner. To live by faith in the presence of the ideal of the divine perfection itself, the supreme rule of every moral perfection, to live by charity in union with God, to will only Him and to will Him as He wills Himself, without mea-

⁴¹ 57¹, q. 92, a. 8, co.

⁴² 2 Cor 5:4 (DR).

sure, and thus to realize in ourselves that which is most intimate in the mores of the Perfect Being—all of this is assuredly a superior moral life, one that qualitatively prevails over the ordinary moral life, as the destination prevails over the route and the end over the means. Likewise and finally, this life is a form of worship, but it is not a material ritual, forever infinitely distant from equality with the divine excellence. Our worship through the theological virtues directly attains God, indeed, God in Himself. It is the worship of those who adore in spirit, without any other sacrificial material than the spiritual acts of faith, hope, and love. It is the worship of those who adore in truth, without any intermediary that would conceal God. Therefore, more than a form of service, a form of morality, or a form of worship—though, without repudiating any of these values—the life of the theological virtues is human life in its highest perfection because it directly strives to reproduce the divine mores themselves, the standard of all holiness, reproducing them in what is most intimate and most profound in them.

Therefore, it is crucial for the conduct of our Christian lives that we know these things and be aware of this incomparable dignity of the life lived according to the theological virtues! What light does it cast on the direction of our spiritual activity, on the paramount attention that we fittingly should pay to this intimate divine life before passing on to service! Moreover, what a focal point is it for inflaming our ardor in this service and for giving it a more disinterested character, so that our moral ideal may be elevated by it, our piety animated by it, and our worship vivified as well! Above all, what comfort can we draw in work, temptations, and hardships by understanding this divine life to which God calls us, which He enables us to realize through the exercise of faith, hope, and love, a life that is at once so much His and so much ours!

THE VITALITY OF OUR DIVINE LIFE

Invited to become the mother of God, the Holy Virgin exclaimed: "How is this possible?" And indeed, how can a creature vitally beget the Creator? The angel responds: "The power of the Most-High will overshadow you."⁴³

A similar hesitation oppresses our minds when they are placed in the presence of this divine plan for our life, the plan of the Christian life, and we understandably say to ourselves:

God alone can attain God. God alone can vitally produce the divine acts by which He enters into possession of Himself. Now, we are not God. And even were God to assist us with His omnipotent assistance, we would not vitally produce the acts reserved to God. Every vital activity pours forth from an interior source which begets it. The source of the divine activities is not found in human nature. Therefore, it is impossible for us to truly live the divine life. We are not beings that live by that life. At most, we are its passive executors. God alone is the one who lives His awesome life in us and through us.

Certainly, this would already be a sublime vocation, that of serving as an instrument for the expansion of the divine life. It is what led the master of the *Sentences*, Peter Lombard, struck by the divine excellence of charity, to hold that the act of charity is an activity that properly and immediately belongs to the Holy Spirit. However, St. Thomas justly retorted that this would, instead, represent a diminution of the dignity of our love for God. If our will were purely passive in the act of charity without being the principle of its action or *if* it were only an instrument (which doubtlessly acts but without being able to resist) what would become of the spontaneity inherent to every will? And moreover, what would consequently become of the merit of our love for God, the source and root of every merit? And, he concluded that in order for charity to be as it must be,

43. See Lk 1:34-35.

namely, truly active, it must possess in itself a principle of action, obviously one that is supernatural and a pure gift from God, a divine form identical with it and inclining it to the act of charity as to something natural, easy, and pleasing.⁴⁴ We must think the same for hope and faith. In order for these divine acts to be produced vitally, as from their source, we must be naturalized to the measure of the divinity.⁴⁵

Now, this naturalization is what our faith affirms. "God," says the Apostle St. Peter, "has given you, through Jesus Christ, precious and magnificent gifts, in order that you may become participants in the divine nature."⁴⁶ Baptism modifies our natural state and begets us, through a new birth, to the divine nature. It is a recasting of our soul, like a new creation in Christ Jesus, *creati in Christo Jesu?*¹ Sanctifying grace is the very nature of God, transfused into us (to the degree that we are capable of receiving it), naturalized, acclimated, and grafted onto our nature, transforming it internally so that the divine life can pour forth from our divinized soul vitally, as from a wellspring. Whence, we have Christ's mysterious words, recounted in St. John's Gospel, when He responds to the Jews who reproach Him for making Himself out to be God: "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'?"⁴⁸ In truth, grace does not make us into God. However, all the same, through grace we are a race who is divinized and deformed, "[given] power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."⁴⁹

Indeed, as the Father substantially sanctifies Jesus Christ's hu-

44. See *ST II-II*, q. 13.3.1.

45. [Tr. note: this language reminds one of the expression of a similarly influential figure at the Saulchoir, Fr. Antoine Lecomnyer, who in his volume *Notre vie divine* speaks of "the natural law of our supernatural life." See Antoine Lecomnyer, *Notre vie divine* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1956), 14.]

46. *iPt* 1:4.

47. Eph 1:10.

48. Jn 10:34 (RSV).

49. Jn 1:11-13 (RSV).

man nature by drawing it to the personality of the Word, His only Son, so too through sanctifying grace God adopts us as His sons and establishes us as brothers of Jesus Christ: *Adepti participationem generationis Christi*. The Christian is called to reproduce in himself, as by a rebound, the movement by which the Word took on human nature: "The Word was made man," said a holy [Church] Father, "So that you may become God." A similar result is encountered at the terminus of these two geneses, that of the God-Man and that of the Christian (the first having its point of departure in the divine nature, the second in human nature): in the first, the humanized God, in the latter, the divinized man. And just as Our Lord's humanity, by the Hypostatic Union and, through that, by His divinity [*parson union, par sa divinité*], is found at the heights so that it may produce divine acts, so too our human nature, through sanctifying grace, is elevated to the dignity of being a focal point of the divine life. Henceforth, it has within it "a spring of water welling up to eternal life,"⁵⁰ a divine seed, *semen DeC*, having come from God and capable of begetting in us the very life by which God lives, enabling us through faith, hope, and charity to know and love God as He knows and loves Himself.

This is why, in the Gospel, charity's act of love for God (which sums up and crowns the soul's movement, having begun by faith and hope, all of whose substance it concentrates in itself) is represented to us as being of the same structure [*contexture*] as the very act by which God loves Himself. Is not this final prayer to His Father the last word of the Son of God's testimony to us: "That the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them."⁵² "We know," says St. John, "and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."⁵³ There-

50. Jn 4:14 (RSV).

51. See ijn 5:9.

51. Jn 17:16 (RSV).

5j. ijn 4:16 (RSV).

fore, we muse take these words literally, as applying to the love that makes up the intimate life of the Holy Trinity: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."⁵⁴

Without a doubt, we must temper the boldness of the divine expressions by the doctrine of St. Thomas recalled above. God has not enabled us to produce identically the same act as that which is reserved to Him alone. Our love for God is indeed ours. However, it is an act of the same order, divine like Him. Inasmuch as we are born of God through grace and made akin to His divinity, He has enabled us to produce these reserved acts, vitally, as from a source. We love the Father with a Son's love inasmuch as we are begotten to the life of the Son and have become members of His mystical body. It is as "gods" that we love God.

Here, at last, we are in possession of all the elements that make up the Christian's dignity. Now, standing at the sublime heights of the result, we can assess the path traveled from the beginning of this impassioned "hunt" which we undertook in search of the definition of our Christian life. How removed we are from the life of servants who work to make the talents of the master come to fruition in the hope of recompense, as well as from the sublime morality praised by those who see the Christian life only as the apotheosis of our rational moral life, and even from the religious life inasmuch as it is confined to the service of worship! Not servants, but friends, sons of God and brothers of Jesus, we doubtlessly journey toward recompense, we strive to realize the perfect morality whose exemplar is God's holiness, and we adore this God, making our prayer and our entire life into a living sacrifice in honor of His excellence. However, for us Christians, all this is but a consequence. It is an irradiation from the focal point that is the intimate life where, through the theological virtues, we live the very life of God, adapted to our mea-

54. Rom 5:5 (RSV).

sure as incomplete and unfinished beings. All of these other things are not its substantial and perfect content. Our dignity is higher. It is the dignity of the sons of God, who are adopted by His great mercy and who, rendered capable by grace, of vitally exercising the acts reserved to God, strive to reproduce, on their own creaturely level, the divine mores of their Father, following Christ's example.

Behold the level to which we must elevate and then maintain ourselves if we wish to be worthy of our vocation—I repeat and insist upon it!—as ordinary Christians. Once more, what light does it cast upon our life's meaning! And what woe will there be if we come to be deprived of it by sinning! The Christian sinner is more than an errant being. Quite literally, he is a degenerate, a being in whom the nature that God had begotten in him is corrupted, a being who has lost his divine vigor and his eternal value: "O Christian," exclaimed St. Leo the Great, "Be aware, therefore, of your dignity, and given your kinship with the divine nature, never consent to return by degenerate morals to the base vulgarity of your former existence! *agnosce o christiane, dignitatem tuam et, divinae consorsfactus naturae, noli in veterem vilitatem degeneri conversatione redire!*"⁵⁵

55. Pope St. Leo, *Senno I de Nativitate Domini*.

2^ OUR PERSONAL AND SUPERNATURAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

THE FACULTY OF GOVERNMENT

In order to govern, two are needed: he who governs and he who is governed. And, moreover, he who governs must be superior to him who is governed.

Therefore, how could a single human person, envisioned in his indivisible personality, govern over himself?

He would need to be duplicated and internally divided into two parts, one of which, being superior to the other, will thus be qualified to govern the latter.

Is this possible?

The organization of physiological life offers us a tangible example of this kind of internal duplication. Given that the brain, the seat of the center of ideation and of our nervous system, thanks to the localization of the principal external senses, is a privileged depository of information concerning the external world of interest to an entire being's relational life, the head holds a place set apart in the organism, naturally dominating its organs and inferior members, and, indeed, governing them.

In the psychological and moral domain, we encounter an analogous arrangement. Here, reason holds the place of the head. It pos-

esses man's superior ideas, especially the idea of the Good, the object and obligatory end of the whole man. Through the intermediary of the will, into which reason pours itself, the latter exercises a dominating influence over our sensible energies, as well as over the instruments that put us into relation with others. Reason rules them and elevates them, each in its own way, to the heights of the Good. Its rule is not despotic but, rather, is analogous to political government, taking into account the spontaneous vitality and rights attached to the constitutive nature of these inferior powers, mastering them only in their own interest—a great interest if it is indeed true that the part's most profound good is for it to participate in the good of the whole, which here is the good of the animal, simply speaking.¹

Indeed, under the influence of this rational government, all our activities involving external relationships and all our internal passions are enriched by the virtues. Our will, which is not only the universal mover in the service of reason but also the special organ of our external relations, can become habituated to consider respect for the rights of others to be its own superior good, no longer basing its own good solely on its egoistic satisfactions. The virtue of justice lies in this habituation. The desiderative [i.e., concupiscible] passions [*les passions de desir*] learn to restrain themselves within the just limits that reason requires so that it may make use of them without being overrun by them. Here, we have the virtue of temperance. The combative [i.e., irascible] passions [*passions de combat*] are applied to self-control in relation to the same end, with regard to attack and resistance, and here we have the virtue of fortitude. Thus, where there had been only a chaotic mass of often-opposed energies, rushing instinctively toward their own particular goods, we now have, thanks to this rational government, a unified organism of greater worth, now established in a vital relationship with the idea of the Good, a reflection of the perfect and divine good.

i. See *S7II-II*, q. 47, a. 10, ad 2.

How could we fail to find this internal differentiation of the human being, one that is so fruitful in its results, in the supernatural life, if indeed grace, in order to perfect nature, must first take hold of nature as it is, understood in its native health and not in its adventitious forms of degeneration (which, rather, are healed by grace, which has such healing as its first effect)?

Nonetheless, while it is true that grace espouses the structure of nature and, in particular, relies on the established distinction between, on the one hand, reason, the faculty of government, and, on the other, the faculties governed by it, it is important at present to note a capital difference which exists between the point of departure for our natural moral government and that for our supernatural moral government.

Armed with the idea of the Good, when reason begins its work, it finds before itself a virgin, uncultivated terrain. In our will and our passions, it encounters natural dispositions favoring reason's rule, dispositions of mental equilibrium, instincts of moderation in judgment, inclinations to justice, innate moral courage, and a propensity to temperance. However, all of this, the influence of education or the instincts of temperament, utterly lacks the definitive character and solidity that belong to the virtues. What a predisposition of this kind brings about can be destroyed from one moment to the next by a mere push in the opposite direction. These moral instincts do not bring our inferior life out of the grip of chaos. What is needed is the idea of the Good, the unmoved mover assimilated by human reason, in order to give consistency to these elements by incorporating them into an organized dynamism that is something different than temperament, something explicitly moral, being willed and imposed as such, in a way that is fully cognizant.

This means that, in our natural moral self-government, reason, finding itself in the presence of an empty terrain, must first, through its governance, form all the pieces laying before it into the moral virtues by which it will then exercise such governance, ever expand-

ing the scope of the latter. Our moral virtues are acquired entirely thanks to rational labor brought about through the repetition of acts.

Matters are completely different for the man who is divinized by grace. According to St. Thomas's doctrine (the one most generally admitted by theologians and, in any case, *the true opinion, having sure and certain probability*), the action of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the soul through sanctifying grace, diffuses into our natural powers not only the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, but also the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. And the reason for this is obvious. Under pain of being exposed to nature's worst resistances from its very first steps and of being obstructed before being able to take possession of its domain, the work of our lives' divinization must be perfectly constituted from the start. Just like the child of nature, the child of God must be born in a viable state. Now, this would not be the case if the whole of the organism did not receive corresponding capacities for receiving the inspirations of this divine focal point that is the life of the theological virtues infused into us along with sanctifying grace (and this is something that must be held *defide*), capacities offering them an effective service. Let us not forget that all of nature's power (even if this were a nature perfectly subdued by the natural moral virtues) by itself is incapable of producing the smallest spark of supernatural life, of being elevated to the lofty heights of an act of perfect love of God.

But, precisely speaking, what our supernatural self-government has as its specific goal is the realization of this act of love of God, however it may be realized, in the very plan of our life of external relations and of the life of our desiderative and combative passions. The divine life must not remain in the head alone; it must animate the entire body. What does it mean to be supernaturally just if not to be just through the love of God, that is, to love God from one's depths, for His own sake? What does it mean to be supernaturally

courageous and temperate if not, again, to love God for His own sake? Now, our natural virtues, which are destined to serve as the rational good's instruments and to safeguard the exercise of reason against the undertow of our self-will and passions, are not proportioned to express such a love and to serve as its instruments. The service of charity, which certain theologians expect from them, in fact, exceeds them. Charity is of another order, like the divine good that is the object of charity, like God Himself. This is why, in the supernatural life, the faculty of government does not need to create from scratch the virtues that assure its good functioning, as it does in our natural moral life. Instead, precisely because of its congenital disproportion to charity's inspirations, this faculty of government, prudence, itself must be infused into our reason by the Holy Spirit, along with the infused moral virtues which will depend on these inspirations in their exercise.²

Therefore, we will say that in order to provide for the life of the child of God in the order of grace as completely as He provides for our moral life in the order of nature, God provides for the former, from its beginnings, as it were, a kind of royal (and nonetheless indispensable) dowry, bestowing it with all the moral virtues that are in harmony with the sublimity of this divine life. The infused moral virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance—are one with the state of grace.

This adult age, into which the supernatural moral virtues are born, is what differentiates them from the natural moral virtues that preexist only in the amorphous elements that serve in constituting them. However, the urgency of our personal and supernatural self-government comes to the foreground again when, for the case of our infused virtues, it is a question of passing to act, of defending ourselves, and above all of reinforcing and developing ourselves. From this perspective, it would perhaps not be an exaggeration to

i. See STI-II, q. 65, a. 3; q. 65, a. 5; II-II, q. 47, a. 14, co., and ad 1, ad 5.

advance the idea that the natural virtues, obtained through a patient clearing of an uncultivated terrain, have an advantage over the supernatural virtues implanted all at once into the overgrown soil of our nature. Indeed, the biographies of certain converts do not contradict this point.

In any case, let us acknowledge that the supernatural life can endure and expand only at the price of the continual intervention of a mastering faculty in the very acts of our inferior infused virtues, which are stimulated and directed by it, all under the pressure of charity. Therefore, infused prudence by rights of primacy holds sway over the intentions of the supernatural love of God above everything and for His own sake and therefore is established in this state of dominating superiority which is befitting of movers. It first works on itself through an interior labor so as to ceaselessly maintain its foresights at the level of the divine norms of the charity that rules it. Then, it reflects this sublimity of charity's ends upon the exercise of the virtues of justice, fortitude, and temperance, through its ordinances realizing in these latter the dictates of God's love. Joining the power of command to an adaptive flexibility, absolute as regards its end but flexing so as to utilize the tactical necessities that give birth to action and ceaselessly develop it, essentially measured in its commands though with a measure whose norm is the divine good in itself, supernatural prudence, through its tireless work, eliminates, extracts, and destroys the dispositions inimical to God which nature conceals, and through this work, imperative for its own part and docile on the side of the powers that it commands, merits from God these successive increases of supernatural energy that it cannot give by itself.³

This exhaustive work of supernatural education is what we will now follow and retrace in its details.

In this chapter, we will successively examine the task of super-

3.57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 47. a. 14. ad 3-

natural prudence; the immobile axis; the supernatural golden mean; the tactical education involved; and the results of our supernatural self-government.

THE TASK OF SUPERNATURAL PRUDENCE

This task is the roughest and the most complex. Therefore, who but the naive could say that the living details of our interior life is simple and could be resolved by relying solely on the instinct of grace?

Certainly, I do not intend to diminish the role of divine influences. First of all, there is one door in particular that I open wide to them, namely that which serves as the entryway for the direct government of our souls by means of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Even in what concerns our personal self-government, I hold and affirm that nothing replaces the love of God above all, which is the principal mover of this personal government. I know quite well that in a soul who thus loves God, every virtue becomes, in a sense, divine, when it carries us lovingly and by a kind of instinctual flair toward what is in harmony with the love of God, simultaneously turning us away from what contradicts or offends it, even in the slightest of ways. I have indeed read St. Augustine building with all these data a simplified doctrine of our divine self-government, doubtlessly by the gifts, but also by the supernatural virtues, which are, according to him, naught but an exercise of love or, more literally, of loves, refracted into rays as though by a prism, spreading out from the unique focal point of our charity, rays whose harmonious rainbow spreads out in a hierarchy of love, *virtus ordo amoris*

However, I also am aware that our attentive, prudent, and labo-

4. "Virtue gets its four names from four different dispositions of love itself." *De mor. Eccl.*, c. 15.---"For me to briefly sum up the definition of every virtue, I can say, 'Virtue is charity.'" *Epist.* 29. Cf. *De Civ. Dei*, bk. 15, ch. 11. "Prudence is love choosing wisely." *De Mor. Eccl.*, loc. cit. Cf. *STI-II*, q. 41, a. 4; q. 41, a. 1; *II-II*, q. 15, a. 4; q. 4-, a. 1, ad l.

rious self-government remains at the foundation of our sanctification, that it is ordinarily the condition for our most assured merits, that it is not for nothing that man is essentially rational, and finally that, in order to form virtues completely worthy of his nobility, grace must take up the work of our divinization by means of our reason. Without this crosscheck by supernaturalized reason, would we not run the risk of holding that our natural instincts are the dictates of the love of God?⁵ Is it not a fact of experience that our temperament, forever underlying the supernatural order's rule over us, is home to urges and, as it were, fumes that are mixed in with the inspirations of the supernatural, sometimes permeating them to such an extent that one wonders whether such an aggressive holiness would not be, at bottom, a consecration of our passions and, as it were, a canonization of our sympathies and antipathies?

No, nothing, not even the most trained spiritual flare, entirely replaces the insights analyzed in the rational light of this undervalued supernatural prudence, for it has eyes to see and a ready instrument for rendering judgments. Thus, it would seem that prudence would only be a sieve, though one that is indispensable for preventing indigestible husks, the grinds that cannot be assimilated to the divine life, from passing through as though they were pure wheat flour.

However, it is more. It is a faculty of organization. On account of the patient and directive work that it ceaselessly exercises over the practice of the virtues, not only are our hostile dispositions little by little eliminated, but beyond this, prudence also establishes a synergistic coordination of all our efforts on behalf of the good. This begets results having an assured technical value, a guarantee against the returns of disorder, and a solidity in our accomplishment, one that the inspirations of pure love do not provide by themselves. It is a good work that is meticulous and durable.

5. "Like when a running horse that is blind, the faster that it runs, the more heavily will it fall" (*STI-II*, q. 58, a. 4, ad j).

Having thus placed the question of our personal and supernatural self-government solely by the resources of charity within its proper limits, we can now return to our subject: the task of prudence.

What characterizes the content of our supernatural life, in the details of its external relationships and internal passions, is the inextricable interweaving of the innumerable movements involved in it, along with their perpetual agitation. As the dictum of an ancient philosopher states: "One never steps into the same river twice." But what is a river [*torrent*] in comparison with this vital whirlpool [*tourbillon*]?

Now, psychologists have undertaken a systematic classification of these states of the entangled soul. They are doubtlessly right, and we follow them, because after all, one cannot do otherwise if one wishes to speak about such a subject. But let us also remember what a great physiologist once said about his colleagues studying the brain: "These men are coachmen who know the roads and the house numbers without knowing what goes on inside."

First of all, what is daunting is the number of the parts making up our internal organism. We have our reason, which is both speculative and practical, in both domains able to fasten onto an infinite number of objects with varied means and operations that determine the diversity of our sciences and arts. These sciences and arts abound in demonstrations, procedures, methods, and conclusions. And this is not the whole story. If science and art have fixed procedures, the man who wields them is a moral and religious being, called to a supernatural life. He is able to supernaturalize the use that he makes of them (for example, as someone like St. Thomas did).⁶ Moreover, everywhere that certitude is not given at the first stroke, his investigations look for reinforcement in the lights that well forth from the interior of the soul, and even, when it is a question of divine objects, in the certitudes on which our divine life rests.

6. See *ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 1, ad 1; a. 4, ad 1.

Likewise, we have a will, whose foundational unity is the desire for our good but which, under the urging of [particular] objects that the intellect manifests to it, is specified as a free will, that is, a will capable of anything and everything. It has multiple ways of adhering: natural willing and willing by choice, simply consenting and commanding, deciding and using, and finally, taking joy in the rest that terminates the action. Its objects are infinite: goods above us like God, Truth, and Duty; goods at our own level, our fellow persons; inferior goods that we make use of. If we here reproduce this simplified nomenclature drawn from St. Augustine, we do not imagine that we fully enclose its content. What a great variety of situations exist, for example, regarding the ways our will can direct the duties that we have to our fellowmen, duties of justice or of fraternal charity! Let us consult questions 25 and 26 of the *Secunda secundae* of St. Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*. There we will find many questions to be answered. Can we love ourselves through charity—in our soul, our body, and in what way? Must we love sinners, our enemies? Must we give them signs of friendship, and if so, to what degree? Must we love our neighbor more than ourselves, at the expense of our bodily life? For whom should we have greater love—those who are better or those who are closer to us? And among our relatives, who will win our love—son or father, father or mother, wife or parents? We are faced with the same questions concerning those who have benefited us, our friends, and our protégés. These are merely the headings of chapters whose content spreads out into the great diversity of possible solutions, all in accord with the concrete circumstances facing us in the multiple interwoven strands of the duties of justice with those of charity. And this holds true just as much for justice. Could we still think that directing our wills through this labyrinth would be a simple affair?

If we descend into our sensibility, besides the external senses, whose moral and religious exercise depend on us, we encounter the shifting and volatile matter of the internal senses, of the

imaginations whose fantasies are well-known, of our ever-sly and ever-hidden instincts, and of common sense and good sense whose ever-frequent alterations, through inborn vice or under the influence of the passions, risk vitiating the intellect's own good work, on which the conduct of life depends.

Indeed, this is nothing in comparison with what we await in the domain of our sense passions, the passions of concupiscence with their sudden triggers, their relentless oscillations between love and hate, desire and revulsion, joy and sadness, as well as the passions of struggle, ambitions, discouragement, fears, and forms of boldness, as well as forms of anger. Under these narrow labels of the twelve classical movements of the passions, what a turgidity of secret movements exists, what nuances, what entanglements, what subtle repercussions! In honor of Pascal's mite,⁷ let us bring a halt to these infinite interweaving threads in our internal life and move on!

Likewise, we encounter a new domain, one that faith makes known to us, the domain of disorder caused by original sin [*péché de race*] to which are added the results of our own wanderings. Through its contaminating radiation, a focal point of sin pollutes this entire living mass, from the intellect to the least of the passions. It remains even in the saints (restrained, yes, but always active) for their struggle and their merit. With the Venerable Bede, we can enumerate four principal infirmities: ignorance in the intellect, malice in the will, weakness where there should be strength, and concupiscence in the passions of love. The virulence of this focal point is such that, in order to furnish some idea of it, theology has only found the analogy of a fire smoldering in the midst of dry twigs, *fomes peccati*, which the least spark threatens to fully ignite at any moment.

7. [Tr. note: see Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Pensées and Other Writings*, trans. Honor Levi, ed. Anthony Levi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1008), 66-67: "But to present ourselves with an equally astonishing wonder, let us search in what we know for the tiniest things. In its minuscule body, a mite shows us parts incomparably tinier: legs with joints, veins in its legs, blood in its veins, humours in its blood, drops in its humours, vapours within the drops. Subdividing these last divisions, we will exhaust ourselves."]

And I have not yet said anything concerning the goal to which we must elevate all of these “weapons of iniquity,” as the Apostle says, a goal that is totally beyond what nature can grasp, a goal that asserts, before each of our miserable energies, lofty and infinitely varied requirements, the requirements of faith, hope, charity, and the cardinal virtues with all their ramifications and nuances. What a disproportion! What a condition ... indeed, what a condition!

Behold man! Behold the being who must be disciplined in order for him to be won over to a divine life. We thus can understand the dread that seizes certain souls who, despairing at the possibility of commanding so complicated a task by attacking it in all of its details, take refuge (despite all the perils involved) in a simplified line of conduct, abandoning themselves to the general inspirations of God's love.

However, a stronger soul, one that is more mindful of what is required by the humanization of grace in us, cannot accept this defeat. Catholic theology, the guardian of the rights of even ungraced human nature, does not allow it. It desires that we do God the honor of governing ourselves, in our human manner, like men, and that we grant the omnipotence of grace the recognition of believing in the loftiness of the task that it imposes on us by simply perfecting our nature, without either destroying it or replacing it.

For such a work, in the service of the intentions of charity, we stand in need of a tactician of the first order—and we will have it.

The ancient philosophers compared reason perfected by prudence not to an ignorant coachman but, rather, to the noble charioteer: *Auriga virtutum*. With his gaze fixed on the course that he must travel, he holds his horses in hand. He has an eye for everything: for accidents on the road, for the advance of his rivals, and for the slightest movements of his steeds, whose unique character he has come to know in every detail. This one rears up, that one shies, and the other strains against the reins. Nonetheless, the charioteer pulls his harness, and by his voice—and, if necessary, by the whip—

he tempers, stabilizes, and excites them, ceaselessly implementing his initiatives in the midst of the circumstances facing him, knowing how to modify its conduct along the way and how, so to speak, to shape his interventions onto the life of his team.

Behold what we must transpose into the domain of our supernatural conduct. It is not a recipe given once and for all so that we may govern some purely malleable substance. Nonetheless, it is a containment and domination of contingencies, less through a speculative and meticulous science of their details than through living experience and the vigorous cultivation of our power to decide, ceaselessly renewing and feeding it at the sources of a living love of God.

The secret of this outlook will not be found in the manuals of asceticism or of casuistry that strive to predict every possible case and to provide lines of appropriate conduct corresponding to them. Such a book has its use, for it renders its services by furnishing authoritative models for resolving problems. However, given that, concretely speaking, no equivalent case exists, onsite adaptation remains the proper task of our good personal government. Suggestions, orientations—yes, as many as you can desire! However, such casuistry cannot, in the end, furnish wholly polished-off solutions that are practical on all points and imperative, applicable straightaway to every single concrete case. There is no prudence that is written on paper. In order to govern oneself well, a tactical maneuver is needed, one that is utterly versatile because it unfolds on the essentially moving terrain of human contingencies.

Certainly, our faculty of government is not in itself merely a form of endless becoming. It is practical reason, armed with its fundamental ordination to the truth, to the principles that rule it absolutely and on which it rules its own activity.⁸ Its point of departure is fixed, namely, the intentions of the love of God. Its line of

8. See STII-II, q. 4-, a. 15, co. and ad 1; q. 48, a. 1.

conduct is defined. It must realize what represents the love of God in particular cases and must eliminate what is opposed to this same love. The general procedures are determined for it. First, one must consult oneself and others in order to recognize the best means for establishing the rule of charity in us. Then, one must choose these means and impose them upon one's action. Finally, to the degree that it is exercised, its experiences and accumulated achievements beget habits that restrain hazards, economize its work, and reinforce the surety of its directions.⁹

However, all these supports and benefits form only a general orientation that usefully dominates all the contingencies of detail, without for all that reducing them. To profit from it, this activity and achievement must be supplemented by an ever-vigilant *solicitude*. Never did the solemn warning of the Gospel, "*Vigilate! Remain vigilant!*," meet with a more pregnant meaning than when applied to our good personal and supernatural self-government. To be vigilant is, one can say, the very task of the person who is divinely prudent.¹⁰

THE IMMOBILE AXIS

The task of seeking the goal of human life does not fall to prudence. That is a prior affair, one that he who undertakes the task of governing himself presupposes as a settled matter. He who is divinely prudent welcomes the teaching of faith and takes as the point of departure for his own labor the intentions of charity living in his heart, intentions whose reign he must assure in the details of his life.

Therefore, the first act of our personal self-government is to recognize the ends of charity and be penetrated with an intention that is genial toward them. Prudence, says St. Thomas, originates in an appetite rectified by the willing of the ends.

9. See *ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 16, ad z; q. 48, a. 3, ad 3.

10. See *ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 9.

This genial intention never departs from the prudent man. It is his constant and unwavering reference point. It inspires all of his deliberations, choices, and commands. It is the fundamental spring of his work, his living force, and quite simply, the immobile axis and generative source of all he will strive to do.

Through this continuous dependence upon our divine life, the prudence of the child of God, from the very start, is distinct from all the false forms of prudence that claim to govern us. It repudiates the prudence of the flesh, the enemy of God, as St. Paul says, a "prudence" which places man's end in base enjoyments. It rejects the idea of ever compromising with the prudence of this age, substituting this world's goods for life's true goal, namely God and His love. It surpasses all human forms of prudence, however commendable they may be, though having objects that are secondary, particular, and temporal. It is elevated above moral prudence itself, which, even though it looks upon the complete good of man, fashions him only to the measure of human nature and the requirements of reason, which, however noble they may be, are still cut to our own level, with all the contingencies and limitations which befall the way we conceive and will God Himself.

Our personal supernatural self-government has only one perspective: that of charity, of the love of God above all things. In other words, it is placed at God's own perspective, namely, the perspective from which, so to speak, God rules His own life. This is all wholly appropriate, for given that we are quite literally children of God, we should govern ourselves like gods.

It is clear that, through a kind of overflow, we will not thereby abandon the task of providing for our own good. Is not our supreme rational good found in the effective practice of the love of God? And thus, the moral work of human prudence is not suppressed. Instead, it is incorporated into the ends that supernatural prudence

ii. See *ST* II-II, q. 4-, a. 15; q. 55, a. 1, co. and ad 3; a. 1, co. and ad 1; a. 3, co.: a. 4, ad 3; a. 6.

pursues while simultaneously being completed and super-elevated by them. However, this is a consequence and not the goal that is principally in view.

Without this fundamental quality of the divine intention of charity, welcomed and made our own by prudence, enduring through the maze of educative activities we must undertake in the midst of life's details, there can be no supernatural self-government. Rather, this leaves us with the reign of imprudence without remedy, born of our aversion for the divine rules. Such a state of soul is recklessness erected in the line of conduct as well as a continuous lack of reflection insofar as the very principle of every supernatural reflection is absent. Here, we have inconstancy in our resolutions, which are neither supported nor assured by any fixed point. Thus, our activity is imbued with negligence, which thus becomes our very means of self-government, whereas the great lever of supernatural solicitude should be the fervor of our love. Every work undertaken in our internal government is shattered by this fundamental vice.¹²

Now, after having noted the capital importance of this intention presiding over the work of prudence, we must push further into its content. Charity is one. However, the aspects of the supreme goodness that is its object have various aspects, and each of God's attributes is reflected in us in the form of a perfection to be imitated, in the form of our virtues' various ends. Christ said, "He who observes my commandments is the one whom I love." Therefore, in true and effective love of God, there is, as it were, an unconditional desire to fulfill the whole of the law of love. The ends of the virtues preexist in the intention of the heart that loves God.

Thus, it is not only the love of God in general that forms the axis of our supernatural self-government. All the goals that prudence proposes to itself for realization are implied and wrapped up in the love of God. Each of the ends that our virtues must realize—peace

iz. See *S7II-II*, q. 53. aa. 1, 4, 5; q. 54, a. 5. Cf. a. 1 and a. 2, ad 4. [Tr. note: in the original, no part of *S7*'s indicated.]

among men through effective respect for the rights of all and of each, moderation in the desiderative passions, self-possession in the combative passions, with all the secondary ends that spell out these master ends in detail (e.g., piety, obedience, humility, abstinence, patience)—all this, having been realized and pushed as far as possible by the means that prudence will suggest and mobilize, is willed outright in advance and thus far constitutes the point of departure for prudence's own work, as well as the permanent reference point that guides it. This ensemble is what constitutes and develops what we have called the ends of charity, the principle of our supernatural, autonomous government.¹³

Now, what is the perspective taken up by supernatural prudence as it begins its governance, looking out upon this complex content?

In natural morality, reason determines the ends of human virtues in regard to man's essential constitution. From the principle, "Man must tend to the good," we will deduce, for example, that we must act in accord with our reason and, therefore, must render each person what is owed to him, that we must moderate our passions, etc. Such are the ends of the virtues that human prudence encounters wholly prepared and then seeks to realize.

However, how are we to determine the divine ends, which are the very ends of the life of God, transposed and made our own to the measure of our actions? God Himself has provided for this, and just as He has revealed to us the supreme end of our life, our calling to communion [*société*] with God and the life of the theological virtues that corresponds to it, He has also taught us the specific ends that the infused virtues must pursue. Doubtlessly, these ends are not presented to us in Scripture using the analytic methods of philosophers, the practical vanity of which was so cruelly derided by Pascal.¹⁴ The Gospel enumerates them without order, or rather, ac-

15. See *STII-II*. q. 4-, a. 6, and a. 13, ad 1; q. 51, a. 1, co. [Tr. note: again, in the original, no part of *ST* is indicated.]

14. "Why divide my virtues [*ma morale*] into four rather than into six? Why should I rather establish virtue as being four in number rather than two or one?" *Pensées*.

ording to this “order of the heart that consists in digression on each point related to the end in order to continually exhibit it.” Indeed, there we encounter principal ends mixed in with secondary ones, so that we may note well that the New Law is not a theory but, rather, a discipline of love. Everything that brings charity to light and is related to it is important, even if it is only the smallest iota.

Theologians will then come along and place the evangelical data into the frameworks of rational morality, a useful task from its own perspective, and one that through its successes highlights the superior human value of the revealed doctrine. Indeed, it concludes that what the Gospel introduced is less a new doctrine than a new spirit, a spirit of a greater, absolute perfection in relation to the requirements of the divine goal by which all the ends of the moral virtues are exalted.

This is what the evangelical doctrine highlights in the Sermon on the Mount, which is its code: “It has been said to you ... I say to you.” What does Christ say? The same thing that Moses said, though with an increase to each commandment. “I have not come to destroy the law but, rather, to bring it to fulfillment.”

This fulfillment shines forth in the metaphors by which Christ, from the start, represents His future follower: salt, light, the city on the hill—all images of something excellent, filled to the point of overflowing. From whence will this transcendence come to the child of God? It will come from the fact that his virtues will be elevated above common virtues, from the fact that “his justice is more abundant than that of the Pharisees.”

Having established this principle, on the word of the new law-giver, each of the ends of the moral law according to Moses (one might as well say, according to natural reason) is opened up and, as through an effect of its own interior propulsive force, transformed into the excellence that belongs to the ends of Christian virtue. There is contempt for the human eye and the reformation of what is interior. There is the tendency toward limitless perfection, in the

image of the infinitely perfect Father. There is secrecy in the giving of alms, in prayer, and in fasting. There is total abandonment to the providence that feeds the birds, confidence in the Father who does not know how to do evil to His children. At every turn of the Masters words, we find reflecting and radiating within our activity's goals an image that is ever the same, at once inspiring and attractive: the face of the Father who is in heaven. Looking upon this transformation of all the goals of human life, how can we fail to recognize an increase that resonates in harmony with the love of God above all and for Himself? This New Law is a law of love to be taken up by hearts that love God and intend all their activity's goals to call to mind Him whom they love.

And behold what is affirmed and spreads out before the gaze of those who are divinely prudent. Behold what is embryonically contained in this primordial rectification of his intention through the love of God for His own sake. Again, behold, though how clarified and enriched: the immobile axis and generator of our supernatural self-government.

Prudence incorporates into itself this foundational rectitude of intention, though in its own way. It is reason, and reason precisely as reason, that sees. It does not love. Nonetheless, let us not forget that if reason is not made to love, rational man loves with his reason, by his reason. Whenever he loves the truth, man imbues his reason with love. In the man who aspires to govern his life, what rectitude of loving is in the will becomes a love for the truth that reflects this love and commands his life.

The man who is divinely prudent says:

What is necessary is that my life be true, that is, conformed to the requirements of these divine ends which in their love for God arouse my will's impulse deep within my heart. Hence, I will that all my decisions be conformed to this dictate of my charity. In advance I say, "Yes," when it says, "Yes," and, "No," when it says, "No." Faced with the law of love, I do not have both *yes* and *no* within me. Like Christ, I forever do what

pleases that law. It is a settled affair. Behold my point of departure and my sole orientation. *Veritas vitae* "Truth in my life": this is my motto. But, I do not separate this truth from my life: everything that is conformed to divine charity is true for me. That is enough. Henceforth, I possess the immobile axis of all self-government according to God: I will bring forth, with my life, the truth in charity. *Veritatem facientes in cavitate*:

THE SUPERNATURAL GOLDEN MEAN

How are we to make this living truth, which must place all our external relations and internal passions into harmony with the rule of the love of God above all, practically and effectively descend into the details of our life and be incarnated therein?

St. Thomas, the guardian and authentic interpreter of the laws of Christian morality, expresses a surprising response to this question. According to him, the truth of our detailed supernatural life is found in the golden mean, that is, in the choice of conduct that holds the excesses to which our passions carry us at an equal distance from each other, proportioning our actions to the rights that have a claim upon them. In a word, the practical truth of Christianity consists in moderation [*mesure*].¹⁵

Does not such a solution contradict the law "of abundance in justice," which just a moment ago we were pleased to exalt as being the proper characteristic of life lived in accord with charity? And might St. Thomas not have been the prisoner of the Greek wisdom in which he placed too much confidence? "*Ne quid nimis*, nothing too much, let us live according to a wise mean," was a fine dictum for a morality holding that reason is the supreme rule and first mover. However, could this mediocrity provide a satisfying solution for the charity of the children of God which has the ambition of reproducing the divine mores? Is it situated at the lofty heights of graces om-

15. Eph 4:15.

16. STILII, q. 47, a. 7.

nipotence? Therefore, does a life lived according to the golden mean leave room for the evangelical virtues? Can a place be found there for absolute humility, unflagging patience, mortification, purity, renunciation, and ultimately, in a word, for the folly of the Cross?

We will forbid ourselves to respond to these refusals by saying that the domain of Christian heroism solely falls under the gifts and government of the Holy Spirit, even though this ordinarily would be true and suffices, in a pinch, for explaining St. Thomas who in his supernatural morality reserved a place of honor to these gifts. Nonetheless, St. Thomas warns us that, in the end, our two divine governments (i.e., our personal self-government and the government of the Holy Spirit) differ from each other not by the greatness of the works involved but instead by the way they are performed: the former is active; the latter is passive and docile. Both proceed from charity, and both must express in our detailed undertakings the divine elevation of the principle that rules them.

Therefore, the debate must be taken up on the terrain of our personal government. We must establish the fact that the rule of the golden mean does not diminish the divine nobility, nor, on occasion, the very heroism of our Christian virtues.

Indeed, the law of the golden mean does not pertain to the divinized ends of human life that are the ends of charity. On this superior plane, the law of excess reigns: "*Quantum potes tantum aude / Quia maior omni laude ...* [As much as you can do, that much dare to do / For greater than every praise ...]."¹⁷ The law of the golden mean pertains to the practical means for realizing these magnificent intentions of charity on the inferior terrain of our affective and combative sensibility and of our external relations.

Now, considered in themselves and in accord with their immanent law, our passions are naturally unrestrained and carried to excess. Likewise, our will is free in the domain of the means that fall

17. [Tr. note: this is taken from Aquinas's *Lauda sion*, the sequence for the Feast of Corpus Christi in the Roman Rite.]

under its choice. The universality of its rule has a sweeping breadth, being only our own interest, from the start unrectified by others' rights, which are, rather, an obstacle for it.

Although divinized in the depth of his soul and even, initially, in his faculties, the child of God nonetheless retains his passions along with their inclination to develop themselves in line with their complete satisfaction, as well as his egoism which is loath to regard the rights of others with the same eye as his own. The harsh man wishes to be strong, the lax to be broad-minded [*relâché*], the rash to be courageous, the feeble [*deliquescent*] to be pious, the overworked to be generous, he who lacks equity to be observant in matters of justice, and the slack to be prudent. At every turn of our activity, that which is excessive in our temperament, in our instinctive habits, in the innate impulses of our imagination and of our passions of attack or defense, as well as in our will, lies in wait for us and entices us. Here we find sympathies, antipathies, anger, incessant denials of justice—so many traps set for the supernatural intention, set against the aims of charity, whose interests these disordered movements sometimes wed, offering themselves in its service. Thus, zeal becomes fanaticism and frenzied devotion. The first task that is imposed on our personal government inspired by charity is the establishment of order within this chaotic mass, keeping our senses and will away from these excesses that lead them to slip out from the rule of reason speaking in the name of charity, evading its activity in imposing the golden mean on them, a mean that will adapt them to their role as instruments in our divine life.

Without a doubt, we here find ourselves faced with a work of lofty inspiration, but it is also a work of just and exact discernment, and of a firm will in support of such discernment. We must know ourselves and, aided by our past experiences, form for ourselves an exact idea of both our weaknesses and our resources. At every moment, we must be aware of the changes taking place in us and around us, at once aware of the time that it happens outside of us

and of time that it happens inside of us, aware as much of the excitation that a given exertion will cause for us as of the depression that results in us from a given disagreement, knowing how to step back and consider the rights of others in such detail when everything within ourselves encourages us to overlook them. And, along the way, we must determine the true and just attitude, far from the extremes and respectful of rights, an attitude that will enable us to have mental and moral equilibrium in the midst of all these interior urges and objectives, a superior form of morality, inspired by the love of God. *In medio stat virtus*, virtue stands in the golden mean, as much for supernatural virtue as for natural virtue.

However, while the child of God is not dispensed from this rule of the golden mean on account of the nature that remains in him with its excesses, we must note well that this golden mean also brings him an increase in harmony with the elevation of the goal toward which he stretches forth, coming from the ends of the charity that inspire him as the immobile axis of his personal self-government.

The acquired virtues by which man is placed in order *vis-à-vis* his human reason are one affair. The infused virtues by which he is set in order as “a fellow citizen with the saints and a member of the household of God” are another.

Therefore, the measure imposed, for example, on the passions of concupiscence will differ when, on the one hand, we take reason's requirements as our norm and, on the other, when we temper these same passions in view of their divine rule. The rational measure will consist in abstaining so that the health of the body, the instrument of reason, as well as reason itself, may not be troubled and may attend to its superior life in peace. The supernatural measure will go so far as to “chastise his body and reduce it to servitude.”¹⁸

This difference between the golden mean of our rational self-

18. See *STI-II*, q. 65, a. 4; *II-II*, q. 47, a. 6.

government and that of our divine self-government is so great that it creates a specific difference between the two governments and the virtues they direct. The elevation of the end inevitably reverberates through the means intrinsically proportioned to the goal. The golden mean established in view of the ends of charity is *essentially supernatural*.

Therefore, provided that it is understood aright, this law of the golden mean does not run the risk of diminishing the evangelical ideal proposed to our charity. The superabundance of justice that presides over the prudential labor as its goal and end is found again in the detailed choices inspired by it. As St. Augustine said, when we are faced with the alternative of disobeying God's commandments or passing from this life, our only choice is to die for our beloved God rather than to live in a way that is offensive to Him.¹⁹ Such is the golden mean proportioned to the ends of charity. It goes even further, and no longer under the pressure of necessity but, rather, under love's pressure, it on occasion declares what Fr. Captier said in an analogous circumstance: "Let us go forth, my friends, for our Good God!"

Far from being the denial of the heroism called for by the Gospel, the golden mean, supernaturalized and, as it were, baptized by the divine ends that inspire the discernment of the child of God,²⁰ becomes the linchpin of the perfect realization of the *excess* of God's Love.

TACTICAL EDUCATION IN PRUDENCE

The task facing us has been specified. Henceforth, we know the point of departure and the ultimate outcome of our supernatural self-government, the love of God driven onward to the point of being a love that chooses all the virtues that incarnate it. We also know the

19. Tract. 51 in *Iohannem*.

20. *Prout Sapiens determinabit. STII-II*, q. 47, a. 7, s.c.

means for practically realizing this love in the interior movements of our soul and in our external relations: the golden mean which the requirements of the love of God imposes on the excesses of our passions, as well as on our actions in relation to the rights of those who bear certain claims upon us. Our technical knowledge [*science*] of the goal and of the means for arriving at the goal has been achieved.

However, while our self-government is an affair of knowledge (which we must maintain energetically against the partisans of all forms of illuminism), it does not stop at knowledge [*science*]. "You parade about with your weapons and gauntlets," Epictetus once said, "but I would like to see what you know how to do with them." Therefore, we now must maneuver. The pivot points of this future maneuvering are fixed. We must realize it on the living terrain of our lives. This is the proper work of prudence, the maneuvering faculty of the supernatural moral life.

In practice, precisely because of the improvisations it involves, these maneuvers, like every kind of maneuvering, elude every kind of invariable theory. Nonetheless, here as elsewhere there are proximate principles for action, ways of making models for the task to be executed, procedures that are current and have proven themselves. In the art of military command, such things are called "tactical rules." Such rules do not replace the act itself, the concrete act of government, which is incommunicable because of its individual character. Nonetheless, they do illuminate, direct, channel, aid, and efficaciously support it.

The tactic of infused prudence includes the three acts already mentioned.²¹ These three acts are spread out, pressing forward from the first to the third, so that the latter takes up, concentrates, and incorporates the values of those that precede it, making these values pass effectively into the economy of our detailed activities which stand in need of organization.²²

ii. See above.

ii. See *ST* II-II, q. 51, a. 1, ad 1. See the closing of "The Task of Supernatural Prudence" above.

The first of these acts consists in *deliberating* about what in the details of our life (*in particulari operabili*) is currently apt for bringing about or destroying, favoring, or retarding the radiation of the divine life and the inspirations of charity in us. The second is the *judgment* that identifies the golden mean in harmony with charity's requirements. And the third is the effective realization of what has been judged to be executable after deliberation. This realization includes two degrees: first to choose [*se decider*] and then *to command*.

To know how to reflect, to know how to judge, and to know how to command in view of the requirements of the love of God: behold the entire tactic of our personal²³ and supernatural self-government.²⁴

TO KNOW HOW TO REFLECT

If we were angels, we would not need to reflect. We would see. The need to deliberate in order to arrive at the truth is itself a mark of intellectual weakness.²⁵ However, it is also a power, our power as men, for such deliberation is the way that the divine government is exercised over us. God takes into account the diversity of natures. He governs the material creature by submitting it to the conditions of time and place. He governs the angel, who is a spirit, by freeing him from space but not from time (though truth be told, such time is its own time, angelic duration). Similarly, in the order of spirit, deliberation is imposed upon man in order that he may arrive at the determination of the truth which the angels attain all at once.²⁶ It is quite necessary that we consent to this imposed necessity, for otherwise we will find realized in ourselves a particular mocking expression once stated by Pascal. Once accepted, this necessity is convert-

13. *Prudentia monastica*, *STII-II*, q. 47, a. 11.

14. See *STII-II*, q. 51, a. 2, co. and ad 2.

25. See *STII-II*, q. 49, a. 5, ad 2.

26. *STII-II*, q. 52, a. 1.

ed into a power, for through deliberation we all can likewise arrive at this same truth which the angels see all at once.

Thus, all men, without using the term, ceaselessly deliberate. What do they deliberate about most of the time? Pascal has expressed it well: they deliberate in order to pass an hour! This is not a truly human deliberation. It distorts God's plan. Before deliberating at all, a man must *deliberate about himself*,¹⁷ if we may use St. Thomas's powerful expression. That is, he must deliberate about this moving body launched at full speed toward the goal that is imposed upon it, though according to a trajectory that it has the awesome power of modifying. This is the only form of deliberation we are concerned with here, and we understand that it will be conducted with all the lights that faith communicates to the child of God and with the inspirations of charity that God has placed in his or her heart.

In short, we must take up the end as well as the modes of being of each of the particular acts that we must perform and test them using the touchstone of charity's own ends and those of the virtues in which charity is expressed so that, from this confrontation, the project and, as it were, the future trajectory of our activity emerges approved, amended, modified, and ready to serve as a solution in our interior divine life.²⁸

If, for example, I am presented with an urgent occasion to correct another person's fault, I must first test the words I will say, as well as the tone that I will place in them, on the touchstone of the principles of charity that rectify the Christian's will in advance. For example: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." And, this will lead me to conclude that if I can hate the fault, I must love my neighbor, the same sinner, and therefore must indeed correct him, though without personal bitterness, doing so for his good and charitably. This is what we call deliberation.

17. *sn-II*, q. 89, a. 6.

18. *Sri-II*, q. 14, aa. i, 5, 6; *II-II*, q. 47, a. 6.

The counsel that we thus hold within ourselves presupposes a habitually at-hand supply of these practical principles and, hence, nurtured with the pious zeal that begets the love of God, an investigation into the divine commandments, the rules of life that are formulated by the Gospel and the letters of the Apostles, the Catechism, moral theology, the preaching of the Church, the words and writings of the saints, as well as their very examples which often have a universal value for various lines of conduct while being susceptible to infinite adaptations.

A Christian approaches reflection on the conduct of his life equipped with principles like these: "Seek first the kingdom of God and its justice. Nobody can have two masters. Do not perform your justice before men. Do not heed the speck that is in your brothers eye; look rather at the beam that is in your own. Let your speech be, 'Yes,' if it is yes, and, 'No,' if it is no ..." I understand that such principles are one with our love of God, and thanks to this love, they are living springs, ready to be unwound and brought forth in the cases that present themselves to conscience looking for a resolution. As we have said, here we have our counsel's immobile axis.¹⁹

In minds thus prepared by cordially taking possession of the proximate rules of action, we see the preeminent realization of St. Augustine's definition: prudence is a love that knows how to direct us in our choices. Indeed, the action sometimes sets off so rapidly that we find it quite difficult to recognize the underlying reasoning. The discernment in question is such a direct effect of love that it seems almost instinctual. He who has encountered these holy souls, profoundly instructed in the school of God, living His teachings with their heart divinized, in whom counsel is so spontaneous and falls, so to speak, immediately at the right moment upon the right path to be taken, could believe that he is here faced with an immediate intervention by the spirit of counsel. While I write these words,

19. See §1 above.

I cannot help but think of St. Catherine of Siena and also our French heroine, Blessed Joan of Arc.

Nothing in our self-government can replace this instructed charity. And this is why St. Thomas holds that those who live in attachment to sin cannot carry out their interior counsel well.³⁰ When it is a question of tending, not toward a particular goal like earthly and temporal goals but, rather, to the goal of the whole of human life, we need a heart that is rectified *vis-à-vis* this goal by charity. Sinners do not have such a heart. If it happens that they fall on what is just and give good counsel, this is not the effect of an infallible prudence but, instead, of a kind of *wholly human* skill that will not carry them far.³¹

However, this general knowledge of principles is not sufficient by itself. Beyond it, we stand in need of an exact and concrete knowledge of the particular act that we must perform. And on account of the infinite diversity of human actions, of their objects and circumstances, it is difficult to attain such knowledge. Those who practice the examination of conscience know well all these details that we have mentioned. A given person believes that he acts uprightly when he in reality commits a foolish deed or even an act of injustice, for want of having discerned all the elements involved in his action. Such a person believes that he performs a truthful deed but then perceives that animosity and self-love are mixed in with his action. Not only must the *major premises* serving as the principle for our deliberations be holy, but beyond these, the *minor premises* of fact, which adjust to the given principles the means destined to channel them, must themselves likewise be profoundly rectified.³² Failing this, we will find ourselves faced with the craftiness that claims to perform virtue with more or less fraudulent means.³³

30. Sec **sm-II**, q. 47. a. 13.

31. *Est in talibus dinotica. id est naturahs industria.* Ibid., ad 3.

31. **STI-II**, q. 49, a. 1.

35. **STH-II**, q. 55. a. 3-

How are we to have such lucid knowledge of the concrete acts that we must perform? St. Thomas discusses this matter at length. From his teachings, we can gather evidence for four auxiliaries whose execution constitutes a kind of method or art for arriving at the truth pertaining to our contingent actions.

Our first auxiliary will be a sincere rectification of our mind in relation to the truth, no longer the truth of principles but, rather, that of the facts.³⁴ Here, we are concerned with opening a path for the love of God. This is not the time to set traps, which are indeed set for the love of God whenever we do not seek to know things such as they are.³⁵ In matters of justice, we must look directly at the rights of the other party and envision them as they are, without turning our gaze back to our own self-interest. Duty is whole and entire. It excludes all subterfuge and requires everything from us. We are permitted to examine it only in order to know it better.—In matters concerning the movements of the passions (for example, of a love that is dubious or of some undertaking that is more or less cowardly), we find that we must not dissimulate, that we must call villainy what is villainy and not be bothered with pretexts that we feel to be false. We must undertake a just evaluation of everything that is moving about in our projects and of the way that matters stand regarding the naked truth of things as they are and not what they surreptitiously would propose themselves to be. Thus, at this stage of its tactics, prudence finds itself again to be a faculty of truth in the service of the true good, envisioning the facts as principles *sub ratione veri*.³⁶

However, in order to reassure timid consciences, let us heed well the fact that the truth needed here is not in any way mathematical. It is not an absolute, indivisible unit. Archers, notes St. Thomas, reach the target even though they do not hit the mark.³⁷ It suffices

34. See *STII-II*, q. 49, a. 2; q. 51, a. 3, ad 1.

35. *STII-II*, q. 55, a. 3.

36. *STII-II*, q. 47, a. 5, ad 3.

37. *STI-I*, q. 66, a. 1, at the end of the body of the article.

that one hit the area around the center—so too for the moral golden mean. The complications of concrete human action are so great and the labor that it requires so superhuman, that we reach the truth when we have tended toward it in such a way as to have drawn closer to it.³⁸ Ultimately, what counts is the frankness of the intention. And the fact of having realized the truth, though only within the limits of human possibilities, efficaciously demonstrates this frankness.

The second auxiliary for arriving at truth in the details of our activity is the use of experience.³⁹ The past illuminates the present and the future. The memory of what was the case in the past in this or that circumstance, of our resources as well as our weaknesses, of our falls and our compunctions, is the most instructive of documents for enabling us to appreciate what we are actually capable of doing. I wished to be generous but overworked and incapacitated myself. Would I not be too impulsive were I to go forward down this path set before me? Does not this path, one that indeed is excellent in itself, pose a risk of overexertion *for me*? I weigh out the *pros* and the *cons* in light of my experience. And if I ultimately abstain from the activity, I will not do so on account of a lack of generosity but will simply do so out of a just appreciation of the act that I was at the point of realizing. This will be due to virtue.

I have frequented the world and kept this or that company: *Mi-nor redii*, I left there a lesser man.⁴⁰ I wasted my time, the fervor of my piety, the peace of my faith—and what do I now know? This is the sign that, though perhaps permissible in itself, this visit is not good *for me*. Others resist it and even do good in such environs—but not me! This provides us with the sign we need. I hang the activity that I was about to perform now upon its true rung: I will take it back up only if my own interior environment happens to change.

38. See 5711-11, q. 4-, a. 3, ad 1; q. 9, ad 1; q. 51, a. 1, ad 1.

39. See *ST II-II*, q. 49, a. 1.

40. See *De bmt. Christi*, 1.10.

By these two examples, let us be assured of the infinite assistance experience can render in the service of the love of God and for the just comprehension of the elements of our supernatural action.

A third auxiliary, whose connection to this order of things does not lack originality, is the shrewd glance, the *eustochia* spoken of by Aristotle.⁴¹ Its usefulness is quite clear. Indeed, there are unforeseen and sudden cases that disconcert and rush our deliberation. Politicians are aware of this fact, and we extol those of them who, at the turn of a conversation, know how to instantaneously unravel the intentions involved: whence comes a given confidence or whither does it go? In a word, such men have a shrewd glance. Why not annex this precious resource to the good supernatural government of our lives? Therefore, we will need to form for ourselves the habit of accurately and rapidly assessing the true character of a path to be taken, of an impression that we experience, and of an undertaking in view. The Gospel teems with these instantaneous and happy discoveries by which the Master escapes the pitfalls set before Him. When He healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day and someone critiques Him for it, Jesus lets fly this forehand stroke: "I ask you whether it is permitted that one do good on the Sabbath?" And His act thus being justified, He heals.—"Must one pay tribute to Caesar or not?"—"Render therefore to Caesar what is Caesar's."—Behold, the woman in adultery. "Moses commands us to stone her; but you, what do you think?"—"Let him among you who is without sin cast the first stone at her."—Everywhere this is how things are: the shrewd glance of the Master, concerning conduct in accord with God, casting a glance of His omniscience over them, and instantaneously gauging the precise value of a given course of action. Why not seek to acquire, to the degree that we can, this often-indispensable help? Have we never been summoned by the apparent obligation to choose between a lie and a betrayal, between

41. See *S7II-II*, q. 49, a. 4.

a duty of state and an urgent requirement of charity? What hostess has not been summoned to find here and now the word or behavior that will change the course of a conversation that is offensive to faith, charity, or modesty? Therefore, let us cultivate *eustochia*. In the service of charity, it becomes an invaluable instrument of the truth and, thus, of our personal supernatural self-government.

The fourth auxiliary is a welcoming attitude toward others' counsel.⁴² Experience and the shrewd glance are personal acquisitions, limited like ourselves, indeed that not all of us have. Our parents, wise friends, instructed and experienced persons, a director of conscience—such people represent accumulated reserves of experience, lived Christianity, and the science of the spiritual life that he who wishes to govern himself may neither ignore nor neglect.

Indeed, on account of the infinite diversity of circumstances, we need a great deal of time in order to process the necessary directives that are just and practical on all points, and nonetheless we never completely and exhaustively arrive at them by ourselves. This is why Aristotle and St. Thomas direct us to take *counsel from old men*, at once sure on account of the abatement of their passions and instructive on account of their many years of experience. These two masters say that even though such old men's advice is indemonstrable, it deserves no less consideration than do evident demonstrations, for their experience gives them a direct view of the principles to be observed in action, *propter experientiam enim videntur principiis*

With St. Thomas, we must go even further and recognize that, beyond individual experience, we must also turn to collective experience in our search for counsel. That is, perfect counsel requires the study of the ways of the spiritual life. Carefully and respectfully, we must search the documents that the masters of the spiritual life and the saints have left us in their writings and their lives, "not to

41. See STIM I, q. 49, a. 3.

43. *Ibid.*

neglect them through laziness, nor to scorn them through pride.”⁴⁴ This is one of the values of *spiritual reading*, so well-known since [Cassian’s] *Conferences of the Fathers*.

In a sustained and deep Christian life, this duty to seek counsel is translated into the practice of *spiritual direction*, which does not have its origins in the seventeenth century, whatever certain writers may say, but rather, goes much farther back, being found, for example, in the relationship that disciples like Timothy and Titus had with their master St. Paul. What are the letters addressed to these two companions of the Apostle if not letters of direction? Direction is counsel that has been regularized, having become, as it were, a stable institution. It implies confidence and openness concerning the secrets of the soul, given to an instructed, wise, and pious priest. Nothing corresponds better to what we have said about the necessity of counsel for having clear sight in the details of our lives. Is not the priest, by definition, this old man to whom the Philosopher referred us? Has he not left everything, like the old man, and like him, likewise, experienced everything either in himself or in others? St. Paul says of the Savior that, because He suffered and was tested, He is powerful in helping those who are tempted. Moreover, the priest has undertaken studies that have placed him in contact with the collective experience of holy and learned souls. If we add to these prerogatives the grace of his office, the secrecy owed to confidences placed in him, and the obligatory disinterest of his counsel, does he not emerge as the very type of the counselor, someone fulfilling Aristotle’s dreams for what the prudent man must be?

But in order for direction to be an effective auxiliary for self-knowledge, as well as for knowledge about what we must do, and in order for it not to lose its dignity as a useful instrument for our personal divine self-government, it must avoid two pitfalls which we will briefly indicate.

44. *Ibid.*, ad 1.

The first is to submit ourselves to meaningless confidence, as happens in meaningless direction. In such a case, the purely spiritual goal of direction becomes accessory, and good counsel a commonplace consultation, an indiscrete and futile gabbling, where everything passes in review, except what is important. Direction thus becomes nothing more than one more worldly relationship.

The second pitfall is the indefinite and absolute subjugation of souls to the *personality* of the director. Indeed, what is the goal of direction if not to create living beings who truly live the spiritual life,⁴⁵ in other words, autonomous beings whose action comes from their own interior principles and who are gradually habituated to find and use solutions by themselves, spiritual prescriptions adapted to their nature, temperament, state, situation, and grace which were first suggested to them by their director?

I say "subjugation" to the director's *personality*, for if, in principle, no human being is dispensed from governing himself or herself,⁴⁶ it is in fact the case that nobody (not even those who are called to lead others) is utterly self-sufficient in his or her supernatural self-government.⁴⁷ This is especially true for souls who make progress and thus enter into new regions of the spiritual life, as in the case of St. Theresa.

With sincerity, experience, shrewd vision, and the counsel of others, we are now armed to recognize the true tenor of the various shifting things vying for a place in our activity.

We now need only bring about the supreme confrontation between these shifting things, duly recognized for what they are, and the motives or principles that have the right to command Christian action. This is rational deliberation properly so-called, leading to the declaration of the right path to be taken.⁴⁸ After seeing the com-

45. See *STI-II*, q. 57, a. 5. ad i.

46. See *STI-II*, q. i, aa. 1-2..

47. See *STI-II*, q. 49, a. 5, ad 5.

48. See *STI-II*, q. 49, a. 5.

plexity of the elements that this deliberation integrates into itself, as well as the successive degrees that it must pass through, we thus can understand the Aristotelian adage: *Oportet consiliare tarde* [One must be slow in taking counsel].⁴⁹ The mark of true deliberation is maturity. It is not by charging forward with our bayonets drawn that we will come to live in accord with the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, thus being doers of the truth in charity, to once more cite St. Paul's words.

Our judgment will be precipitous if it fails to pass through these steps. What does this mean? Just as we descend from a mountaintop by passing downward step by step on pain of falling, so too man's mind, even one inspired by the love of God, cannot normally descend in a single bound from the clear view of charity's superior ends to the just determination of his detailed actions. If he neglects one step and does not follow the pathway whenever it is possible (i.e., the understanding of principles, experience, shrewd vision, docility, and the attentive and mature comparison of principles and facts), charity will never be realized in his conduct. *Recklessness* is found in holding these rules of human action in scorn, *thoughtlessness* in not being preoccupied with them, and *precipitation* when we omit them because of impetuosity of will or out of passion.⁵⁰ Aristotle noted that, on account of their violent strength, the passions of love hold the first place among the passions that thus render our judgment reckless and precipitate it.⁵¹ And the fabulist, the interpreter of universal experience, agrees with the philosopher's verdict here: "Love, love, when you take hold of us / We must indeed say: Adieu, prudence!"⁵²

For all these reasons, our masters have deservedly given good

49. 57^{II}-H, q. 53, a. 3, ad 3.

50. *Ibid.*, ad 1; a. 3.

51. *Ibid.*, a. 4.

52. [Tr. note: from the closing of Jean de La Fontaine's "Le lion amoureux." See Jean de la Fontaine, *Selected Fables (Fables Choiesies)*, ed. and trans. Stanley Appelbaum (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 1997), 38.]

counsel the rank and importance of being a specific virtue. Doubtlessly it is united to prudence, which it only serves as an auxiliary. However, it nonetheless has its own proper domain and wishes to be cultivated for its own part. And St. Thomas annexed this auxiliary virtue of good counsel, *euboulia*, to the supernatural virtues.

Here, we have something which should be reflected upon by generous, though impassioned and impetuous, souls, by these "Sons of Thunder," who wish to make the fire of heaven descend upon their opponents, and by these pullers of chaff who say, "What do you want? We go, we pull, we burn!" All this well-intentioned vivacity runs aground before the verdict of ancient wisdom, ratified by Christian wisdom: we must deliberate with maturity. *Oportet consiliari tarde*. Good counsel is a supernatural virtue, and he who does not practice it with all its conditions is quite simply an imperfect Christian, if not a sinner.

Oh! How much therefore was she in line with the truth, and in advance Christian, whom the Church calls the Mother of Good Counsel. Even in the presence of a messenger whose heavenly origin she did not doubt, she dared to tarry and to place in suspense the will of the Most-High, bringing herself to a decision only after having received all of the illumination needed to reassure her so that she could state the response, in which, nonetheless, her spirit exulted in advance: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord!"

TO KNOW HOW TO JUDGE

By the force of things, we have already advanced, on several occasions, to this new stage in prudence's tactics. First, could our counsel be brought to completion if we did not form some judgment concerning the truth of its directive principles and concerning the truth of the means that are offered to us for realizing them in our lives? Now, however, it is no longer a question of these partial and preparatory judgments but rather of the definitive and absolute

judgment that brings our deliberation to its close. Such a judgment is easy in simple cases where only one path is present, and these simple cases are what we envisioned in the examples cited above, when on several occasions we pushed deliberation all the way to its final result, in order to highlight the full arc of counsel's deliberations. But matters are not ordinarily so even and uniform. As we said above, the truth of our actions is not an indivisible, simple unit. It is often a knot of intersecting circumstances and perspectives. One given decision is preferable from one given perspective, while another choice is preferable from a different perspective. The rigorist tendency, for example, places us in agreement with the principles, but the best is sometimes the enemy of the good. The lax tendency, by contrast, is more in harmony with human possibilities, but in following it, I can go so far as to loosen the principles to such a degree that they no longer are actually represented in my action. What will reconcile all these extreme positions disputing for our consent? What will extract with certitude the appropriate golden mean in which all these dissonances come into harmony? A great deal is accomplished in our preparation of the terrain by recognizing the proper note of each of the elements involved in the action, its principles and means, making these present, so that their harmony or discord may be truly heard. However, the essential task must still be performed. By *afirm judgment*, we must utter our definitive statement concerning the fitting path that we should now take, in order that charity's inspirations may really pass into our action, so that our own testimony may be the same as the testimony uttered by Him who is the just One *par excellence*'. "I do what is pleasing to Him."

What we need is judgment, *good sense*, understood in the full meaning of the expression.⁵³

It is commonly said that men of good sense are not a dime a dozen. There are people who totally lack it, and there are others who

53. 57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 51, a. 3-

have only the slightest amount of it. The facts stand before us to attest that here, as everywhere, grace does not destroy nature and that, among Christians (indeed, even among devout men and women) we can find people who, in the practice of life (even that life which is Christian and pious), are more or less afflicted with this deficiency. Indeed, St. Thomas noted a curious occurrence:⁵⁴ those whose spirit is particularly fertile in discoveries touching on the various ways of acting well (and whose counsel, consequently, is the most nuanced), often suffer from this final instability due to the impossibility of resolving into a firm judgment all the ins and outs of their deliberations. Many scruples have no other cause than this inability to render such a final judgment.

Will we cruelly insist that the rectitude of the Christian life may thus depend on an involuntary vice found in one's given disposition? Nobody, says Sr. Thomas, citing Aristotle, reproaches someone for being born blind: we are merciful toward him.⁵⁵

We are well aware of this and will also be merciful. However, we must first see whether it is a question of a congenital and irreproachable defect of good sense, or whether the cause of this infirmity is not more or less self-inflicted and consented to.

In the first case, we are no longer in the presence of the normal course of things. Grace presupposes a complete nature. If it encounters deficient subjects, it can indeed lead them to heaven; it cannot make complete Christians of them. A lame person does not walk like everyone—so too a lame spirit.

Nonetheless, he does walk, though with a cane. The recommendation of having recourse to the counsel of others applies above all to people who lack common sense. Some tasks, says St. Thomas, require the uninterrupted direction of an architect.⁵⁶ You will say to me, "However, these people must at least report on their state and

54. *STI-II*, q. 51, a. 5, co.

55. See *STI-II*, q. 81, a. i.

56. *STI-II*, q. 47, a. 11, co.

therefore must have enough judgment to perceive that they do not have it." Quite so! However, there is nothing chimerical about such a case. Often, enough light remains for these ill-favored persons to be able to suspect their deficiencies [*fuites*], whether the latter are irregular and include recurrences of lucidity or whether the observations, reproaches, critiques, warnings, and near-mockery of their acquaintances ultimately convince them of it. Thus, this is at hand so that such people may produce virtues of intention, for these repeated warnings come to them from important persons in whom they have confidence or who have authority over them. Humility, obedience, and docility thus supplement adult reason or, rather, enlist the moral values of adult reasons for us as directions that are undisputed (because they are practically indisputable). Thus, through repeated acts of deference to authority, these abnormal people ultimately can indeed come to have the appearance of rendering normal judgments. And if a small grain of oddity sometimes remains, this only adds to the savor of their borrowed but recovered good sense.

Moreover, the influence of grace does not fail to come to the aid of those of good will. The Spirit of understanding sends them substitutes that, by the path of the heart and of the love of God, guide and sustain them in the way of inferiority and meritorious subjection that is their own.⁵⁷

These substitutes given by grace are the only resource available for people who are so completely deprived of common sense that they do not suspect this privation and are, according to the metaphor used by St. Thomas, like curved mirrors on which images are reflected, deformed and twisted, *distortae et prae se habentes*.⁵⁸ If this radical defect goes so far as to cause insanity, it is no longer a question of good sense, no more than of self-government, but only of final justification, and that is a matter laying in the hands of our merciful God. If, without going all the way to this excess, this lack

57. See *ST* II-II, q. 51, a. 3.

58. *Ibid.*

of good sense is irremediable, more or less complete substitutes will assure them a merit proportioned to the good that they will have understood that they must do, all the while leaving these unfortunate people in their disjointed state of life. Who has not encountered these incurables who thus win their way to heaven ... while sometimes driving others mad!

However, it can indeed be the case that our lack of good sense is imputable to causes that do lay in our power, namely, as St. Thomas says, our false ideas and our passions.⁵⁹ In this second case, an educative therapy is possible and, indeed, necessary.

False ideas arise either from a superabundance of imagination, *quae defacili potest formare phantasmata*, or from prejudices coming from one's education or the influence of the environment, *idola tribus*, or again from a knowledge [*science*] that is imperfect and does not take its deficiencies into account (elementarily educated persons), or finally, from voluntary pertinacity and stubbornness. In the details of action, moral matters do not involve absolute evidential certitude [*l'évidence absolue*]. Thus, faced with a choice to be made, we stand before a kind of quarry filled with false ideas. Above all at the moment when counsel comes to its close, our false ideas keep watch and strive to trouble our judgment, which nonetheless has worth only when it apprehends things such as they are, *rem ... secundum quod in se est?**

How are we to remedy this danger? Most of the time, when the urgent moment to pronounce one's judgment has arrived, it is already too late. We judge with the ideas that we have at hand. At most, we can be aware of them and apply the full intensity of one, final intellectual glance over them in an attempt to perceive them and free ourselves from them. But here, as in all things, an immense advantage is held by those who have purified their mind through preventive discipline, have battled against the frenzies of their

⁵⁹. Sec 57¹¹-11, q. 51, a. ad i.

⁶⁰. Sni-II, q. 51, a. 5.

imaginings, have sifted their received ideas by means a judgment that strives to be right, and have tried to perfect their knowledge, fighting against their penchant for being stubborn. Good sense, says St. Thomas, is germinally present in human nature, but its perfect development is acquired only through exercise, unless grace steps in, *ex exercitio velex muneregratiae*⁶¹ Therefore, good sense is an acquired virtue. Doubtlessly, it is also found in the child of God as an infused virtue that is one with infused prudence and is given along with it. However, like every infused virtue, it requires cooperation so that it may reach its full development. Are all Christians well enough aware that good sense is a virtue?

Our passions, which we have already encountered as being opposed to the fundamental rectitude that is the axis of the prudential labor, also can interfere at this ultimate moment of the *dictamen rationis*. Doubtlessly, they are connected to and obstructed by the child of God's rectitude of intention. However, not only are the directive major premises influenced by our passions. The minor premises of fact and the particular conclusions of our deliberations concerning the conduct of our life are also influenced by them. Subdued but ever-living—because they must indeed live if they are to be governed and thus become cooperators in our sanctification—our passions react all the more violently at the moment of the ultimate judgment, feeling that they themselves are endangered. Similarly, holy people, whose hearts are completely devoted to God, having acquired justice, fortitude, and temperance, looking to remain in these virtues, often thus experience the sudden triggering of these passions and an unexpected undertow pulling against what is otherwise most dear to them and which they hold as sacred: movements of sadness, anger, irritation, or desire. They are not vices, as vice is vanquished and has given way to virtue. Rather, what we have here is a back-and-forth vibration of passionate movements, disaggregat-

61. *¶* III-II, q. 51, a. 3, ad 1.

ed and disconnected, though sufficing to put to the test the man of divine prudence. In vain does the intention remain right and ones counsel conclusive. In those who falter, the latent passion introduces a surreptitious major premise into counsels syllogism, and it is under this major premise that the conclusion is reached. Thus, we here have the "syllogism of the incontinent man," famed in ancient philosophy, an illogical syllogism as well, as it involves, as Aristotle says, four propositions.⁶² Absurd, yes, and yet how frequent!

He who aspires to govern himself must guard against these assaults through a special virtue that the ancients and St. Thomas called continence. This virtue is not identical with the continence spoken of by St. Paul, which itself is nothing other than chastity.⁶³ The kind of continence we are speaking of here has a field of action extending also to our irascibility, the stirrings of our pride, and our love of riches, although concupiscence remains in the foreground.⁶⁴ Continence is the power to stand firm and remain in control in the presence of the passing assaults of all the passions. In the end, it is self-possession, which has its seat in a reason that remains intact and in a will that is firm,⁶⁵ dominating from on high this oscillating vibration of our passions, at the very moment when our acquired or infused virtues do not exercise their own full strength. Therefore, we here have a resource ready at hand, intervening when it is needed.⁶⁶

However, in order for it to be efficacious, it needs to have been cultivated through a vigilance habitually exercised over every kind of passionate movement stirring about within us, by incessantly inhibiting them, not permitting them to be triggered before counsel has achieved its work and before the verdict inspired by charity is rendered, binding them definitively.

Thus, in this second case, there is not a special virtue *in* the

61. See St. Thomas. *In VIII Ethic.*, lect. 3, § *quando quidem*.

62. See *STII-II*, q. 155, a. 1.

64. *Ibid.*, a. 1, ad 1-5; a. 1, ad 1.

65. Sec *STII-II*, q. 155, a. ad 1 and co.

66. See St. Thomas, *In VII Ethic.*, lect. i-io.

judgment *itself*, one that would be analogous to the virtue of good sense that stood against false ideas. The virtue that protects against passionate movements (namely, continence) acts on the judgment from on high. It does not constitute a new perfection of judgment. Rather, it is the protector and overseer of such judgment.

With good sense and self-possession, the child of God is able to directly exercise his judgment with rectitude, discerning the golden mean and bringing it into existence, at least in ordinary circumstances.

However, exceptional cases exist, wherein mere good sense is insufficient. In order to illustrate this fact, St. Thomas cites the example of a deposit entrusted to a man who becomes the enemy of his country. This is a clear enough case. Other, less-clear cases exist, involving conflicts between the law and conscience, between justice and prudence or charity. In order to resolve them, we need, says St. Thomas, a superior form of good sense, something superior, more penetrating, more perspicacious, and more universal than ordinary sense. What is needed is discernment, *γνωσις*, which sometimes is a natural quality, but more often is an acquired virtue or a supernatural gift.⁶⁷ It is the counterpart of what the virtue of *epikeia* is in matters of justice, the interpretation of laws when the strict application of the latter leads precisely to the opposite of the legislators' intention.⁶⁸

Discernment is frequently utilized in the interior life. A number of saints are praised for having had discernment of spirits, that is, discernment of these secret intentions and sometimes imperceptible movements that are the effective mover of so many actions. For example: what degree, when and how, must we leave, abbreviate, or moderate our customary and most dearly beloved duties of piety in order to satisfy duties of family, charity, and diligence [*zèle*]? We feel agitated by contrary spirits. We fear conceding too much to nature

67. Sec 57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 51, a. 4.

68. See 57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 110.

or to external circumstances but nonetheless feel that if we do not cede anything, important interests will suffer. Here, more than mere good sense or moral logic, what is needed is a wise form of supernatural appreciation, which only a superior form of discernment alone will know how to resolve. For this, we will not turn away from the *East*, the *East of the Gospel*. However, the golden mean which we will set for ourselves will be sought in another way, deeper than the golden mean of ordinary good sense.

From whatever perspective we envision it, correct judgment therefore is an act of virtue, indeed of great virtue. Let us summarize the degrees through which we must pass in order to assure that we may have this foolproof judgment. If we cannot judge for ourselves, we must have the good sense to consult the wise. We must ceaselessly combat our false or incomplete ideas, our prejudices deriving from education or environment, our mind's vivacities, our projections, our originalities, and our whims, all to the degree that they obscure our judgment's objectivity. We must have an eye over the passionate movements that slip into our virtuous acts, over our melancholic feelings and our optimistic flights, our depressive times and our manic moments (*emballements*), our irritations and our ambitions, our fears and our unregulated desires, and must be in possession of this entire hectic world in order to prevent the "incontinent man" slumbering with us from evading reason's rule.⁶⁹ Finally, we must not fear to get out of our rut and break free from the routine that makes our judgments mechanical. In short, we must not fear to be far-seeing and to judge from on high. Therefore, learning to judge is a travail and sometimes a true martyrdom. Nonetheless, charity requires it, for the very grandeur of its aspiration, God [loved for His own sake and] above all, finds its true equal only when all things are set into motion and requisitioned in His service.

Besides, there is a handsome recompense for this discipline,

69. *Incontinens egreistviis a r.iaone*, St. Thomas, *In VII Ethic.*, lct. i.

namely, the splendor of Christian good sense having arrived at its perfection, a splendor that the Gospel describes in these terms: "When your eye is sound (if your judgment is right), your whole body (the infinite detail of your acts) is full of light.... If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."⁷⁰

BEING ABLE TO CHOOSE AND TO COMMAND ONESELF

However, we know quite well that what was indeed chosen as an immediate duty often then remains *en route*, whether through the wills indecision or through lack of constancy.⁷¹ Our personal self-government reaches its tactical goal only if we know how to choose and command ourselves.⁷²

Choice is an act of the free will. To command oneself is an act of the intellect which now has motive force, under the influence of a previously decided will.⁷³

These two acts are intimately ordered to each other. Nonetheless, they are distinct and even in the practical affairs of life all too often are separated from one another. How many have the courage to choose who then do not have the strength to command themselves to perform the deed at hand! This is because each of these acts not only proceeds from different principles but also runs into special difficulties, entailing, if one succumbs, specific sins against the virtue of self-government.

Let us look more closely into these matters.

70. Lk 11:34,36 (RSV),

71. See STII-II, q. 54, a. 3.

71. See STII-II, q. 51, a. 3, ad 3.

73. See STI-II, q. 13, a. 1; q. 17, a. 1.

To Choose

Some consciences are indeed intellectually alert, very sensible, well-informed, and quite perspicacious, perfectly aware of their present and urgent duty, aware too that they can neither avoid a decision, nor delay it, lest they belie the superior, divine love that is the *raison d'être* of their life, but which nonetheless, at the moment when they must take a stand, hesitate, procrastinate, and cast a glance backward over other issues that were already examined and abandoned for good reasons, thus remaining in a state of sterile fluctuation which is perilous for self-government, which cannot wait or, in any case, which suffers from this illegitimate stagnation. Such is the character of the indecisive person.

Whence comes this vice? Sometimes, it comes from an exaggerated demand for certitude. We would like it to be absolute, even though human contingencies do not lend themselves to such absolute surety.⁷⁴ Sometimes, it comes from fear, whether fear of sin (as in the scrupulous), fear of responsibilities (as in the timid), fear of engaging or restraining our freedom, or fear of the very effort that every decision requires. Sometimes, quite simply, it comes from the tugs in the opposite direction by the complexity of life, occupations, our distractions, and our very relationships. Faced with these individual causes and others that resemble them, an individualized therapy doubtlessly must be exercised.⁷⁵ We must have lucid self-understanding, and thus knowing ourselves, must have the energy to forthrightly acknowledge everything that is unjustified and unreasonable in such an attitude.

However, whatever may be the case for these individual causes, the primary one lies deeper still because it is organic. It is the power of free will. This power can choose only in favor of our good such as we see it, this very good, therefore, that is affirmed as being oblig-

74. See *ST* II-II, q. 47, a. 9, ad 1.

75. See *ST* II-II, q. 55, aa. 6-~.

atory in the ultimate practical judgment. Logically—according to the dynamic logic intrinsic to our deliberations—there is no other path to take. However, this path wishes to be freely traveled, that is, on account of an absolutely spontaneous initiative of the will. Nothing, not even the urgency of our duty set forth in the verdict of the practical judgment, can force us now to take this road. As long as this judgment is present to our consciousness, our will doubtlessly cannot choose something else, for what this judgment dictates to the will is the will's own good. However, it can delay, for after all, this good is only a partial good for it. Thus the will can momentarily turn its contentment from it and turn the intellect, the purveyor of its goods, back in search of other paths that perhaps represent more adequately what its profound *élan* desires. Nothing limits the free will's power to bring these matters to a halt. This power is unlimited [*indéfinie*]. The dictates of conscience and the will's consent can only be welded together if the latter freely comes forward to their meeting. Heap up utterly well-informed counsels, the dictates of the surest good sense and of a discernment that is most capable of making an impression on a reasonable will—all this will be held in check.

Therefore, what these undecided persons lack is the détermination of the election by means of a free choice.⁷⁶

How are we to remedy this situation?

St. Thomas lived in an era in which etymology played an important role, if not in the resolution of philosophical problems, at least in weighing them out and orienting them. And, we must concede that this procedure sometimes led him to successes. Indeed, that is the case here.

Considering, from this etymological perspective, the will's unreasonable *negligence* in surrendering itself to the authoritative ver-

76. See 571-11, q. 15, a. 6.

diet of practical reason, St. Thomas notes that the word *negligere* can be broken into these two terms: *nec eligere*, to not choose, giving this a nuance which we could render: *and nonetheless (nec) not to choose*. The negligent person sees what must be done but, nonetheless, does not choose it.⁷⁷

Whence comes this refusal or this abstention? Negligence is opposed to solicitude or *diligence*. If we were diligent, we could not be negligent. The point is nigh on a truism. But what is diligence? A second use of etymology places us on the way to an answer. *Diligentia* comes from *diligere*, which means *to love*, to love with sufficient energy, to the point of being solicitous.⁷⁸ Thus, we have discovered the remedy for a will that, abusing its power, fails to make a decision that is recommended to it by all the facts: we must appeal to the love of a superior good that envelops every decision and is, as it were, the internal framework of all the free decisions we will ever make.

Etymology has set us on our way. It cannot justify what it thus suggests. Happily, etymology is here only the translation of a very profound psychology, the very psychology of freedom.

However inviolable freedom may be in itself, it is nonetheless part of a whole. What do we choose? The means for realizing the ends that we love beforehand. Why do we choose them? Because we love these ends, and the paths proposed to our freedom represent the means for realizing them. We are not bound by necessity to consent to these means, either when there are several alternatives among which our choice can hesitate or, given that the means never equal the goodness of the end, when we reserve ourselves and refuse to adopt the single means present if there is only one.⁷⁹ However, still, if we persist in loving and willing the end, we will indeed need

77. See *ST* II-II, q. 54, a. 1, co.

78. See *S7* II-II, q. 54, a. 1, ad 1.

79. See *ST* I-II, q. 13, aa. 5, 6.

to make a choice. Freedom is not necessitated by this love but it does depend on it. Therefore, relying on this unshakable, persisting, undisputed love of the good that he regards as his end, the man who wishes to effectively possess this good will release his freedom. He will suppress irresolution at its root. He will overcome the negligence that lingers to the detriment of his happiness, now letting loose the decision *because he wills it*0 quia vult*.

However, let us leave behind this overly abstract sort of response. In our present reflection on our supernatural moral psychology, we are dealing with a child of God (for whom the love of God is, by hypothesis, undisputed). When, illuminated by wholly supernatural reflection, his conscience declares to him a given decision to make, something urgently related to his love of God, why does it prevaricate? Why does it fail to embrace this choice, if not because his love for the ends of charity are lukewarm in some way,⁸¹ suffering from some tepidity that he perhaps was not aware of, one that could only be revealed to him with effort? He sincerely believed that he wills the divine good and loves God above all things. It was enough to bring him to this critical point of decision which engages him, in order for the weakness of his heart to be manifested to him.

Those who are irresolute in the Christian life are, at bottom, the lukewarm. In order for our free will to have the powerful resolve needed, we cannot look to reflect once more anew, a task that would ultimately be limitless and unending, given that everything has already been considered and weighed out. Instead, we must turn toward the lofty sources of the love of God, of our divine life. Our heart is what needs to be healed, and our divine life is what must be strengthened.⁸² How? Doubtlessly by applying anew our faith to meditation on the infinite kindnesses [of God], so that, with

80. See *ibid.*, ad x.

81. See 5711-11, q. 54, a. 3, co. and ad 1.

82. This is, as you will recall, the tactic of Pascal in his *Pensees* so as to make indifferent persons go forth from this "negligence" wherein they profess they are faced with their eternity (ed. Brunschvicg, 3:194-95).

our heart enflamed by the vision of the eternal goods that thereby re-emerge with greater reality, a more fervent love may pour forth, steering and directing our negligence and making our will consent to what conscience declares to it in the name of this very love.

*Dilige et quod vis fac?*⁸³ Love and make your decision on behalf of what this loving will wishes. Freedom is not given to you in order for it to destroy the whole of your life's substance through its indecision. No, it is given to you in order to build it up. *Non in destructionem, sed in aedificationem.*

The entire secret of choice in our personal supernatural self-government is found here in the practice of this tactic of returning to the fervor of charity.

Indeed, this is why the Church, as well as the masters of the spiritual life, insist so greatly on the need to ceaselessly strengthen our will by drawing from the well of our love of God. Likewise, this is why, in prayer methods and the rules of spiritual retreats, these two things are found in such close connection: the renewal of fervor and practical resolutions. The discipline indeed includes frequent communion, in its own turn, in order to beget resolute and diligent souls who, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, depart from the Holy Table as terrible as lions. *Ut leones flammam spirantes, sic ab illa mensa discedimus, terribiles effecti diabolo* [Like lions breathing fire, thus do we depart from that table, having been made terrible to the devil].⁸⁴

To Command Oneself

"I go so far as to will," says St. Paul, "but when it is a question of accomplishing the deed, I find only a gaping void before me." Without a doubt, St. Paul speaks on behalf of all of us. And in fact, however strange as it seems, the firmest resolutions do not always

83. St. Augustine, *In Epist. Joann.*, 7.8.

84. See *ST III*, q. 79, a. 6. [Tr. note: taken from St. John Chrysostom's forty-sixth homily on the Gospel of John.]

come to fruition. We just spoke of *retreats*. In the ascetic life, the retreat is the powerful means *par excellence* for bringing the will to its decision. But, nonetheless, at the beginning of his famed *Retraite spirituelle*, Bourdaloue,⁸⁵ an expert in these matters, felt the need to confess: “How many retreats have I made which ultimately were useless, producing *no change* in me?”

Still, there is no personal self-government without realization. To govern is to realize.

In this respect, we encounter an inveterate illusion, which we might call the illusion befalling artists. Indeed, one can be an artist without creating the product of their art—consider the witness offered by the existence of amateurs and art critics. As St. Thomas notes, one can even remain an artist while voluntarily committing sins against one’s art. A given poetic license of Victor Hugo, a given eccentricity of someone like Rodin, cannot harm their reputation as artists, for they do it on purpose, *peccant volentes*. In such cases, art remains in the artist, notwithstanding the character of his work of art. This is not the case in matters pertaining to morality and the supernatural life. Here, a voluntary sin deserves reproach. We cannot sin involuntarily.⁸⁶ Why not? Because we are no longer concerned with a work that is external to us, dominated by an optional ideal which *man* may permissibly evade.⁸⁷ The work of our personal good government is ourselves. It is us, inasmuch as we are submitted to ends that require our whole selves, ends from which we must not flee, the ends of the whole of human life for man as such and the ends of charity for the Christian.⁸⁸ Therefore, every act of [self-] government must direct itself and us in the direction of these ends. The fantasies of artists are not permitted in the affairs of our personal self-conduct. And yet, we refuse to understand this fact in prac-

85. [Tr. note: Louis Bourdaloue, SJ (1631-1704), a contemporary and friend of Bossuet, famed for his preaching.]

86. See *STII-II*, q. 47, a. 8.

87. See *ibid.*, a. 4, ad 1; a. 5, co.

88. See *STIMI*, q. 47, a. 6.

tice. Even were we utterly determined to do the good, the slumbering artist whom we believed to be dead during prayer or our retreat reawakens and comes into contact with temporal life, believing that he can escape from our grip—and immediately *peccat volens*!

This sin occurs in spiritual people more frequently than might be thought. Without going all the way to the excess of those Pharisees who believe they are done with their work, having placed on the shoulders of others enormous burdens that they themselves do not touch with the tip of their finger, have we not on occasion ourselves acted as though our own right intentions, our own conscientious deliberations, and our own judgments—they are so just, are they not?—concerning good and evil, as well as our good purposes, ultimately were deeds that have been performed? *Quoties dixi, nunc coepi: haec mutatio dexterarum Excelsi!* [As often as I have said, now I have begun: this change of the right hand of the Most High!]

We must not be startled by this. Rather, it must only make us return into ourselves in order to ask about the cause of these failures and how it is that, however resolute and decided we may seem to be, we still do not find success, *perficere non invenio*.

Have we now made clear the difference between choosing and commanding ourselves? Our choice, in sum, terminates and comes to its consummation within us. It is the act of a will that has been completely won over in advance by the sweetness of the love of God, an act of will that, moreover, in its spiritual grandeur is made to taste and embrace divine things. However, when we begin to command ourselves, we turn ourselves outward, toward an external world that is still ourselves, though no longer the superior *self*^reason and of the will but, rather, the *self* that is inferior and tainted by the passions, a *self*^which does not know the divine beauty, our inferior *self* which includes our relationships with others—this terrible self, terrible, I say, precisely because it is other and, as such, is unmoved by the events that stir within us. We move ourselves from within when we choose, but we ultimately will be dealing with a world that is not

instructed by the decisions that aspire to rule it. It is a world that is prepared to resist them as soon as they claim to penetrate into it and that indeed resists them as soon as their governance is impressed upon them.

This difference of orientation between the choice that is brought to its consummation in “the interior man” and the command that looks upon “the exterior man” explains the difficulty that we experience in fully realizing our self-government, as well as the hiatus existing between our resolution (however energetic it might be) and our effective command. To choose and to command oneself belong to two different worlds.

The tactic of our faculty of [self-]government thus finds itself faced with a new problem to be resolved: how to impress upon the will, which henceforth will be executive and directive [*réalisateur*], a sufficiently powerful impulse for overcoming all these difficulties.

To respond to this, let us first weigh out the terms of the problem.

A *human* will is never accessible except by the path of the intellect. It is essentially, says St. Thomas, an intellectual appetite, a tendency following an idea of the practical order, an idea transfused and moved into willing. It is not one tool handled along with another tool. Two wills act on each other only through the intermediacy of an idea. Without this, a supposedly passive willing would no longer be a human, rational willing. Such is our structural character as rational beings. A will, even an executive will, is not a slavish will; it wishes to be ruled politically, that is, by a precept that illuminates it. Therefore, if a decided will wishes to communicate the victorious impetus to the executive will, it must act by means of the intellect.⁸⁹

89. See *STI-II*, q. 9, a. 1; q. 17, a. 1. This intellectual character of the *imperium* [command] eluded certain theologian-psychologists, in particular [Gabriel] Vasquez, though for understandable reasons. Indeed, if one makes the command or decree into an act of the will and not of the intellect, one suppresses the psychological basis for God's knowledge of future contingents in His determining decrees, such as the Thomists understand them. Therefore, for reasons attached to their theological system, the theologian-psychologists

Now, up to the present stage of the development of our personal self-government, the intellect only *proposed*, and this was the cause of fluctuations in the will. When the intellect *proposes*, the will *disposes*.

Hence, by the choice of the will, the latter's fluctuation is brought to a close. The will has become firm. Armed with this resolute determination, I therefore will act upon my intellect,⁹⁰ taking hold of its activity, closing it off from anything outside of what has justified my rational decision; and strengthened by this law coming from my reason, I take up this duty of conscience which heretofore was only proposed, now transforming it into an *absolute command*. The *imperium* is this absolute command having an intellectual content, though an imperative character. It is imposed on the executive will by the intellect under the rule of the decided will. What the command orders is irresistibly transfused into our activity in the executive will and becomes the internal, unbreakable law of its deployment. Against the reticences, refusals, and resistances of the passions and of our relations with others, the executive will, immobilized by the command, rallies forth and realizes the plan. The external man has only to bring himself under its rule. At last, he is governed.

This does not mean that the execution unrolls with a kind of ineluctable necessity, easily, smoothly, and wholly along the course predicted by our preliminary counsel. Obstacles exist which reveal themselves only during the execution. Prudences tactical maneuvering is never immobilized: it is essentially adaptable, like the matter that it seeks to reduce to order.

Thus St. Thomas holds that the act by which we issue commands to ourselves must have foresight, circumspection, and caution as companions in the very course of its execution.⁹¹

of whom I speak have thus been led to suffer this little "dusting up" [*petite toilette*] of the psychology of the *imperium*.

90. See STI-II, q. 1-, a. 6; St. Thomas, *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 6.

91. See Sni-II, q. 48.

Through foresight, our prudent man, rich with everything that he gained in his previous deliberation, everything that was seen and foreseen, and with everything that was decided, is in a position to make provision, along the way, for everything that will assure the success of the execution.⁹² Thanks to circumspection, the eye opens up on everything that surrounds the execution, sometimes requiring us to modify the way that the prior order will be realized.⁹³ With caution, he stands on guard against the surprises that arise from the complexity (*mtdtiformitatem*) of the execution,⁹⁴ and especially, as this is indeed our supernatural government, from the complexity of the surreptitious intermingling of evil things with good ones, the false with the true, and the natural with the supernatural. In particular, he turns aside from distorted and ambiguous paths, which would introduce more or less cunning and fraudulent techniques into our self-government.⁹⁵

Moreover, all these acts of foresight, circumspection, and caution do not involve turning back, taking up again what has been ordered. Although their names suggest this at first glance, these virtues are, on the contrary, the active and staunch executors of our fixed designs, and their entire effort is exercised in making them succeed in this endeavor.

With such supports in place, our personal command finds itself armed in advance against the blows falling upon execution. It does not allow itself to turn aside from the resolute determination that animates it. It possesses constancy, this victorious virtue that carries out the realization of the virtues imperturbably, “without being overpowered by blows from the return of the passions of pleasure, persevering in the face of discouragement.”⁹⁶

The tactics of prudence are thus brought to their comple-

91. See *STII-II*, q. 49, a. 6.

9j. See *ibid.*, a. 7.

94. See *ibid.*, a. 8.

95. See *STIMI*, q. 55, aa. 3–5.

96. See *STII-II*, q. 53, a. 5.

tion, and through this achievement, our personal and divine self-government is henceforth effective.

THE RESULTS OF OUR SUPERNATURAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

The overall outcome of our personal and supernatural self-government is the holiness of Christian mores, along with its two characteristics: on the one hand, liberation from what is inferior so that the soul thus delivered can be united to God and, on the other, a firm and organized tendency of all our internal energies, under the impulse of charity, toward the divine good.⁹⁷

The justification of this result spontaneously follows from what we have explained up to this point.

However, this result takes shape in several creations that must be described, for the tree is recognized by its fruits. These fruits are virtuous acts, the growth of virtue, the connection of the virtues, spiritual autonomy, and the Christian character.

The virtuous act. The virtuous act, substituted for the natural and instinctive act, is the immediate result of our personal self-government.

The faculty of [self-]government itself is its first beneficiary. To be able to govern his inferior faculties, the prudent man must first of all govern his very prudence. We have followed along the phases of this education. Through a first undertaking, attuning the child of God to the requirements of charity, he is equipped with true directions and set in harmony with these requirements. Then, faithfully, he developed this fundamental orientation through his past experience, through the habit of a rapid and just shrewd glance, and by means of a docility that made him a participant in the knowledge and experience of wise men and saints. At the center of his activity,

97. See S7TI-II, q. 81, a. 8.

as his eye, there came forth a measured judgment, the work of supernatural good sense, reinforced by a perspicacious discernment, armed in advance by continence against the surprises of passionate movements. Following this judgment, the prudent man aroused the resolute choice that draws on the fervor of his charity, his source of strength for fighting against negligence or endemic sickness in those afflicted with a tepid will. Finally, fortified with this accumulated light and energy, our prudent man reduced himself entirely into a command, vigorous yet adaptable in execution, circumspect, provident, and knowing how to surround itself with precautions so as better to arrive at its ends. Our act of government has thus become an integral human action and, at the same time, a wholly supernatural one. Nothing is missing from what renders an act to be truly worthy of the divinized man whom we are [as Christians].

This intimate result was not, however, our prudence's direct objective. It is perfected through its own labor pains, *prole sua*, said St. Augustine.⁹⁸ What was proposed to it was that it must govern our passions and external relations by imposing on them the golden mean approved by reason in the service of charity, in which our divine life at once finds its security⁹⁹ and its outcome.

Thanks to the efficacious command that brings prudences tactical maneuverings to a close, this project is now a reality. Adapted to the requirements of the love of God above all, our passionate movements, as well as the activities by which we adjust ourselves externally, are purified and elevated to the lofty heights of our rational nobility, clad with the superior dignity provided for it by charity. These are acts of virtue, indeed of supernatural virtue, divine acts, in their rank and in their manner, bearing within themselves the reflection of our Heavenly Father's perfection.

98. *Soliqu.*, 1.1.

99. St. Thomas, *In IV Ethic.* 1.4. *Mrnaes morales salvant stia pnnnetpia ... salvant mentern.* [Tr. note: these exact expressions cannot be found in the current critical corpus of Aquinas's works.]

Through them, we are in line with what St. Paul had wished for the Christians in his spiritual care: "If in the past you made your members serve iniquity, make them now serve justice in view of your sanctification."¹⁰⁰

Therefore, this metamorphosis and transfiguration of our movements of passion and activities into *acts* having a divine dignity and merit is the first and immediate result of our personal and divine self-government brought about through Christian prudence.

The growth of virtue. There is a second result, one that comes forth more slowly, while nonetheless being more crucial, for what it produces is no longer a transitory effect but, instead, a permanent state. We are speaking of the education and growth of our infused virtues.

Earlier,¹⁰¹ we noted (and here bring it up again only as a reminder) the difference between the education of the infused virtues and that of the natural virtues. The [self-]government undertaken through prudence gives birth to the latter. With the hammer of the human moral ends in hand, it, so to speak, forges these virtues from scratch on the anvil of our inferior self. It is a complete genesis. This is not the case in the supernatural order, for those moral virtues are divinely infused into us along with grace and the theological virtues. The proper work of infused prudence can only be a work of education.

As we have said, this education is indispensable. It is quite true that, by God's gift, a little Christian child from the start possesses (indeed, in a superior state) all the moral virtues that a pagan sage will acquire only through the long exercise of the moral life. However, it is no less certain that habitual self-government is needed so that he may not lose these virtues, indeed, to maintain them and make them grow.

Now, what is the outcome of this education? Methodically tak-

100. See Rom 6:19.

101. See the very beginning of this chapter.

ing up the violent reaction of our passions as well as the will's own self-centered quest and replacing them with movements issuing from the infused virtues, this education brings about the gradual suppression of these disordered movements and, at the same stroke, prepares for growth in the infused virtues.

I say "prepares," for the effective production of growth in our infused virtues, even to the smallest degree, does not lay in the power of our [self-]government, even when supernaturalized. The divine [life] is completely outside our grasp, as much for its growth as for its first dilation.¹⁰² To grow through the more complete possession of an infused virtue is to make the divine life grow in itself, and the divine life's progress in us can arise only from the progress of its sources, of sanctifying grace, its first source, and of charity, its derivative and proximate source. Now, grace and charity, at all their degrees, are an outpouring of God's own life and love. We possess these things only by receiving them. Therefore, we cannot, by an inevitably human work, like the work of our good [self-]government, bestow upon ourselves one degree of charity, no more than we could make ourselves grow an inch taller. The growth of the divine life in all its forms (including that which results from the progress of the infused moral virtues) is pure largesse bestowed by God who, through this growth, makes us enter more deeply into a participation in the depths of His being, thereby making us live more fully by His life... here, most certainly, we have a point that is quite enough to call us back to humility!

And, nonetheless, yes! We can indeed do something concerning this growth. Though we cannot *produce* any growth through our generous and energetic government, through education following upon the exercise of our supernatural prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance in accord with the impulses of charity, we can *merit* such growth. I mean that we can set before God a strict, and in no

102. Scc5TII-II, q. 24, a. 1.

way optional, right to receive from Him growth in these virtues.¹⁰³ The way is different, but the outcome the same, as for our natural moral government.

Indeed, what are these works of our moral virtues when we accomplish them according to the laws of our supernatural self-government if not a continual exercise of the love of God? They are, I say, acts of the children of God, acting precisely as such, and therefore situated at the lofty heights of their Fathers own life. I do not say that the life that we thus lead is equal to the intimate life of God. I say that it is situated at these lofty heights, that it reaches God, and that in the divinized state that is the Christian state a proportion exists between what we thus do for God and what a Father must do for His faithful children. Now, the first thing that a Father does for His children is to establish them as heirs, *sifilii et haeredes*. This is the law.

An inheritance is the definitive gift of paternal goods. However, this complete gift normally includes preparatory forms of largesse, dowries, and anticipations proportioned to the capacities of the children and to the proofs that they provide concerning their filial good will. In the case of the children of God, the inheritance is God Himself, possessed by the clear vision and perfect love of His Goodness. What anticipated gifts can He give them if not progress in their approach toward this possession, an augmentation of this relative possession of the divine goodness that grace inaugurates in the Christian and which, here-below, is realized by means of charity? Therefore, we state with full rigor that the Heavenly Father grants to His children, whose filial love is affirmed by a generous government of their passions and of their relational life, growth in this love and, by a kind of overflow, growth that is proportioned to the supernatural energies in which charity pours forth and whose profound life is naught but an exercise of love: infused prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

105. Sec STI-II, q. 114, a. 8. Cf. II-II, q. 14, a. 4.

This growth follows the laws of the growth of living beings. There are seasons of recollection when the plant, for example, puts down roots, hardens its wood, produces sap, and forms its buds. Then, there are seasons of active efflorescence and blossoming, and finally there are the periods of effective realization when the progress that has been prepared for in secret vigorously asserts itself at a single stroke. So too for the growth of our virtues through prudential education. A more energetic act of justice or of fortitude determines a general increase in the level of all the virtues by the appeal that it addresses to a more fervent charity, in order that it may be sustained in it. And this is indeed how progress actually occurs, as something generously conceded by the Father who smiles on His children's generosity. But we never lose anything from what we do through charity-directed self-government. Whatever does not immediately lead to detectible progress constitutes, as it were, an incubation for future progress. The accumulation of little merits ends by placing us in a high-voltage state which a final, more meritorious effort frees and actualizes.¹⁰⁴

The organic connection of the virtues. Charity is the first and universal mover of this entire aroused mass of activities that exert themselves in its service. By right of primacy of control, infused prudence holds in its hands the impulses of charity that are destined to assure our personal supernatural government,¹⁰⁵ and for this reason, in relation to the activities incorporated in this government, it is a general mover. Therefore, the supreme principle for the unification of our action is our charity. In turn, our entire personal government is unified by our prudence acting on behalf of the ends of charity.

In the rational order, the unity of our moral organism is acquired through our prudential labor.¹⁰⁶ In the supernatural order,

104. See ST I, q. 14, a. 6, and MI, q. 114, a. 8.

105. We set aside here the place of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which likewise are connected in charity, but not in prudence, and do not belong to our *personae* supernatural self-government.

106. See ST I-II, q. 65, a. 1.

this unity is not acquired. It is something given, for all our supernatural virtues are, from their very infusion, set in organic relation with the virtue of charity, which they are destined to serve. Similarly, the infused virtues of justice, courage, and temperance, with the whole train of virtues that depend on these cardinal virtues, are from the start connected to infused prudence. 'Therefore, the interconnection of all the virtues is, so to speak, plastic. I mean that it does not depend on their exercise but is assured from the start by the same divine providence that infused them all together.¹⁰⁷ From his baptism, the child of God possesses a dynamism which is organized in view of serving his charity.

However, it is clear that, while indeed being perfectly constituted in itself, this organization does not have its complete functional perfection from the first moment of its existence. The same urgency that we encountered regarding the growth of the virtues is found again regarding their activity's interconnection. It is through activity conformed to the inspirations of charity and to the commands of prudence that the activity of our supernatural virtues preserves, sustains, affirms, and finally increases its organic unity. And this synergetic activity likewise is deployed in accord with identical laws: the elimination of natural movements [of soul] that are opposed to full unification, dispositions increasingly intensifying in the direction of this unification, and finally, the acquisition, by way of merit, of a stable and henceforth acquired degree of superior unity.

In fact, we could draw this final conclusion from what we said on the subject of the growth of our supernatural virtues. Given that the latter act as a kind of reinforcement for charity, the universal principle of supernatural action, it is clear that a supernatural virtue never merits increase for itself alone, but instead, all the virtues that are under the influence of charity benefit from their merit.¹⁰⁸ Thus, at each growth, the whole ensemble of the virtues mounts upward

107. See *ibid.*, a. x.

108. See *ibid.*, a. 5.

and sees its cohesion increase along with its quality; the entire body is what, "holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together throughout its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that comes from God."¹⁰⁹

How beautiful he is, our just man, thus balanced and unified by the integrated impulse of his manifold tendencies toward the good inspired in him by charity and developed in him by prudence! What an admirable sight! What a divine splendor! We would like to halt here before this sight and, like St. Peter of old, pitch our tents upon this Tabor. However, our supernatural and personal government does not permit us to do so: it still has other revelations to present to us.

Spiritual autonomy. Autonomy in action is the characteristic trait of causes. A free being exercises its causality of itself, *liber est causa sui*. God possesses this autonomy at the supreme degree, being the first cause of all things. Inferior beings, by contrast, are subject to the law of superior beings, whatever might be the nature of this superiority.

Through his freedom, man ranks among causes. He can even refuse to give God the obedience that he owes Him. In so doing, he sins against the constitutive law that places his entire being in dependence upon his Creator. Nonetheless, he has this power. As regards the inferior world, whether it stirs inside man himself or is found around him, it is made to be dominated and governed by our freedom. We can use this freedom in order to submit ourselves to the inferior order, thus alienating our autonomy. This is a second sin against the constitutive law of our being. Nonetheless, we have this power.

Our true autonomy consists in freely submitting ourselves to God and, having thus submitted ourselves to Him, in governing the inferior world of our passions and of our external relations. In this

109. Col 2:19 (RSV).

truth, we have the reconciliation of our constitutive love of being naturally submitted to God with our autonomy as causes which, while being [meta]physically absolute, is given to us only so that we may make use of it in accord with righteousness. This is the truth that frees us.

Now, this truth of human activity is assured in an incomparable way by the child of God who has learned to govern himself.

First of all, he uses his freedom only in order to submit himself to God, thus ratifying the gift which God has given to him through sanctifying grace, namely, the gift of His own life. And he does this without constraint, through love, filially. It is by being autonomous that he adopts the ends of charity, making them into the sole mover of his action.

In the second place, through this free choice of ends which are the very ends of the divine life and of the divine action, he surpasses the order of his own, proper causality and incorporates the latter into the divine causality, becoming a participant in God's sovereign autonomy. In him we see the realization of the expression: "Where the Spirit of God is, there is freedom."

Finally, turning back toward what is inferior, he freely imposes on this inferior domain the divine law of his charity, freely chosen by him, thus freeing himself from every form of servitude. As we have seen, this act of free choice is the critical juncture of our personal self-government.

However, we have not yet pronounced our last word concerning the magnificent autonomy of the child of God.

It is not only by his current decisions that he is autonomous. The infused virtues, which he has educated, elevated, unified, and organized through the toil of his self-government, exist in him like a habitual framework of living energies, forever ready to embark in the direction of charity. The autonomy of individually consented-to acts is deposited and, as it were, embedded into all his inferior powers, passions, and faculties of relation, like a living force and latent

potential ever-ready for action. Thus, thanks to the supernatural virtues that perfect it, our inferior being, even when at rest, vitally participates in the dominating freedom of our superior being, as the latter, just now, made the sovereign autonomy of God its own.

From head to toe, indeed up to the very tips of his toenails, if I may be permitted to borrow such crude metaphors in so lofty a subject, the child of God who knows how to govern himself is autonomous. What I mean is that, even from his faculties of concupiscence and of irascibility, from his actions, and from his very bodily attitudes, nothing comes forth from him any longer which would not have been freely willed, and his acts, made to the measure of the divine ideal, emanate even from his inferior faculties with a joyful ease, vitally, as though from their source.

Such is the incomparable vision set before us by our personal and supernatural self-government when it reaches its ultimate goal. Are we dreaming? We merely need to read the biography of a saint and contemplate the energy, spontaneity, fertility, and vigor of the souls of the saints in order to be convinced that we are not dreaming and that in the service of God, assured by a faithful self-government, we indeed find, allied to the kingdom of God, the most complete realization of human autonomy.

Christian Characters. This is the supreme culmination of our personal supernatural government. It is the sign and, as it were, the seal of our education, brought to its completion.

We sometimes hear tell of an education of character. By "character," what is generally meant is native temperament, marked by one or several dominant traits, which give it its originality. But this is not where we will find character in the excellent sense of which we are speaking here: behold a man of character; this man has character. Character understood in this latter sense is not a first deposit that one then begins to perfect; it is a terminus, an end, a crowning. It is not a matter to be educated but rather, is, as I have said, the seal of an education truly brought to its completion.

Again, we sometimes hear tell of a person who is "a character." This is an accolade that is sometimes addressed to people who are, in fact, quite imperfect, or even, from other perspectives, not very deserving of commendation. The word "character" is thus taken as referring to strength of will. As we have seen, such strength is one of the instruments used in the formation of characters. It does not constitute true character and, indeed, can be used in the service of evil.

As its etymology indicates, a character is a sign, an imprint, a seal. It requires an impressionable matter, as the seal requires wax in order to be impressed upon it, in order to make it testify to something that the wax is not.

In man, the rational animal, the impressionable matter is his body, the instrument of his action. Moreover, it is his inferior sensible and motive powers. Finally, it is his will, which by its very nature is made to be impregnated with rational dictates then making them resound throughout man's own immanent inferior domain as well as in the external world surrounding him. And just as there is matter, so too is there a form involved here: reason made in the image of the divine reason and the bearer of the idea of the Good. The human matter constitutes man in the sense of *homo*, a term drawn from *humus* indicating the "mud" from which man has come forth. The form is the man, the *vir*, a term coming from *vis*, signifying the superior power that must lead the whole man. When, through this education process, reason has impressed the moral virtues on man, his entire being reflects the perfection of his reason and of the idea of the Good. Through the moral virtues, slowly formed under prudence's masterful touch, the inferior man, *homo*, is configured to the image of the superior man, of the *vir*. Therefore, human character is the mark of reason upon our wills, passions, and activities. It is the seal of the *vir* upon the *homo*.

These considerations lead us directly to the definition of the Christian character.

Our superior reason is not the whole of the *vir*. From the start, it itself bears the imprint of the divine reason. This imprint was

disfigured by sin, but through Christ's redemption, it has been re-established, with its primitive contours. Admittedly, it henceforth bears a special mark. It is no longer the direct imprint "of the face of God," *signum vidus tui*.^{no} It is this same imprint, but as something previously reproduced in the human soul of the God-Man, of our Savior Jesus Christ. It is to the image of Christ that we are directly configured, as it is through Him that we indispensably receive the restoration of our primitive divine likeness. The *vir*, himself, is in the Christian, stamped with Christ's character. Moreover, the sanctifying grace that imprints the divine character upon us is not only a grace that elevates us to the dignity of being a child of God, *gnz//rt elevans*, but also is a grace that heals, *gratia sanans*. Therefore, in the superior part of himself, the Christian bears the seal of Christ, and the Christian character is, above all, this profound mark, to which we do not contribute, a mark which Christ, without us, imprints upon the depths of our souls.

However, in our present life, the healing action brought to us by grace directly reaches only our superior part, *quae quidem sanatio primofit in praesenti vita secundum mentem, appetitu carnali nondum totali reparato* [indeed, in this present life the healing first is brought about for the mind, the carnal appetite not yet being fully restored].^{!!!} Therefore, room remains for an entire educational undertaking, one that will strive to configure our inferior being completely to the image of God, taking its point of departure in our superior reason, itself impressed with Christ's character. This education is the goal of our supernatural and personal self-government, which we have tried to trace out in this chapter.

Through the repeated blows of this government, the child of God makes the divine likeness restored within him by Christ pass into all of his still-rebellious passions and into his will, infatuated as it is with its own good at the expense of that of God and of his

no. See 57¹-11, q. 109, a. 8.
in. 571-11, q. 109, a. 8.

brothers in God. Under its sway, like so many medallions rippling under the striking of a divine pendulum, the supernatural virtues are released, specified, and acquire their contours. And when the labor is sufficiently advanced so that its results can be discerned, the resemblance bursts forth: the face of the Father, perfectly reproduced on the face of Christ Jesus, and already reflected by our superior reason, which asserts itself no longer only upon our brow but now throughout our entire being. Here, you see, we are entirely marked with Christ's character, no longer only in our reason, but also in the most remote corners of our energies, places that, at first glance, seem the least destined to imitate the divine mores.

Those who have arrived at this point are the true Christian characters. The Christian character is not only the mark of the *vir* in the *homo*, like human character but, moreover, is the imprint of Christ, the splendor of the Father, in the entire man, in the *vir* first, by grace, then in the *homo*, through the work of our holy personal self-government corresponding to grace.

In this ultimate result, this creation of *Christian characters*, the work of our personal and supernatural self-government comes to its fulfillment, having received its definitive seal.

3 OUR PERSONAL AND SUPERNATURAL SELF-EDUCATION BY THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION

IS THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION AN EDUCATIVE VIRTUE?

The idea that religion would be an educative virtue is something that is contested in “secularist” *laïques* circles. The most moderate of secularists regard religion as a transitional form of moral discipline, useful only for those who still in conscience believe that they can or ought to accept it. Doctrinaire secularists hold that religion in fact represents a deformation of moral discipline, a superstitious practice that should be suppressed or, at least, gradually made to disappear in the interest of humanity’s moral progress.

Our own perspective in these studies forbids us to be occupied *exprofesso* with this debate. We here are addressing Christian souls, speaking to them about Christian self-education. However, it turns out—and this once again brings to light St. Thomas’s own modernity—that we cannot interpret the first three articles of the question *De religione** without having our minds haunted by contemporary preoccupations, there encountering the very questions which are posed today, along with a clear determination of the elements involved in their resolution.

At the opposite extreme from the secularists stands the position

i. SeciTIMI, q. 81, aa. 1-3.

of certain souls who too often ignore the human value of their supernatural mores. In such people, there is a tendency to reabsorb the whole of religion into the divine life of the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, into our intimate commerce with God, into those effects of grace that God brings about in us, so to speak, without us. Consequently, in the eyes of those looking on from the outside, their religious life seems like something suspended in mid-air, formed of superhuman practices that are not concerned with the common run of mankind [*lecommun*] and are not made for it.

Do not the simple faithful fall into this error in their own manner? Do we not sometimes confuse that which is love of God with what is required and is simply owed from the moral perspective, giving satisfaction to justice by the impulse of the heart? Do not many find themselves helpless if this impulse runs dry?

Our religion would assuredly be much better instructed, more solidly established, and more balanced if we knew its properly moral character, its value as a debt owed to God, a debt of justice which persists despite the absence of sentiment and intimacy with God Himself. It would also be much dearer to our human hearts if we knew what fulfillment it brings to that which is most profoundly human in us—in short, if we were aware of its educative value for man precisely inasmuch as he is man. And this is what St. Thomas was very keen to instruct us on in the next pair of articles in the same question.²

St. Thomas does not stop there, and after having denounced and refuted the opposed errors of the secularists and of the devout, he elevates himself toward his synthesis. First, presenting a kind of invitation to the secularist soul, he radiantly sets forth the value belonging to the first moral virtue, a dignity that falls to the virtue of religion.³ Then, consoling devout hearts regarding the restoration of religion to morality and to justice which he imposes upon them, he

x. See *ST* II-II, q. Si, aa. 4-5.

3. Sec *ST* II-II, q. 81, a. 6.

proves to them that, far from having lost anything, they find again in the virtue of religion, radiating forth its own, proper value over the whole of the moral life, the indispensable auxiliary for the theological virtues and for the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the realization of holiness.⁴

So understood, and therefore interpreted in the presence of four contemporary problems, the question *De religione* seems, to my eyes, to be broken up into these four statements, whose ascending progression will be clear to all:

- i. Religion, a moral virtue
- i. Religion, justice toward God
3. Religion, the first moral virtue
4. Religion, productive of holiness

We must candidly declare that, in order to reduce the articles of this question to these principal heads, we do not here intend to lay out an ontological anatomy of the subject at hand (as the Holy Doctor does here, following his customary manner of investigation).⁵ Rather, we have extracted from this ontology what we could perhaps call its organic dynamism, placing in relief the overarching questions that give the articles their meaning, doing so in order to reconstruct and fully establish the organic structure of the virtue of religion.

IS RELIGION TRULY A MORAL VIRTUE?

“No, it is not,” respond our secularists. And in support of their denial, they produce well-known arguments, namely: the moral insignificance of religious ritual, the lack of human dignity found in the religious attitude, and in contrast with the latter, the moral nobility of the “religion of humanity.” Finally, there is a popular

4. See STILII, q. 81, a. 8.
\$.S7TI-II, q. 81.

argument, namely, the moral degradation of those for whom religion is, as it were, a professional specialization: monks, priests, and religious sisters. Behind these reasons which are expressed in such terms, there assuredly stands the true, though unspoken, reason for this denial: these gentlemen believe neither in a God, nor in God, nor God.⁶

It is neither from the secular faith of Buisson,⁷ nor from the ideas of Mr. Bourru, the cantonal delegate of Payot, that we borrow the execution of these arguments. St. Thomas will suffice, and we will see that, however briefly they may be expressed, the contemporary objections lose none of their spice in passing under his quill. I only warn that, in order to better accommodate them to the modernized goal that I am pursuing, I have sometimes slightly modified his accent and turn of phrase. I assure the reader—and one can confirm the claim easily enough thanks to the references that I will provide—that the fundamental theme remains identical.

The moral insignificance of ritual. There is no moral virtue, objects St. Thomas, except where our humanity is perfected in some way. Every moral virtue must have its basis in human nature, and it falls to our reason to tell us when this condition is realized. Now, reason is mute in what concerns the relationship between human nature and rituals and ceremonies, which are the characteristic content of religion. Therefore, religion cannot be a moral virtue.⁸

The religious attitude. The religious attitude is made up of fear and servile subjugation. Moral virtue, by contrast, involves complete freedom and spontaneity. Therefore, the religious attitude is the exact opposite of a moral attitude. It is not a perfection for the free man. It cannot be a virtue.⁹

The religion of humanity. Nonetheless, a true religion does exist,

6. [Tr. note: the language implies the distinction discussed in *STII-II*, q. i, a. i.]

7. [Tr. note: likely the educational French reformer, Ferdinand Buisson (1841-1951).]

8. See *57TI-II*, q. 81, a. 1, obj. 3.

9. See *57*11-11*, q. 81, a. 1, obj. 1.

namely, the religion that presents itself as a program requiring us to come to the aid of the wretched and to guard ourselves against the world's corruption. In other words, it is the cult of humanity in itself and in all, and this religion has nothing to do with cultic religion.¹⁰

The personal deformation of religious [brothers and sisters]. Ceremonial religion finds its typical expression in a special caste of men and women, religious [brothers and sisters]. Their characteristic trait is their submission to material observances and to vows that make them dependent on other people. This has nothing in common with moral perfection.¹¹

Thus, we can see that modern objections against religion were known in their essential outlines by St. Thomas himself. How did he respond to them?

Before reproducing his responses, we must make a preliminary observation.

What enables our secularists to affirm their rejection with such force is, let us say, this "hidden idea" that there is no God, or at least that we can know nothing about Him. If this were indeed the case, religion would quite clearly be nothing but a parasitical outgrowth on our character, having nothing to do with true human nature. As we have said, this is not the perspective presupposed for our reflections here. In what we will say, we presuppose the existence of God as something proven by our reason and adhered to by our faith. We can engage in a specific discussion concerning the moral value of religion only if this point is conceded to us, at least as a hypothesis. If one refuses to grant this, the entire philosophical question concerning God thus opens up before us, and that is a matter for another discussion. Therefore, presupposing that God's existence is admitted, we will listen to St. Thomas vindicate the moral quality of the religious attitude in the face of the objections recounted above.

A moral virtue, it is said, must involve the perfection of our hu-

io. See 5711-11, q. 81, a. i, obj. 1-4.

n. See *ST II-II*, q. 81, a. 1, obj. 5.

manity. St. Thomas accepts this point from the outset. However, in what does human perfection consist? Would it not be in the fact that all the wholesome and normal activities having human nature as their source—in a word, his mores (a word from which the other word, moral, is derived)—function in relation to their constitutive law, according to the hierarchy of their values? For example, what distinguishes man from the beasts is man's reason, as well as his appetites and activities ruled by reason. It is in conformity with the constitutive law proper to man that he act in conformity with his reason, by which he judges everything, dominating and guiding the sensibility that he shares with the animals. When he acts in this way, he acts in conformity with his true mores as a man, and therefore acts in a moral manner; and when this way of acting is fixed in him by habituations, he thus has acquired a moral virtue, which perfects his human nature.

Now, human nature—and, as noted above, we take this for granted—does not exist wholly on its own. It lives in dependence on the first cause—as regards both its being, as well as its continuous preservation in existence, and likewise as regards its ultimate destiny. The stigmata of our essential dependence on God is inscribed upon our nature. This is a fact that no free man can change in any way.

If he cannot change this fact in any way, it nonetheless seems that he can choose to ignore it in the conduct of his life. He will not find his life's perfection by more extensively exercising his freedom but, rather, by exercising his freedom aright, taking into account the natural and inviolable dependencies to which he, moreover, owes the boon that is his existence and his freedom itself. In a word, freedom is not an end; it is a means. We must freely take God into account in our lives, but we cannot not take Him into account. Only at this price will our nature receive the fulfillment of its mores, which at bottom are the mores of a being who is dependent upon God. Only in this way will it obtain moral perfection, in harmony

with the essential and immanent desire that reconnects it to its first principle.¹² If, as is often said, the word “religion” comes from *religare* (to reconnect), from “relation to another,” then religion, which reconnects us to God, seems to be the required prolongation of the whole of human nature.¹³

What will be the proper character of this relation? If God is, shall we say, the first cause of the being of the universe, including of our nature, must He not possess, by Himself, as the source and in fullness, this being which is found in His creatures only in a reflected manner? Therefore, God has an excellent nature, not only in relation to us, but absolutely speaking, having nobody from whom He receives being, having nothing that limits Him. He stands at the first rank in being and in every perfection thereof. This fact is quite clear to any human person who has understood that he must reestablish his relationship with God. There is only one word for expressing the attitude that henceforth is suitable for him, the word that we employ every time that we find ourselves in the presence of a superior and excellent being: “homage.” We must enter into relation with God by having an attitude of homage.

However, here the homage is absolute, just as the perfection to which it is addressed is absolute. Consequently, we need a new word in order to characterize this unique homage. This word is “worship,” a word that is reserved for the act by which man, going to the utter depths of the fundamental requirements of his created nature, renders due homage to the infinitely perfect God, his Creator and ultimate end.¹⁴

The virtue of religion is the generative power giving rise to worship. According to its true and certain etymological root, given by the master Latin writer, Cicero, and confirmed by the laws of linguistic descent, the word “religion” comes, not from *religare*

12. See 5711-11, q. 81, aa. z-3.

13. See 5711-11, q. 81, a. 1.

14. See *STII-II*, q. 81, a. 4. See a. 1, ad 4.

(to reconnect), nor from *reeligere* (to choose again), but rather, from *relegere*, to read again, to run over in one's mind. To run over what?—Everything that has a relationship to worship of the Godhead. St. Thomas, who adopts this etymology as his own, sees in it the equivalent of this beautiful expression from Proverbs 3:6: "In all your ways, think upon Him."¹⁵

Understood in this way as the source of the worship of God, pouring forth from the depths of what is most intimate and characteristic in man (namely, his thought reflecting on the conditions of his being), religion is truly a natural fulfillment of the mores of humanity. And thus, the fact that man is "a religious animal" is not merely an experiential fact, as was once noted by a naturalist thinker. No, this fact has its justification in human nature. Man is essentially a religious being, just as from a very similar perspective, he is essentially a social being, *animate politicum*. His nature imperiously requires him to find his fulfillment in the religious attitude.¹⁶

Let us conclude: given that religion is truly a moral virtue, it makes up part of our personal self-education. It has an educative value for man precisely inasmuch as he is a man.

If our exposition of this principle does not have decisive value for the unbeliever, it will perhaps have the value of showing him that we practice our religion with full awareness of what we are doing. In any case, it renders us the service of providing ourselves a justification for our own religious attitude.

Let us now respond to the objections into which St. Thomas condensed the entire virus of modern prejudices.

First—is it correct to say that rituals and ceremonial worship are something foreign to human morality? By itself, ritual is nothing. Granted! Our Gospel itself declared this fact by these words

15. "One is called religious from 're-reading,' for he ponders and, as it were, rereads those things that pertain to the worship of God." 57TMI, q. 81, a. 1. The other etymologies do not have linguistic value, and St. Thomas, who refers to them, prefers this one to them.

16. See STII-II, q. 81, a. 7.

to which Renan,¹⁷ having come along far too late, was able to subscribe (tendentiously enough, moreover): “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”¹⁸ Yes, God is spirit, but what about us? Are we only spirit? Do we not need, even for our most spiritual acts, an external translation that certifies them to ourselves and also would help to arouse them?

This external translation is inescapable and this arousal indispensable. Without them, human nature is unable to express or arouse its internal sentiments.¹⁹ Reason is without a doubt mute in what concerns the turn and ceremonial form that interior worship will take on. However, without prescribing anything necessary, it does not fail to stimulate the devout will to express itself and find nourishment in particular forms of worship, and indeed, certain ones, like prayer and sacrifice, are remarkably found everywhere that rational creatures are encountered. Secularists scarcely make one step forward, and the contribution of their mores to the study of man's true nature is as insignificant and negligible a fact from the perspective of positive science as is the fact that religion is totally absent in certain tiny tribes in Brazil. Whatever may be the case, rituals and ceremonies, conceived of as emanating from a will and a reason seeking in them the culmination and nourishment of their recognition of the divine excellence, are not something foreign to human morality. Rather, they are its natural culmination.²⁰

Second—when it is thus conceived along these lines, is the religious attitude servile? No, at least if one will concede that servility is never involved in recognizing *that which is* or (something ultimately coming down to the same thing) in recognizing what one believes, in conscience, to exist. Whether or not we accept the fact, we are dependent beings. This dependence on a perfect and excellent Be-

17. [Tr. note: Ernst Renan (1811-91), the philologist and historian of Semitic languages and culture, a secular academic.]

18. Jn 4:14 (RSV). See 5TIM1, q. 81, a. 7, obj. 1.

19. See 57'11-11, q. 81, a. 7.

20. See 57'11-11, q. 81, a. 2, ad j.

ing does not hold without the latter having the right to be honored, nor without us having a strict duty to honor Him.²¹ However, it will be said, "We have not consented to this dependence." One might as well say, like the child in a secular school who is spoken to in the Catechism concerning the law of God: "This does not pertain to me; I did not vote for it." Your vote does not prevent things from existing. There is never servility involved in recognizing an existing right, should it put us into a given state of dependence. As the common expression runs (one perhaps created here by St. Thomas): "Make virtue of necessity."²² When we do so, we still act with spontaneity, even though our freedom would thus be morally bound by rights recognized by conscience. In order to deny this, we would need to hold that rights depend on the caprice of our will, whereas, in truth, they follow being. Every being that exists has rights corresponding to its natural value, and this is just as true for God as it is for others. These rights do not destroy our freedom. No, they adorn it.

And then, because a kind of fear makes up one aspect of the religious attitude, would not human dignity be humiliated by it? Yes, without a doubt, if, as an ancient thinker said, we created the gods out of a feeling of terror. However, this is pure phantasmagoria. God is not fabricated by our feeling of terror but, instead, is demonstrated by reason. The latter professes that such fear is a virtue, not of feeling terror, but rather, of fearing precisely where there are motives for such fear. Such fear is the sign that one sees things as they are, and to see things such as they are is a human virtue. Now, on account of His absolute excellence, His absolute sway over us, and our inability to fully satisfy the rights that flow from His infinite superiority, God deserves to be feared. Therefore, religious fear is a virtue.

Here, I must add that following the Gospel revelation of the divine paternity, this fear above all should be filial. Filial fear falls wholly in line with the Father's love, and with His children's aware-

ii. Sec *ibid.*

xx. Sec *ibid.*, a. x, ad x.

ness that they are separated from Him. In other words, it flows from the freest, most spontaneous, and noblest sentiment that could exist on earth. The religion that practices such a fear is at the service of the spirit of love.²³

Third—as regards the religion of humanity, one must recall that it was Christian before our modern moralists claimed that they newly discovered it. It is not from a Jaurès,²⁴ but from James the Apostle, that we have this vibrant and unparalleled program of the religion of humanity: “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”²⁵

However, if God exists, we can readily agree that we must serve Him first. I will say even more. These utterly lofty values, humanity and personal integrity, do not call for the absolute sentiment that we call worship, unless we connect them to this first value, the source of all values, namely God. Man is the work of His hands, and our integrity strives to imitate His excellent mores.

What is humanity apart from God? An aggregate, a sum of scattered, mortal individuals, born of a chance encounter ultimately coming to its end by disappearing for a given individual or in the final cataclysm, along with all their ideas, as well as all their vaunted aspirations and values, including those which are spiritual. If honor, justice, goodness, and truth are only ideas formed by men, mere phenomena and human products, humanity would therefore be made up of all such human values subject to the general cataclysm that will befall all things. The whole of the absolute character that we attribute to these values would vanish before our eyes, for the effect is only as lofty as its cause. We all feel this cannot be the case, and it was repeated frequently enough during the war²⁶ that here

23. See *STII-II*, q. 81, a. 2, ad 1.

24. [Tr. note: Jean Jaurès (1859-1914), a French socialist leader.]

25. Jas 1:27 (RSV). See *Sni-I*, q. 81, a. 1, obj. 1.

26. [Tr. note: the original article from which this chapter was taken is from 1919, so the reference is most certainly to the First World War.]

we find immortal, absolute, and dominating values that would still be worthwhile even if man did not exist. Well, then, what should we say? In short, their value comes from the fact that there is someone outside and above humanity watching over them, an anchoring point for these eternal values. We call this anchoring point "God." And hence we ask the religion of humanity not to overlook that form of religion which honors God, but much to the contrary, ask it to find in this religion the justification for its absolute character, its title as a religion, its *raison d'être*, and its meaning.²⁷

Fourth—let us now pass on to the professional deformations of true human nature offered to us by the category of religious men and women. Agreed. These abnormal people, haunted by the obsession of being slaves to other men, accumulate to this end the most dismal of practices, namely, vows, which place them perpetually at the mercy of anyone whatsoever for whatsoever ritual observances, thus attaching to these observances the power of capturing the moral virtues at their wellspring—what poor, poor people!

Here, we must read the great pride with which St. Thomas, who decidedly does not seem to be a degenerate, faces this accusation concerning one man's subjection to another and defends its proper character. His remark is brief but peremptory: "The men of whom you speak," he says, "submit themselves to man, not inasmuch as he is a man but, rather, as someone who represents God. Could the people of Galatia have been men without honor, those to whom St. Paul wrote: 'You received me like an angel of God, as though I were Jesus Christ Himself?'"²⁸

THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION, JUSTICE TOWARD GOD

We must now face a tendency diametrically opposed to the preceding one. It is an outlook belonging to pious, devout, and mystical

17. See *STII-H*, q. 81, a. i, ad i.

18. See *STII-II*, q. 81, a. i, ad 5. For a fuller refutation, see *S7II-II*, qq. 184 and 186.

believers. For them, the whole of the Christian life is summed up in a single act: to love God. Here, religion is annexed to charity and no longer has a properly human value. Its value is that of an act of love. It is a theological value, not a moral one. It is a mystical act.

I am purposely exaggerating this tendency in order to make its meaning clear. I am not unaware that many nuances exist in the concrete, just as the words of St. Augustine, "Love and do what you will," are susceptible to many interpretations that attenuate the absolute character which imbues its literal form.

Nonetheless, I maintain that this tendency is no mere phantom of my imagination. And this is why, in order to give it shape, to mark out its objective tenor, and to sketch out its contours, I will reproduce the objections that St. Thomas addresses to himself on its behalf.

We can hear the question now: "Would religion render homage where charity simply loves? However, Aristotle already asked himself: what is united more closely to love than to render honor?"²⁹ Where Aristotle speaks of proximity, St. Augustine indeed seems to push onward to full identification: we render *worship* to God, he says, by our faith, hope, and love."³⁰

And the reason for this identity is obvious. Do not the theological virtues and religion have the same object: God?³¹ Do they not follow the same law of excess in their deployment? We cannot honor God too much, just as we cannot believe in Him too much, hope in Him too much, or love Him too much. All this has nothing in common with the befitting, golden mean of a moral virtue.³² The same object, the same law: a sign of a fundamental identity.

The same identity is found when we consider the fact that the virtue of religion and the theological virtues have the same exten-

29. See *STII-II*, q. 81, a. 4, obj. 3.

30. See *STII-II*, q. 81, a. 5, obj. 1.

31. See *STII-II*, q. 81, a. 5, obj. 2.

32. See *STII-II*, q. 81, a. 5, obj. 3.

sion: everything must be done out of the love of God. And, similarly, as St. Paul witnesses, everything must be done in view of God's glory, that is, in a spirit of homage.³³

Moreover, in common parlance, the word "sacrifice" is used indifferently in order to designate the cultic act bearing this name and in order as to designate, as St. Augustine says, "the entire holy work done in view of being united to God" by charity.³⁴

Finally, the life of the theological virtues and of religion, properly speaking, clad themselves with the same name, the word "piety," and their two meanings are so intermingled that it is not clear whether this word designates the mystical life or the moral virtue of religion.

In our opinion, this confusion is profitable neither for the mystical life, nor for religion. Moreover, it risks compromising the vigor and clarity of the conduct to be followed in educating ourselves supernaturally and personally. The proper value of the virtue of religion must be safeguarded. By making everything into a mere exercise of love, one runs the risk, on the one hand, of not paying heed to the strictly obligatory character of certain acts and, on the other, of diminishing this obligatory character allowing acts of religion to be overshadowed by the spontaneous characteristics of love. We will be reproached with lacking "piety," a virtue that preserves an aroma of genial spontaneity, when we should say quite simply that we are unjust and, hence, lacking in integrity.

Therefore, let us get to the point and begin by declaring that the virtue of religion has for its specific and exclusive object the repayment of a debt of justice.

Honor is owed, as a debt of justice, to every person whose characteristic excellence is eminent in nature. It is owed to a superior by his inferior, to a father by his children, and to eminent virtues by all those that draw close to them. Nothing can relieve us of this obliga-

33. See *ST II-II*, q. 81, a. 4, obj. 1.

34. See *Sni-II*, q. 81, a. 4, obj. 1.

tion. It is founded on being itself, on the hierarchy of values. It is a natural duty to render honor to every perfection in being. And it is an act of justice to recognize this right when it is acutely present.³⁵

To God belongs the special, unique, and incomparable excellence that comes from the incomparable place He occupies in the hierarchy of beings. In Him exists every perfection and every kind of superiority, indeed in every manner. How could we be free to elude this superiority of the sovereignly perfect being?³⁶ If we remain [meta]physically free, we can make use of this freedom only by lying to the instinct of our rational nature which is capable of knowing God and, therefore, only at the price of a moral degradation. This is more than our duty. It is our honor as men, that of rendering Him homage, and to those who do not understand it, we can only repeat what the prophet said: "Man when he was in honor did not understand: he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them."³⁷

Worship is the means of rendering to God the particular justice that we owe Him. It consists in making our internal and external acts be performed, along with the objects that they arrange, in homage to the divine majesty. Worship has God as its sole object. Thus, He becomes the end of religion, the generative source of worship. The proper task of the virtue of religion is to order this matter of worship, our acts and our goods, so that it may bear witness to the divine excellence and be proportioned to it. Thus, the just man proportions his undertakings and his goods to the rights of his creditor.³⁸

Obviously, this cannot be a question of bringing about equality through the honor we render to the divine majesty.³⁹ Rather, God, who is infinitely good, wishes to be content with what man can do.

35. See STII-II, q. 81, a. 4.

36. See *ibid.*

37. Ps 49:10. [Tr. note: taken from 48:11 (DR), as the French cited by Fr. Gardeil appears to be from a somewhat common French translation from the Wilgate.]

38. See STI-n, q. 81, a. 5.

39. See SHI-II, q. 81, a. 5, ad 3.

When the latter has established in his homages a measure that exceeds that of the homages that he renders to creatures—thus, one that clearly stands out above creatures—the interior sentiment remains unachieved as a real expression, but its tendency cannot be doubted. God recognizes it and accepts it, just as Christ accepted and praised the alms offered by the poor widow: “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had.”⁴⁰

Despite this lack of proportion, all the characteristics of justice are encountered in the act of religion: an ever-urgent right, the right of the divine excellence, is its end and rule. Its matter is some human activity. The just measure between the right in question and man's acknowledgment of it is represented, to the degree that this is possible, by the effort he expends in stretching forth, striving to surpass the measure of the homage rendered to creatures and, indeed, to extend his gaze far beyond them.

Therefore, the exercise of the virtue of religion ultimately is a form of justice.

By contrast, the exercise of the theological virtues is in no way a form of justice. In their case, direct union with God is our sole concern. Without a doubt, this belongs to an order quite superior to the domain of justice, but we must note well that it is no longer a question of justice.

In the acts of faith, hope, and love, God is present, offering Himself not in the form of a demanding right but instead as a divine object that attracts us to Him so that we may live with Him.⁴¹ The exercise of the theological virtues is essentially a life of understanding and of love. Here, we do not have a matter to be organized in accord with the just proportions of debt to right. We only have the direct

40. Lk ii:5 (RSV).

41. See STI-II, q. 61, aa. i and 3.

and spontaneous movement of our intellect and will, informed by divine grace, going out to meet the spiritual nourishment offered to them and yearning to be nourished thereby. What is first and foremost here is the very life of our soul, not a debt to be paid.⁴²

I am well aware that the truth of God demands a response.

“God speaks, and we must respond to Him,” and likewise, to the infinite goodness of God. Therefore, we have a duty to believe in God, to hope in Him, and to love Him for His own sake and above all else. Yes, this is a duty just as nourishing oneself is a duty, ratifying the foundational law of our being, ordering us to Him. It is the duty required by life, not the payment of a debt corresponding to an onerous right, which we would need to satisfy solely because it is a right.

I also know that God has made this faith and love into a commandment for us to observe. Nonetheless, the commandment does not change the nature of the obligation. If it pertains to acts of justice, it sanctions them precisely as acts of justice; if it pertains to vital necessities, it does not change them into duties of strict justice. “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments,” said the Savior. “If you wish!” Without a doubt, this is commanded, on account of the realities present; namely, God and us, who [through grace and the theological virtues] He made to be united. However, this is not commanded as a payment. We do not pay a debt when we obey a law that orders our being to its fulfillment, its honor, and its happiness.⁴³

Do you now see clearly enough the specific difference that exists between our divine life and the justice rendered to God by the virtue of religion?

Consequently, to fail in one's duties of religion never goes without an offence against justice, that is, against this virtue which we are so sensitive about when we ourselves are involved, if we are cri-

42. See STII-II, q. 81, a. 5. Also, see q. 82, a. 2, ad 1.

43. See STII-II, q. 44, a. 1.

tiqued for lacking it. Something other than a good life is involved here. It is a question of integrity. He who fails in his religious duties robs God [of what is owed to Him].

What consequences throng forth here, confounding the negligent and careless acts of devout souls!

Your Catholic conscience owes God a Mass each Sunday. It is a Mass. It is neither a half-Mass, nor a three-quarters Mass, even if you must do some violence to yourself in order to assist at it. At this Mass, you must maintain an attitude in harmony with the divine excellence that you have come to honor. If you slacken your bearing, if you voluntarily do not maintain your attention and have willingly been inattentive, you will not be guilty of a lack of piety, as might be commonly said. Even the least of these small indiscretions, which are judged so severely in human relations, represents an offense to God's rights.

Your Catholic conscience approves the traditional practice of prayer each morning and each evening and consents to this as to a minimum and indispensable homage to be offered to God. Therefore, when thoughtlessness, distraction or negligence lead you to omit your prayers, or you rush them, if may I dare to say it: do not claim that this is just human weakness. It is assuredly this, but it is also an injustice since you have defrauded God the payment of the homage to which, according to your own estimation, He had a right.

So too for Easter [reception of the Eucharist], which is a debt of justice at the same time as it is nourishment for the soul, and so forth for all the duties toward God whose urgency is obvious. Thus, for souls consecrated to God, facing all the prescriptions of their rule: "You have made a vow," said St. Jerome to Rusticus, "You are not permitted to follow your desires."

"I planted my vineyard so that it may produce grapes, and behold, it bears only thorns,"⁴⁴ said the Lord. God had a right to

44. Is 5:1.

your prayer, your adoration, your respect, and your thanksgiving, and like the Savior once upon a time cursing the barren fig tree, He looks here and finds nothing, where He had the strict right to find something.⁴⁵ What you lack is neither piety nor fervor, as you may think. What you lack is justice. It is your good name itself which is at stake. Nothing is changed by the fact that God is invisible or silent.

If Christian souls would only realize this and govern their lives accordingly! Does not each virtue have its own principles and its own method of education? What characterizes justice is the equalization of a *debt* to a right. Nothing about God's right is changed by the fact that we cannot ultimately bring about such equality between ourselves and God.

The duty of giving what we can remains strict just like the right toward which it is oriented. You who are so intransigent in the questions of integrity: this is the opportunity to have it. The idea of an obligatory repayment is the master notion involved in every way the virtue of religion is active in the education of our souls. We do not belong to ourselves; we owe a debt.

We know all too well that God exercises His rights with gentleness and forbearance and that the divine creditor is generous concerning what is owed and remits the debts of the insolvent. Nonetheless, God's goodness is not a reason to neglect either His rights, nor our personal formation by the effective recognition of them. Unlimited confidence in the divine mercy can become a wicked counsellor in the matter of education in the virtue of religion. We must form our will in response to this dominating question: Yes or no, do I wish to be just before God? And if yes, let us begin by rigorously fulfilling our religious duties. After that, we will think about piety, devotions, zeal, and sensible fervor.

Having dissipated this confusion of justice with what is option-

45. See Mt 11:19.

al in matters of religion, with souls rectified by justice, the close relations that connect together justice and charity in the living organism of the Christian soul may now once again take up their activity anew and find their normal course of action. The love of God remains the great inspiration for everything, including our religious activities, for all the infused virtues are consolidated under the quivering energy of the love of God. After having asserted what is characteristic in religion, we will have the heart to proclaim this harmonic unity.

However, for now, let us respond to the objections that we noted at the beginning of this question.

When it is said that there is nothing closer to love than homage, something true is said. Friendship, the moral aspect of love, does not exist without respect and esteem for persons, and homage immediately pours forth from it.

But homage remains homage. It is not love. Nonetheless, it can be penetrated by love, and in this way, we find the realization of St. Augustine's words: "We render worship to God by faith, hope, and love."⁴⁶

Let us say that the theological virtues are more than—indeed better than—a form of worship. They are the exercise of a life that is nourished by its divine object. However, they arouse, as a kind of self-evident consequence, the desire to be just toward God. They are springs whence homage and worship flow forth. The act of honoring God is thus brought about under the rule of these theological virtues. It is saturated with the love of God, intrinsically elevated by it, rendering to God a justice that is permeated with love. Piety is this virtue of religion, receiving its inner framework from filial charity. However, this interpenetration changes nothing in the proper values of the energies that compose it. Religion remains a form of justice, and love remains love. Indeed, it is only on the condition

46. Sni-II, q. 81, a. 5, obj. i.

that justice be done that faith, hope, and charity may thereby render worship to God in and through religion.⁴⁷

No more is it the case that their common participation in the law of excess would prove the absolute identity of religion and the theological virtues, for this law behaves differently in the former and these latter. Yes, they do have a common characteristic: all the efforts expended by the virtues can equal neither the divine truth, nor the divine goodness, nor the excellence of His perfection. Nonetheless, in the movement toward God provoked by the theological virtues in our souls, there is not a golden mean to be kept: the measure of these acts, dare we say, is the infinity of the divine⁴⁸ truth and goodness. Here, the words *quantum potes tantum aude*TM must be taken literally. Behold what amazingly simplifies the government of our theological virtues: God, such as He is in Himself, directly governs them by exerting an objective influence⁴⁹ on them. The infinite is their fundamental law.

On the other hand, in the movement of the soul inspired by the virtue of religion, we must take into account the material used in worship, our internal and external human behaviors, our objects, and our property, by means of which we are faced with the question of eliciting a testimony on behalf of the divine excellence. The whole problem concerning the establishment of a golden mean, a proportion between the debt owed and the payment given (i.e., the whole ordeal of the faculty of personal government) reappears here. "The virtue of religion," says St. Thomas, "is not only conditioned by greater or lesser quantity and intensity in the act (as are the theological virtues as well), but also by many other considerations." For example, acts of religion are conditioned by considerations such as: we must render homage to appropriate persons and not to others (true

47. See STTII-II, q. 81, a. 5, ad 1.

48. [Tr. note: reading this as plural, applying to both truth and goodness.]

49. [Tr. note: "As much as you can do, that much dare." This is taken from Aquinas's *Lauda sion*, the sequence for the Feast of Corpus Christi in the Roman Rite.]

and false devotions), and must not do so at an inopportune time (off-base devotions), and not in an exaggerated manner (indiscreet devotion).⁵⁰ Thus because of the intrinsic nature of worship, the law of excess finds itself in competition with another law, namely, the law of the golden mean and that of the adaptation of worship to its end. Worship must be neither superstitious nor incongruous, placing what is secondary before what is primary, nor what is pleasing before what honors God.

Here, we touch the nerve of the error occasioned by the confusion of religion with the theological virtues. Once the specific distinction that reigns between them is abolished, the only rule to be applied in matters of worship can be nothing but the intensity of our love for God. The sincere but inconsiderate devout person does not know measure. When such souls take up devotions, they will sometimes prefer those which are most exaggerated, most irrelevant, and most foreign to the interior exercise of religion. With the best of intentions—indeed, intentions which flow from their zealous love of God—they will place worship and its garish manifestations, its material objects, pilgrimages, medals, rosaries, devotional cords, a recorded number of communions, etc., etc., all before devotion of soul, imagining themselves to be more religious through the material augmentation of acts of worship.

St. Thomas indeed did say, *Quantum potes tantum aude*, but he saw the quality of the homage, *Quia maior omni laude* [for greater than every praise]. The devout imagine that God receives greater honor through increased quantity. Their device is ever to extend, ever to augment, A.M.D.G. *Ad maiorem Deigloriam*, to the greater glory of God]. However, given that human life only has a limited amount of matter at its disposal (e.g., a restricted amount of time), so that other duties exist alongside our duties of worship, such souls sometimes end up neglecting essential duties (e.g., an obligation

50. See STII-II, q. 81, a. 5, ad 3.

of fraternal charity, a duty of state, and so forth) and overlook the rights of persons or of the common good. And finally, this intrusion by the immeasurable demands of a theological virtue into the domain of a moral virtue, which is submitted to measure [by the golden mean], ends by imposing an unbearable burden upon the devout soul and on his surroundings, indeed, one that is harmful for them to bear.

Nothing can manifest better than these results the need for a prudential rule in the execution of the means of worship. And doubtlessly, in what pertains to deformations of worship, the Sacred Congregation of Rites exists ... but it cannot do everything. How desirable, indeed, is it that the good government of our souls in such matters would be presided over by an exact, individual knowledge of the true nature of religion, of the distinction between zeal, charity, and worship in homage, and, finally, of the measure that is the law of the latter, would preside over the good government of our souls in this matter.

We still must respond to one final objection: the domain of religion, it is said, is profoundly intermingled with the domain of charity. Why distinguish them?

It is true that all the moral virtues depend on the theological virtues. The spirit of faith, hope, and love of God animates the whole service of God, indeed, making it into an exercise of love. As we saw earlier,⁵¹ according to St. Augustine, love penetrates all of this so much that, according to him, the acts of the moral virtues are nothing other than movements of love: love directing (prudence), love rendering each his due (justice), love rendering homage to God (religion), etc.

However, according to the most surely established doctrine of St. Thomas, each of the moral virtues preserves its domain and its own proper activity under the direction and rule of the theological virtues.

51. See the beginning of "The Task of Supernatural Prudence" in the previous chapter.

Thus, the virtue of religion has its own, reserved domain, namely, acts of worship, which have no other meaning than to render homage to God.

However, the loftiness of this end gives the virtue of religion an eminent place set apart among all the moral virtues that strive to establish an internal order within man himself and an external order among men. God rules man from His divine loftiness, and the virtue that takes God as its end naturally surpasses the limitations of the matter that is assigned to it, in order to begin to make the whole man, as well as the whole morality governing him, serve the honor of God. St. Paul has authorized this claim: Do all things for the honor of God!

However, the rule exercised by the theological virtues over the whole moral domain must not be confused with that which is exercised by the virtue of religion, for they have distinct perspectives and competencies. The theological virtues act on the moral life in order to make it into an exercise of faith, hope, and love of God. Religion aspires to make this same life an act of homage to Him.

Clearly, given that union with God, such as He is in Himself, is our ultimate end, the theological virtues remain independent in the influence that they exercise over the entire moral domain. By contrast, the virtue of religion is submitted to them because the perspective of homage, however lofty it may be, is only partial in nature and thus provides only a partial means for union with God.

And this is how, all the while remaining themselves, the theological virtues and the virtue of religion attain their maximum return for the supernatural life. The moral life, wholly elevated by the virtue of religion to the dignity of being a form of *sacrifice*, according to the idea of St. Augustine, which is ratified by the common usage of Christian language, becomes, under the supreme influence of the theological virtues, the most appropriate means for procuring union with God.⁵²

51. Sec *ST*II-II, q. Si, a. 4, ad 1.

However, already, by the logic of things, we have anticipated the subject of our third topic: religion, the first moral virtue.

THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION, THE FIRST MORAL VIRTUE

Behold,⁵³ most certainly, a statement that flies in the face of secular morality: the virtue of religion is the first moral virtue.

The defenders of secular morality retort: In order for such a pretension to be well-founded, your worship would at least need to equal the requirements that you attribute to the divine excellence.⁵⁴ Now, you will never realize such an adjustment by means of your wretched prayers and ridiculous genuflections. Therefore, remain erect. You will always be small enough.

Moreover, even if your homage were proportioned to the divine majesty, it would be perfectly superfluous. As you yourself say, God is perfect by Himself and in Himself. Therefore, He has no need of your worship. Reserve yourself for your neighbors—as you yourself, say, they are images of God—and for the needy who, according to your Gospel, are another self. This at least will serve humanity and will give greater honor to the Godhead, if it can be so honored by us.⁵⁵

In any case, given that, by your own admission, your worship is something strictly owed, religion could not be compared to these noble moral virtues, which are full of generous and disinterested spontaneity, heroism, civic devotion, and free solidarity. No, religion is not the first moral virtue.⁵⁶

53. [Tr. note: in a reference without any corresponding number in the body of the text, this refers back to the first article in this sequence. It appears that Fr. H.-D. Gardeil did not heavily edit the articles thus brought together into the volume, for direct references throughout are made to the original articles, not to the pagination in the current text.]

54. See STII-II, q. 81, a. 6, obj. 1.

55. See STII-II, q. 81, a. 6, obj. 2.

56. See 5^o7^oII-II, q. 81, sol. 1. [s/c] [Tr. note: this seems to be referring to a. 6, obj. 3.]

Now, we have a response for the first objection: since when do effective results enter into our considerations in matters of morality? Is not the merit of a virtue found above all in the will?⁵⁷ As Aristotle himself said, do we not exercise a loftier form of human morality by striving to realize a superior end, even if we only imperfectly attain it, than we do by adequately realizing inferior ends?⁵⁸

You say that our genuflections are ridiculously disproportionate to the divine excellence. Yes, without a doubt they are, and we are well aware of this fact. Nonetheless, we are spirits immersed in the senses, so suffer us to tread the path offered by our senses, in order that we might open up for ourselves a pathway toward the "invisible realities of God." Rituals, external worship, and even prayer do not have a value by themselves, and we already have conceded the point to you. Nonetheless, they are a kind of translation, instruments, as it were, stirring up the spiritual acts by which we come forward to render homage to God. And, in turn, even if our internal worship is not equal to the divine majesty, does it not testify that we are aware of our unworthiness, doing so by the very admission that we ourselves make concerning this insufficiency? All the same, however negative it may be, it represents a form of homage that has a moral value since it does not leave us to the mediocrity of earthly outlooks, for it situates us in our true place, making our foundational attitude into a living profession of God's perfection.⁵⁹

You say that we cannot thus be useful to God and that He does not need our homages. Doubtlessly, indeed. The only goal of a moral virtue can be to perfect ourselves. But the fact that God exceeds us does not prevent it from being the case that we should take Him into account. Is not the first quality of an essentially dependent being the fact that it retains an outlook acknowledging this dependence? Is not the atmosphere ceaselessly able to be permeated by

57. See ST I-II, q. 81, a. 6, obj. 5.

58. See St. Thomas, *In Ibr. Boetti de Trinitate*, q. 1, a. 1; *In X Ethic.*, leer. 11.

59. See ST I-II, q. 81, a. 6, co.

light, and is it not a perfection for it that it thus passes, through no power of its own, from the shadows of night to the splendors of the daylight? Behold our model: what natural agents do solely by physical necessity, we who are rational beings do by free consent. This is our first duty and our first virtue.

Without a doubt, this duty is something that is owed. Does it, for all that, surpass the acts of the benevolent virtues? If the latter are, so to speak, optional, they doubtlessly are more absolutely spontaneous. Nonetheless, does this not come from the fact that they are less fundamental, less capital for the moral life? Does it not come from the fact that they are the acts of virtues that are some way supererogatory? Will we say that the virtue of liberality's spontaneity means that it surpasses justice? No. What gives a virtue the value of holding the first place is not freedom (a quality shared by all the virtues) but rather the nobility of its object. Now, what nobler deed could we perform than to render justice, to the degree that this is possible, to the sovereign majesty? Besides, what prevents us from placing our hearts impulse into the repayment of this debt? Is not the divine excellence predestined to arouse a passionate search, as much in the form of a due payment of homage as in the form of the spontaneous characteristics of love?⁶⁰

But let us leave behind this discussion with our adversaries, whom we can indeed refute but cannot convince, given the disbelief that is at the foundation of their spiritual state. Let us elevate ourselves, *entre nous*, toward the true reasons for things and speak about the motive that leads us Christians to set religion in the first rank among the moral virtues.

If God exists, He wishes to be the first thing envisioned by the activity of the human soul, a reflection of God's face. This duty is fulfilled by virtues whose immediate and unique object is the vision of God as He is in Himself: the theological virtues. However, as their very name bears witness, these virtues are divine virtues, whose

60. See 57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 82, a. 3, co. and ad 2.

only human element is the subject in which they inhere. They are not moral virtues.

Nonetheless, if one moral (and therefore human) virtue draws closer, among all the others, to this superior dignity of the theological virtues, would we not be justified in holding that it is the first moral virtue?

It is said that prudence is the highest of the moral virtues because it in fact does govern and direct all the others. From this purely dynamic perspective, prudence does indeed hold the first rank among the moral virtues, and as we saw earlier, religion itself is submitted in the matter of its activity to the golden means decreed by prudence.

I say, "in the matter of its activity," but not in its end. If we compare the ends of prudence and religion, we will find that the former is wholly human, for it is concerned with acting in conformity with reason, and even when reason is led by the insights of faith,⁶¹ supernaturalized reason remains reason. The dictates of faith and the rectifications of charity are imposed on our action inasmuch as they are received, assimilated, and have become prudential. Not only is the prudential mode human, but prudence's very end remains human: directing our action.

By contrast, the end of religion is God alone.

The virtue of religion comes forward to transform the human material elements of our relational life and even of our passions (which otherwise find their end in us) into acts that have God as their end. Through us, it aims at God and reaches Him.

Some of its acts realize this intention so perfectly that some have needlessly sought to give it some other meaning than that of rendering an homage to God. Such acts are the proper acts of worship, which radiate forth from the virtue of religion as from their proper source.

Its other acts retain their human value. An act of restraint [50-

61. [Tr. note: that is. in the case of infused prudence.]

br'M) or one of obedience retain their human moral value. But religion grasps them and elevates them to the dignity of being an act of worship. The whole Christian life takes on the character of being a sacrifice.

We have already discussed all of this. But what we are insisting on now, as something to be retained for our present subject, is the fact that the acts that the virtue of religion adapts and annexes, as well as its own proper acts of worship, have God alone as their end.

Therefore, the internal tendency of religion is obviously related to that of the theological virtues. The virtue of religion relates our acts, works, and goods to God whereas the theological virtues embrace God Himself, through thought and love—this is the difference between them. Released from every matter inassimilable to God, the theological virtues enable us to “freely fly toward Him,” as the author of *The Imitation of Christ* says, whereas religion, a moral virtue, weighed down by the burden of our human mores, which were not intrinsically predestined to be the mores of “fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God,” must raise up this ponderous mass, making it into a protestation on behalf of the divine excellence. For the virtue of religion, God is not an *object* directly aimed at. The object of the virtue of religion is our mores, along with the new order that we must introduce into them in view of a new goal. Nonetheless, God remains forever in sight. He forms the perspective and horizon for the picture painted by the religious artist. He remains the unique *end*, if not the object, of its labors. The results are different. The theological virtues are concerned with union with God, and religion with adjusting our mores and their dependencies in relation to God. Still, our eyes are dazzled by the resemblance between the orientations in these subordinated and nonetheless symmetrical plans of life: the divine life and the moral life.

Thus, let us say in conclusion: what loftier moral virtue is there than that which gives all of man's being and goods this attitude which is so profoundly human and, nonetheless, so superhuman, so harmonized with the divine being! What more beautiful fulfillment

is there for our morality than this effort expended in grasping this morality and brandishing all things, in a sublime gesture in homage to God, to Him who is the source of all morality [*le premier Moral*]!

Let us attempt to summarize the transformation produced in the whole mass of human morality by the first rank among the moral virtues thus accorded to the virtue of religion, solely in the order of the dignity of ends and, therefore, without usurping the primacy of place reserved to prudence in the order of our self-government and moral activity.

Placed immediately below the theological virtues, to which it is akin, and nonetheless constituted as a stakeholder in human morality because we are what it ultimately perfects (though in relation to God), surpassing all the virtues (including the prudence that governs it) on account of its divine end, we here see the virtue of religion inserted into the center of the hierarchized dynamism of the virtues, like one of the "transition species" that connect two of nature's kingdoms, placing them in continuity according to the embryogenic conception of the universe.⁶²

To express the divine harmonies of human life, the virtue of religion arranges a double keyboard: first, the acts reserved to it (prayer, adoration, vows, and sacrifices); then the acts of the other moral virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) with their infinite ramifications. It infuses into the music coming forth from the two ranks of this organ the spirit of homage that is its own character, expressed in harmonics which transpose and humanize the accent provided by the theological virtues. What is thus taken up and transfigured into a form of religious homage is the whole of the human life in what is most elevated in it, refined already by our supernatural prudential education.

61. [Tr. note: early in his career, Fr. Gardcil took great interest in working out the conditions for a reconciliation between evolution and the strict principles of Thomist metaphysics, writing a lengthy series of articles on the topic. See Gardcil, "L'evolutionisme et les principes de S. Thomas," *Revue thomiste* 1 (1895): 17-45, 516-17, -15-3; 1 (1894): 19-41; 5 (1895): 61-84, 607-35; 4 (1896): 64-86, 115-47.]

This insight is what must illuminate our reading and interpretation of the scope of the conclusion in which St. Thomas expresses his adherence to the primacy of religion. Religion, he says, in his straightforward prose, "must be preferred to all the other moral virtues."⁶³ Truly, the Holy Doctor has spoken well.

Here, the practical conclusions touching on the fundamental orientation of our moral and supernatural personal education are present. The principal conclusion is what the Apostle Paul stated in these terms: piety is useful to all; it contains in promise the whole of the present life and of future virtue. Above, we set the role of piety in its place. We defended against it invading the domain of justice, all in the name of a supposed identity with the theological virtues. Likewise, for the greater good of religion itself, we have maintained the claim that this virtue is itself indeed a form of justice and not of charity. But, to distinguish is not to separate. Now that it is placed in its proper role, which is to moralize us by making us solvent with the divine creditor, religion can offer itself to charity in order to become, in religion's order of justice, the executor of charity's inspirations of filial love. The justice that we render to God through the virtue of religion is the justice that children render to their father: it is a form of piety, not a haughty and heartless justice.

Therefore, the first virtue that must be established in the soul of a child of God will be this form of piety. All the other virtues that will then be formed through our personal and natural self-education will thus receive a superior impulse from it, thereby being stamped with a religious imprint. They will have the savor of worship rendered to God. Thus, religion is full of promise for the present life (*vitaе quae nunc est*) and for the task of moralization to be undertaken here-below. It brings about our moral perfection. It is no less full of promise for the life hereafter (*et futurae*) for this justice toward God, permeated with a filial sentiment, is, as we have said, the

63.57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 81, a. 6.

justice of a child of the Heavenly Father. Through it, he strives for the great justice of heaven, like an apprenticeship preparing for the full justice that is rendered to the Heavenly Father by His beatified children, when the optative wish of the Apostle will be realized in man: *ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus*, so that God may be all in all.

RELIGION, IDENTICAL WITH HOLINESS

We still must give a name to the state of soul produced by this radiation of the virtue of religion over the whole of morality, in dependence on the inspiration coming from the theological virtues.

Why is the word "holiness" reserved for religious language? Why do we use the term "holiness" where philosophy uses the term "morality"? We will explain why.

Truly acquired moral virtue, which is solid and fully achieved, virtue in the state of virtue, as the theologians say,⁶⁴ fulfills two conditions. On the one hand, it brings about the emancipation of our reason, unobstructed by interior passions and by every disordered form of will in our external relations, so that these passions and relations may find the rule for all their activity solely in the idea of the Good. On the other hand, it brings about a concentration and unification of all our energies living for the good under the government of this right reason.⁶⁵

The supernatural life adopts this idea of human morality and makes these two conditions its own. Only, it pushes them to their complete fulfillment and thus transfigures them.

The end of the supernatural moral life is forever the good, but

64. [Tr. note: here, he seems to be distinguishing it from moral virtues in the state of disposition. On this topic, see Thomas M. Osborne, "Perfect and Imperfect Virtues in Aquinas," *The Ithaca Review*, no. 1 (100-): 49-64. A classic account can be found in Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "The Instability of the Acquired Moral Virtues in the State of Mortal Sin," in his *Philosophizing in Faith: Essays on the Beginning, and End of Wisdom*, trans. Matthew K. Miner (Providence, R.I.: Cluny Media, 1019), 1-1-82.]

65. See 5TH-II.q. 81, a. 8.

it is no longer the good measured out in dribs and drabs by our weak nature. It is the good in all its fullness, the concrete and living good, the type and exemplar of our rational good, embracing it and achieving it. It is the divine good. It is God.

Our soul's union with God is brought about—and this point cannot be repeated too many times—by the theological virtues. By means of them, taking God Himself, in Himself, as the object and reference point of the whole of our life, we give our entire life a new orientation, one that reason itself had not been aware of before the advent of these virtues in our souls. Supernatural prudence, whose governance is measured by the golden mean, thus sees itself as being required for transposing this measure to the lofty heights of the aims of faith, hope, and charity. This elevation has its repercussions on all of our morality. It is the abundance in righteousness (that is, in morality) spoken of in the Gospel.

The two fundamental conditions of morality find themselves transfigured in it. Indeed, quite clearly, the emancipation from the inferior order resulting from our soul being placed in the presence of the divine good must be more radical than if we were merely concerned with realizing the rational good in ourselves. It is clear that a more fundamental unification of all our energies is required when we aim directly at the ultimate end than when we merely set our focus upon the rational good, which always comes up short in some manner, at least in our case.

Therefore, under the inspiration of the theological virtues, infused prudence produces in our moral organism an effect which is at once more absolutely pure and more demanding. On these two heads, supernatural morality will be more complete than natural morality.

What we here have is holiness, the word whose dual etymology—*ayio* (from a *yyj*, without admixture with matter) and *sanctus* (from *santire*, to seal, to cement)—corresponds to the two aspects of the moral result obtained.

Now, this twofold superior result cannot be obtained in the perfection and completion that the divine good requires without it appealing to the virtue of religion in the matter in question, indeed with all the importance we acknowledged in the preceding question. And this is why the following statement crowns St. Thomas's exposition of his teaching on the virtue of religion: the virtue of religion is identical with holiness; they differ only in perspective.⁶⁶ Let us attempt to penetrate the profound reasons for this identification.

As we have said, the object of religion is to render the Godhead the worship that is His due. And this worship is twofold: worship properly speaking (prayer, adoration, vows, and sacrifices), along with the interior devotion that is their soul; and worship in an extended sense, with our intention of homage spreading out over our entire moral life.

Now, quite obviously, the more that specific acts of worship, to begin with them, are freed from all alloy, to that same degree will the homage that they render to God have its full meaning. A symbol of this purity of worship is given to us in the crystal-clear property expressed in the material exemption required of temples and of objects, figures [*lignes*], or vessels that serve in worship.⁶⁷ The meaning of this is obvious. "Purify yourself? Scripture will say, "you who bear the vessels of the Lord." And St. John Chrysostom: "Let your soul and thought be pure, for the sacrifice is pure." The proper work of the virtue of religion is thus oriented in the direction of an extensive moral purification. In order to approach God, one cannot be too removed from what is not God and from what is opposed to God: "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."⁶⁸ The religious logic is obvious.

66. See *ibid.*

67. See *ibid.*

68. Nk 5:13-14 (RSV).

Nonetheless, it is clear that these same specific acts (adoration, prayer, sacrifice, and the making of vows) require the attentive concentration of all our energies, the unification of all our thoughts, intentions, gazes, and gestures in relation to the divine excellence that we wish to honor. Here again, we find the proper character of our worship symbolized in the Christian church edifice, whose architecture converges toward the sanctuary and seems destined to draw our eyes, our attitudes, and our minds toward the altar where God resides. Thanks to this arrangement, the Christian temple provides for the masses the secret chamber spoken of by the Savior when He said: "When you wish to pray, do not stand in the midst of the temple or on the corner of public places so as to be seen by men; enter into your chamber, close the door, and pray to your Father in the secrecy of your retreat."

Thus, the indispensable environment and conditions for guaranteeing that the proper acts of worship may have their full value and signification support, strengthen, and require first and foremost this purification in relation to what is inferior, as well as this concentration that, for its part, the faculty of supernatural government, infused prudence, strives to realize in order to free supernaturalized reason and enable it to govern our inferior world in accord with charity's inspirations. These two influences go in the same direction and supplement each other. However, the influence exercised by religion is, in a sense, more pressing because, taking up the general impulse of the love of God in which it partakes (as does the infused virtue of prudence) it adds the urgency that is born of the special necessity befalling the religious soul, namely the need to be purified and utterly unified in order to directly face the demanding rights of the divine excellence.

If we now pass from the specific acts of worship to the general influence that the virtue of religion exercises by spreading out over the entire content of our moral life, in order to thereby elevate it to the lofty heights of a form of worship, we must acknowledge

that it has the same simultaneously liberating and unifying power [*win*].⁶⁹

What is more efficacious in arousing in us the need to purify ourselves than the idea of God's presence? If, in human relations, the thought and respect that we feel for a lofty, ideal, and perfect soul, as well as for a friend, suffice to restrain us while on the slope of evil so that we may purify ourselves, what will be the case when we think upon God? Faith is what gives us the conviction of this presence of God in our life; charity maintains and vivifies it. However, the virtue of religion adds an active, devout will to this, a willingness to give oneself over to everything that can procure the honor of God, the beloved. "Do all things for the glory of God," it suggests to us. This is a form of worship. But how can we realize this worship if the pure gold of our intentions remains alloyed with our sensible thoughts or our worldly relations? No, nothing reinforces the purifying power of morality like the intention to fashion the whole of one's life into a form of homage offered to God. And this is why, without a doubt, the first impulse that makes a young soul think that she is called to fully consecrate herself to God is a purifying impulse. Likewise, this is why the saints, who fashion their entire lives into a form of perpetual worship, strive to free themselves from inferior things, ceaselessly taking this work up anew with increased rigor. With this unifying theme in mind, now reread the life of a saint, for example of St. Francis of Assisi!

And likewise, nothing contributes more to concentrating all of our activities toward the divine end than does the conviction that the whole of our life must be a form of worship offered to God. God is our first principle and our last end, and in this role, He is the unmoved mover, infinitely demanding by His rights and infinitely powerful by His attractions. A soul that has seen this, believing in these rights of God and loving them, feels himself irresistibly moved

69. See *ST* II-II, q. 81. a. 8 and ad i.

to make all of his energies converge toward the worship of this God, to unify them and fashion them into a beautiful ceremony, harmoniously unfolding all things in God's honor. At the beginning of his *Summa Contra Gentiles*TM St. Thomas Aquinas, borrowing from the words of St. Hilary, opens up before us the state of this soul in the following terms: "I am aware of owing to God, as the principal office of my life, that all my words and soul's feelings proclaim Him." Behold, taken immediately from a holy soul, the power that unifies all our energies as the religious intention radiates over the whole moral life of the Christian.

Therefore, let us conclude that for the purification of our mores and the concentration of all our moral energies in view of the good, the virtue of religion—as much by the requirements of its own proper acts, as by the radiation that it exercises—constitutes a powerful auxiliary for our supernatural government, infused prudence, in the service of the theological virtues.

The influence of religion transposes, at the very heart of the moral labor, this special and urgent vigor which could only be communicated to it by the proximity and action of the rights present here, belonging to our first principle and ultimate end. Repeatedly, in relation to all things, the soul that is under its sway proclaims: "Do all things for the honor of God." This is an interior spring, ceaselessly pressing upon the soul, impelling it in the direction of a morality whose sublime heights and end are unknown to ordinary morality, giving rise to a morality whose motto is drawn from the Gospel proclamation: "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

This special, unique, and incommunicable state of morality, one that religion alone can provoke (and which it alone knows how to provide), is what, by universal consent, receives and maintains the name of "holiness." Some people have spoken of secular holiness.

These are two words that clash with each other. For him who, in the light of the lives of the saints, has penetrated the meaning of the word "holiness," there neither is, nor can be, a secular holiness.

In sum, secularism wished to exclude religion from morality as a parasitic growth. A careful study, presupposing that it is true that God exists, has shown us, on the contrary, that in religion we have the generative energy of superior morality that is called "holiness."

Behold, something that is not suspected by those who go about proudly repeating, as though it were a decisive mark of their superiority, the expression spoken by this imitator of the intelligent Nicodemus: "Between us, there is the whole of the religious question!"⁷¹

Yes, certainly so. However, from the perspective of man's moral fulfillment in holiness, what have you gained from this intractable opposition?

DEVOTION

The virtue of religion is the source of a number of acts by which we give God the special form of homage which we have called worship.⁷²

Among these acts of religion, some are internal and others external. According to St. Thomas, its internal acts are devotion and prayer, whereas its external acts are called adoration, sacrifice, offerings, contributions to worship, vows, the practice of the sacraments, and oaths, the use of God's name either to beseech someone or to praise God.⁷³

71. [Tr. note: although the two texts are not entirely identical in French, Fr. Gardeil is likely citing remark by Raymond Poincare (1860-1934) to the conservative senator Charles Benoist (1861-1956). See "Poincare: 'De vous a moi, il n'y a pas tant de difference. — Il y a toute la question religieuse,' *L'Histoire en citations*-, see histoire-en-citations.fr/citations/raymond-poincare-de-vous-a-moi-il-n-y-a-pas-tant-de-difference. Also see J. F. V. Kciger, *Raymond Poincare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1001), 66.]

71. See STH-II. q. 81.

73. See STII-II, qq. 81-91.

These external acts are works rather than acts. The true acts of religion can only be internal. An external work acquires its full meaning and value as an act of religion only by incorporating and assimilating internal devotion into itself. "The Father seeks true adorers in spirit and truth."⁷⁴

Let us first speak about its internal acts.

Deep within us, we find our will and our reason. Externally, we have our body and the goods that are at our disposal. St. Thomas thus locates devotion and prayer among the internal acts of religion. He means that they are immanent acts within the spiritual soul, acts whose only matter is psychological, whereas external acts necessarily have a bodily or physical matter.

However, this does not mean that devotion and prayer should be placed on the same level. The order of their enumeration already suggests this, and a moment of reflection will penetrate the difference between them.

By placing devotion, an act of the will, before prayer, an act of the intellect, St. Thomas follows an order opposite to that which he followed in the enumeration of the theological virtues. In the latter case, faith, a completely intellectual virtue, precedes hope and charity, which are virtues of the will. Why are the theological virtues ordered this way?

Because, in their case, our divine life needs to be fully "constituted." Now this life takes root through contact with divine realities. Faith enables these realities to enter our inner depths. We can hope and love only when we believe. Faith provides hope and charity with their nourishment. As our Doctor says somewhere, the only foundation for true charity is true faith. Therefore, faith, a kind of threshold virtue, needed to be placed before charity.

By contrast, when the virtue of religion takes up its activity, our divine life is already established⁷⁵ and our personal government al-

⁷⁴-Jn 4:13.

⁷⁵. See the chapter "The Fundamental Idea of the Christian Life" above.

ready constituted.⁷⁶ Given that religion, the first moral virtue,⁷⁷ is a species of the virtue of justice, which is essentially a virtue of the will, it must be translated first by an act of will: this act is what we call devotion.

Consequently, without being an external work strictly speaking, prayer depends on devotion, which provides religious activity with its first movement. Likewise, given that prayer is external to devotion (because it is dependent upon it), it is not an interior act of religion in the same way that devotion is. It is religious by participation. That is, even while it remains, like devotion, an immanent act psychologically speaking, an act whose substance is furnished by the rational soul (in contrast to properly external acts), from the perspective of the virtue of religion, prayer finds itself ranked alongside religion's external acts as a derivative activity, an act that "receives" the religious permeation which comes from devotion alone.

As regards the properly external acts of religion, they are enumerated in these broad categories depending on whether we offer God the homage of our body (adoration), the homage of the goods that are our property (sacrifice, offerings and first fruits, contributions to worship, vows), or finally homage which offers God His own goods (practices of the sacraments, oaths, adjuration, and divine praise).

With the benefit of these clarifications, we can now enter into our subject: our supernatural and personal self-education. This subject calls for four considerations: the nature of devotion, the causes of devotion, the effects of devotion, and devotional practices.

THE NATURE OF DEVOTION

What has not been said... ? But what have I myself not thought or said about the devout and about devotions? Falsely devout peo-

76. See the chapter "Our Personal and Supernatural Self-Government" above.

77. See the preceding discussion on the virtue of religion.

pie, devout people who are far too unintelligent in their devotion, the puerility of certain devotions, the exaggeration or materialism in the practice of the best—all such things have compromised one of the most beautiful words in religious language.

Therefore, with St. Thomas, let us first consider the term itself, this indication that so often reveals the reality in question. Then, we will attack the reality itself.

First—the word, “devotion.” In reality, “devout,” a simple transcription of the Latin *devotus*, means “dedicated” [*dévoué*].

In the language of the ancients, the word “dedication” [*dévouement*] could not be spoken without awakening religious resonances, the idea of consecration and sacrifice. St. Thomas takes up this literary sentiment and supports it with a passage from Livy reporting the devotion of the Decii who offer their life to the gods for the salvation of their army.⁷⁸ He could have cited the beautiful expression of Cicero concerning the same fact: *devotiones Deciorum*.

The noble idea of dedication is not altered by this religious acceptance, and it arouses the thought of a complete gift of one's self and of one's activity for a work, a cause, or a person. Therefore, it is completely apt for characterizing the state of soul of those who strive to deliver themselves promptly to everything that brings honor and glory to God, that which is the very definition of the virtue of religion.

Despite the legitimacy of this religious naturalization of the term “dedication,” it is useful that we preserve the two denominations—dedication and devotion, along with their derivatives, dedicated and devout—in order to distinguish simple dedication, an act of moral virtue, from religious dedication, which has the character of being a consecration. Let us always recall that devotion, all the while possessing a properly religious meaning, nonetheless retains its original generic value as a kind of dedication and that the nobili-

78. See 5TILII, q. 82, a. 1. Livy, *Decades*, 1.1.8, chap. 8; 1.10, chap. 19.

ty of this latter sentiment remains incorporated into it, constituting its internal moral substance.

Second—now, let us pass from the word to the reality signified by the word.

Dedication is an affair of the will, of a will in motion, activating and setting in motion an entire world of activities.⁷⁹

Therefore, devotion grasps the religious activity at its very first source, the will. Devotion is not yet prayer, nor some practice, nor external worship, nor adoration, nor sacrifice, etc., all of which are acts of our applied powers. This entire ensemble will follow. It will be maneuvered by our devotion, calling upon it for direction in all this activity. Devotion, however, itself precedes its material expressions. It completely exists in a will that moves. It is the simple and primitive—yet already sovereignly active—voluntary intention to honor God through worship.

Is not the entire object of the virtue of religion to honor God through worship? And therefore, devotion expresses and pours forth the entire hidden sap of religion, this virtue of our will. It makes it pass into act, entirely and all at once. It is religion in its nascent state; it is religion in its pure state. In it, the interior nature of the virtue of religion pours forth, is transfused, and entirely translated into action.

And this is why St. Thomas defines devotion as a form of willingness, a pure and simple willingness to deliver oneself promptly to everything that is in God's service. Here, we have a specific kind of good act, unique in and through its very fullness, one that is not to be confused with any of those of the same genus.

Third—why does St. Thomas place the characteristic of promptness into the very heart of his definition of devotion, as though it were an essential aspect of it? There is another moral virtue whose definition also includes promptness, namely, obedience.⁸⁰ How-

79. See ST II-II, q. 81, a. i, ad 2.

80. See 571141, q. 104, aa. 1-1.

ever, we believe that the reason for the inclusion of promptness is immediately clear in the latter case. Sluggish decisions are made by those who must personally deliberate concerning the path to be taken. The obedient person, precisely as such, does not need to deliberate, for he finds himself faced with an authority who has deliberated for him. Once deliberation has been fully carried out, only execution remains: though we must be slow in deliberation, we must be quick in execution.⁸¹ Therefore, promptness is the characteristic quality of the obedient person as such. As soon as he receives the formal order from the authority who has a claim over him, his will submissively complies and turns to the activity at hand: his response is utterly immediate.⁸²

Now, if we consider the matter carefully, the devout person finds himself in an analogous situation, no longer in relation to an authority or a leader but, rather, in relation to the absolute authority of the divine excellence, which commands, in its manner, the envy of the most obeyed authorities.

What does a will imperiously command? The good of him who wills. Our will is the faculty by which we achieve our good. Set the will before the sight of our good and, here, it is immediately summoned to love it. It is like an open eye set before the light: it can do nothing but see. It gives itself over, if one may so speak, to the authority of the light.

However, if the good in view is our ultimate end—that is, the first and essential good which arouses all of our activity in the order of the good and is the source for all the attraction and enchantment we will ever experience in all possible goods—can we suppose that the will would be able to delay in the slightest way here? No, when the ultimate end is unveiled before our consciousness, its sway is absolute, immediately exhausting the entire strength of the will.⁸³

81. "One must indeed quickly carry out that which was counseled, whereas one must be slow in taking counsel" (*STII-II*, q. 47, a. 9).

8x. Reservations, however, being made for exceptional cases.

83. See *ATI-II*, q. 1, a. 6.

The precise object of the virtue of religion, as well as its result, is to place its possessor into immediate contact with the ultimate end, from the specific perspective that worship looks toward, namely the divine excellence. Given the need to observe the golden mean in this matter so as to rightly adjust it to the ends of worship, delays are indeed possible in the material acts of worship (prayer, offering, vows, etc.). However, there can be no reason for delay when it comes to the pure and simple willingness to offer ourselves, along with our acts and goods, in homage to the divine excellence, which is merely one given aspect of our ultimate end. Now, as we have said, devotion is this willingness. The devout person therefore only has to obey. Promptness is needed. It is the specific quality of devotion, just as it is of obedience.

At bottom, the two situations are similar. In the case of the devout person, we have someone whose will is set in the presence of our ultimate end, which is not an object of deliberation but, rather, of an adherence that spontaneously flows forth from its source. In the case of the obedient person, we have someone placed in the presence of an authority representing the divine authority and, therefore, representing the sway of the ultimate end. In the two cases, every intermediary and all deliberation are suppressed: the mere activation of the will, set into motion in the presence of the object that naturally dominates it. And this is undoubtedly why, by a kind of transfusion of qualities, we say that obedience can and must be devout.⁸⁴

Fourth—this solution to the question of promptness leads us directly to a more profound understanding of devotion. Illuminated by this insight, let us gaze upon the sweeping vistas presented by St. Thomas here, opening up before devotion in the religious domain vistas which are enclosed within this simple phrase, expressed with in his accustomed discrete yet pregnant terseness: “devotion is

84. See *ST* II-II, q. 104, a. 3, ad 1.

the principal act of religion.”⁸⁵ Here, understand the word “principal” in the formal sense that it has in the Holy Doctor’s language. It is the act that predominates in all those that come after it, commanding them, placing them in its service and ordering them to its honor. In short, if I may dare to take this expression in its ancient acceptation: it is their prince. Let us briefly explain this point.

According to St. Thomas, at the very summit of the hierarchical organization of our psychological activity, one act is the very centerpiece of the entire arousal of voluntary activity. It is the simple willing of the end and, principally, of the ultimate end.⁸⁶ In this act, which is merely the reaction of the rational will under the sway of the object that is naturally destined for it, an act which is the first outpouring of this dominating faculty, there preexists, in reality, the entire energy that will then pour forth into our entire voluntary and moral organism. For it is only after having willed the end that the will, itself acting, determines itself to will all the objects that fill out the details of life, objects that are nothing other than means for attaining the previously willed end. And this is above all true for the ever-present ultimate end along with its absolute demands, laying behind all of our objects, which it transforms into active goals. Thus, it follows that the entire deployment of human activity is subject to this first willing of man’s ultimate end and that this willing governs and measures all of our undertakings.⁸⁷ Let us replace the words “ultimate end” with “God”—as He in truth is—and we will conclude that in order for all human activity to be set in order, it must be organized under the pressure of this first and essential willing, which loves and wills God.

What is true for the whole of human activity can be transposed to any particular course of human action, most particularly to that of religious activity, for here, on account of the very nature of the

85. *Ibid.*

86. See *STMI*, q. 9.

87. See 57¹-11, q. 1, a. 6.

virtue of religion, we have a direct resumption of contact between the will and our ultimate end, given that religion is nothing other than our willingness to render to God worship that is proportioned to His excellence.

And therefore, the first act of willing in which the essential intention of religion pours itself forth, religion itself in its nascent state, still pure of all alloy with material worship—indeed, let us name it “devotion”—possesses, in seed, with the fullness and native vigor of things in such a nascent state, the entire future deployment of the religious life. This life will later blossom forth into multiple activities and a variety of works (prayer, sacrifice, offerings, vows, oaths, praises, etc.), but all of this will only exist in virtue of the impulse rising up from its roots: the general and prompt willingness to serve God. Therefore, it will exist only in virtue of devotion.

Here, we have no longer a mere rehabilitation but, rather, a splendid glorification befitting truly devout persons. Their devotion is not one particular act of their virtue of religion, situated on the same level as its other acts, mixed in with them and, as it were, lost among the others, more hidden than them on account of its immaterial nature and for that reason ungraspable by our sensible nature.

Still less is it the virtue of “devotions,” which are, as St. Thomas will say, its secondary and very often adventitious and optional matter. Devotion faces only toward God, like the virtue of religion, whose entire transfused power it possesses in a dynamic form. It is the master and generative impulse of our entire religious and cultic life. It governs and penetrates all of our religious acts, and not only those that are naturally related to the ends of worship. The devout person can speak devoutly just as he can pray devoutly. He can eat or walk devoutly, just as he can kneel devoutly, obey devoutly, study devoutly, or suffer devoutly. There is nothing in the moral domain that escapes the spirit of devotion. This spirit is encountered as something identical in all acts of worship and in all the undertakings of worship, not as a particular act or a visible external quality—which

is what sometimes renders it bothersome and hateful—but, rather, as the impulse of the first mover insinuating itself everywhere, present and active in the entire machinery depending on it, indeed, as its living soul.⁸⁸

THE CAUSES OF DEVOTION

Here,⁸⁹ I can hear devout people, these authorized experts in this matter, register a reproach against me. This synthesis drawn from St. Thomas, they say, is beautiful, but it reveals only one side of devotion, its active aspect. This idea of a complete devotion in will and in the fulfillment of justice does not fully correspond to what devout Christian people experience. Yes, devotion is a form of dedication, a prompt willingness to do everything that procures honor for God. However, it also is a cordial sentiment, a savor for God and for divine things. This sentiment and savor are not, perhaps, what is most important, since “God who is served” takes precedence over all things. Nonetheless, they are the inevitable result of devotion and, at the same time, the consolation of devout people. Your idea of devotion passes in silence over what is most characteristic for us other devout people and, in any case, what is best in devotion. To be honest, it is hardly devout.

We are more than happy to appease those who address this reproach to us. Their remark relies on a real fact, one having consequences of the greatest interest for the good government of ourselves in the practice of devotion and for the education of the latter.

Our excuse is that we could not say everything all at once. We first needed to disentangle and place in high relief that which properly belongs to devotion, that which constitutes its unique character as an act of religion, namely the fact that it is the first and utterly

88. “Devotion pertains to religion, of which it is the first act, necessary to all those that follow upon it.” 57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 87, a. 15; cf. a. 14. It is first not by origin or rank but in the order of causality.

89. See [^]TII-II, q. 82, a. 3.

pure expression of this virtue, the universal and radiant cause of all its subordinate⁹⁰ manifestations. Now that this fundamental task has been accomplished, without disavowing anything that we have heretofore determined, we are happy to do justice to these claims which, as we will see, are concerned less with the essence of devotion than with the normal accompaniments that it owes to its superior causes. What are these causes of devotion? St. Thomas enumerates two of them: charity and meditation.

The First Cause of Devotion: The Love of God

In order to understand what we will say, one must not lose sight of the solidarity binding together the existence and very life of the virtues (both theological and moral) within us, together with their various acts. No virtue, and no virtuous act, is isolated. There are the incessant and penetrating influences of the superior virtues on inferior ones, especially those of the theological virtues on the moral virtues. There are also the repercussions of the moral virtues' own activity, whether on one another or on the theological virtues. And among these influences and repercussions, while some are rare and occasional, others are also frequent and normal, passing from one virtue to another, either on account of their dependence in the hierarchy of the virtues or on account of an affinity they have in the role they must play in our life taken as a whole. Thus, sometimes, without being part of the specific essence of a virtue, a given property, a given activity, or a given characteristic will normally and habitually belong to it on account of its interpenetration with another virtue.

As we said earlier, the virtue of religion has an obvious affinity with the theological virtues on account of its relation to the divine excellence which, while not being its direct object, nonetheless is its exclusive end.⁹¹ On the other hand, as the summit of the virtue

90. [Tr. note: reading "inférieures" for "intérieures."]

91. See our discussion in the last pages of "The Virtue of Religion, the First Moral Virtue" above.

of justice, the loftiest moral virtue and also a virtue of the will like charity itself (through from a different perspective), the virtue of religion offers itself first to the government of prudence acting for the ends of charity and consequently is the first virtue utilized. For these two reasons, religion and charity are connected to each other by a very close, organic bond. If there is an act of religion in which this affinity ought to make itself felt, it assuredly is the act of devotion wherein religion pours out over the whole of our life, prior to the material expressions involved in the subsequent acts of worship, prayer, and sacrifice and without concern for the prudential measure to be meted out for all of this—in a word, as a pure and simple voluntary intention. Thus, we find ourselves faced with a maximum degree of sympathy here between charity and devotion. Devotion is an act predestined to favor charity's undertakings as they wend their way through the various paths trod throughout our supernatural morality.

In addition to these general motives, there is one that is special and drawn from experience, something which St. Thomas himself noted. Charity not only has God as its object. It is a form of friendship with God. Now, nothing like friendship makes us ready to place ourselves at the service of our friend and to render to him the honor that is owed to him. Therefore, devotion pours forth from charity as from a wellspring.⁹²

"The fact that man," concludes St. Thomas, "delivers himself over to God for the works of divine worship doubtlessly arises immediately from the virtue of religion, but it is related, by its mediation, to charity, the superior principle of religion."⁹³

Consequently, the concrete act of devotion is normally penetrated and interiorly reinforced by the love of God, with which it constitutes, as it were, a single body animated by a twofold life, the life of religion and that of charity.

91. See 5TII-II, q. 82, a. 2, ad 2.

93. 5TII-II, q. 82, a. 2, ad 1.

However, this interpenetration of love and religion in one and the same act does not mean that they are mixed together into a kind of confused mass. What religion seeks and procures in devotion is the gift of ourselves owed to God in justice.⁹⁴ Union with God is what charity seeks in its own turn in this same act, in conformity with its interior law. Charity arouses devotion like an exercise of love, in order to find therein a means for adhering to God through a spiritual union.⁹⁵ And when it has obtained this result, it then nourishes itself on the devotion that it has prompted, just as every friendship nourishes itself and grows through the fulfillment of duties toward those whom it loves.

Clearly, all this does not take place without a cordial sentiment and the savor for God that the devout experience and, indeed, reproach us for disregarding. But see: we have not disregarded anything but, rather, intend to give each part its due. We recognize that charity involves union with God, as well as the cordial sentiment, *gaudium*, that follows upon it and is normally incorporated into devotion. Likewise, we recognize that devotion properly so-called is the activity of the virtue of religion, the prompt willingness to render justice to God through acts of worship.

In this way, we can see that the theological idea of devotion does not cease to be devout. It is only more examined than the common and slightly superficial sentiment. Theology analyzes and discloses the inner structure of what we observe through experience.

SECOND CAUSE: REFLECTION ON GODS BOUNTY AND OUR POVERTY

Thus, we here find ourselves in the presence of three elements operative in the act of devotion: charity which is its superior but external principle, religion which emits it, and the cordial sentiment

94. See STII-II, q. 81, a. 1, co.

95. See STII-II, q. 82, a. 1, ad l.

that accompanies it. We can now draw consequences of the greatest interest for this good self-government in the practice of devotion, consequences that we have already glimpsed.

The love of God is the superior principle of devotion. This indicates the path we must follow in arousing, begetting, and reviving devotion in ourselves. How greatly do we desire that souls would complain of not having devotion, of being sluggish in the service of God, of not knowing how to go about arousing in themselves this promptness of will in God's service, unfortunately failing to hold themselves justly accountable to it, even though it is the true desire of their Christian heart! The response is in sight. Do you love God truly, for His own sake and above all else? Yes, without a doubt, to the depths, but perhaps with a languid heart, allowing yourself to experience all of these ups and downs, these intermissions and divisions which punctuate the lives of so many Christian souls. You love Him, though tepidly.

True, God alone gives charity, the mother of virtue. "He calls him whom He judges worthy," says St. Ambrose. "He renders religious those whom He wills. Had He so willed it, He would have made the impious Samaritans devout."⁹⁶ But, we would misunderstand God's conduct were we to await our conversion from Him without doing anything to assist in it. He does not justify us without our involvement, says the Apostle. God's grace seeks us and presses upon us ceaselessly. It falls to us, under this stimulus, to open to God the door of our hearts! How will we come to do this?

First—the Psalmist said, "When I reflect, it is as though a fire ignites within me." Love pours forth from knowledge of our good,⁹⁷ and the love of God gives birth to knowledge of God. How are we to love God if we do not know Him, if we know Him poorly, or if we only think upon Him rarely and distractedly? The secret of the practice of the love of God is to habitually think upon God, in

96 .S7II-II, q. 8x, a. 3.

97. See S7II-II, q. 82, a. 3, co.

particular, by thinking about His infinite goodness and His benefits (whether general or individual), with which He has been pleased to fill us. Thus, the soul cries out with the Psalmist: "It is good for me to adhere to God and to place my hope in the Lord."⁹⁸ Such an outlook arouses the love of God in us, and this love of God, the superior cause of devotion, thus renewed and reinforced, suggests to us the idea that we should hand ourselves over to Him for His service and His worship, for His honor and His glory.

Second—this kind of meditation is not the only one that acts on our devotion. Like charity, devotion, an act of the virtue of religion, perfects our will. Therefore, the religious will can draw directly from the source of meditation. Now, there is one consideration that directly inspires devotion in us, namely the thought of our faults and of our insufficiencies. Nothing compares to this conviction for making us feel how much we need to rely on God: "I have lifted up my eyes to the summit from whence will come my help," says the Psalmist, "My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth."⁹⁹ To this end, one should read the confessions in which someone like St. Paul is moved to recall his faults and find therein inspiration for more devoted elevations of his soul toward God who has been merciful to him.¹⁰⁰

This consideration excludes presumption which, along with tepidity, is the great obstacle to devotion. When we trust in our own worth and in our own means, having confidence in ourselves, how could we feel the need to hand ourselves over to God with the intensity that characterizes devotion? "Everything—and this is not limited merely to knowledge—that is a cause of elevation for us," says St. Thomas, "is an occasion for us to have confidence in ourselves, and consequently, to not give ourselves totally over to God. This is why devotion abounds more in simple people and good

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. See 1 Tm 1:12-13.

women in whom devotion suppresses the desire for self-elevation. Note that I only say, 'an occasion,' for every human perfection, including knowledge, can be perfectly submitted to God, and then devotion abounds."¹⁰¹

In these two considerations (on the one hand, God and His benefits, and on the other, our poverty and sin), we possess the two fixtures and, as it were, the two poles on which Thomist asceticism rests and turns. They are the first principles, we can say, of the Christian life. They function like a kind of spring-mechanism for the two virtues that generate holiness: charity, the virtue of the heart, and religion, the virtue of the active will. Their influences converge in the act of devotion, from which all of our subsequent worship and service of God radiate forth.

This suffices for expressing how much these two considerations are essential causes of the religious life, and here we can only note their agreement with those which the divine teacher set at the foundation of the life of the very devoted disciple of St. Thomas, St. Catherine of Siena.¹⁰²

THE EFFECTS OF DEVOTION

Given that the cordial sentiment inherent to devotion emerges under the influence of the love of God and the influence of contemplation, we need not conclude that the joy of devotion does not have its own quality and its own savor.

Doubtlessly, the devout soul receives the repercussions of the joy of the divine good that is begotten by charity,¹⁰³ as well as from the enjoyment inseparably united to the act of contemplation.¹⁰⁴ How-

ioi .STIMI, q. 82, a. 3, ad 3.

102. See the life of Catherine of Siena by Raymond of Capua, trans. Huguency, 97 and 98-100. [Tr. note: likely this refers to *La vie de sainte Catherine de Sienne, par le Bienheureux Raymond de Capone*, trans. Étienne Huguency (Paris: Lerhicleux, 1904).]

103. See *STII-II*, q. 28, a. 1.

104. See *STII-II*, q. 199, a. 7.

ever, by being incorporated into devotion, these values are modified. They are colored, so to speak, by their contact with it, like a ray of white light passing through a colored piece of translucent film.

Indeed, in conformity with a general law ruling the reception of the influence at the heart of any hierarchized dynamism, the action of superior causes is received by its inferior instruments in a manner befitting these latter's own modes of being.

In particular, every form of delectation is in some way molded upon the specific act to which it belongs. As Aristotle said, it accompanies the act *sicut decor iuventutum* [as beauty accompanies youth].¹⁰⁵ To charity, which is, above all, a love which takes pleasure in the divine good, there corresponds a tranquil *gaudium*, a replica of the parallel effect of charity, peace.¹⁰⁶ To contemplation, an act which is, so to speak, static, there corresponds a joy which is at rest, delighting in the truth, *delectatio*. However, devotion, ever ready to honor God and to do everything related to recognizing such honor,¹⁰⁷ has nothing to do with these calm joys of the unitive life. What is needed is a rejoicing that is wedded to its movement, a rejoicing that could have—how to express it?—like devotion, something buoyant in its character.

Behold, we have discovered the word! Likewise, St. Thomas characterizes the effect of devotion in the following way. He calls it neither *gaudium* nor *delectatio* but rather *laetitia*, that is, a joy in movement and on the march, a form of jubilation. And we doubtlessly can find a faithful translation of the sentiment that the Holy Doctor seeks to suggest by this word in the verse of the Psalm: "I will run in the way of your commandments, when you have expanded my heart."¹⁰⁸

Can we be quite certain that jubilation is the proper effect of de-

105. See *ST*I-II, q. 4, a. i, ad 1.

106. See *ST*II-II, q. 19, a. 3.

107. See "The Nature of Devotion" above.

108. Ps 119:51.

votion? Many souls, devout ones no less, contradict this claim. Just a moment ago they protested against the aridity of an unsentimental devotion wholly in the will.¹⁰⁹ Now that we have satisfied them, they say that we are being excessive, leading them to protest against our claim that devotion must be marked by such buoyancy.

Let us hear St. Thomas flesh out their protestations.

If there is a thought, he says, that excites devotion in us, it assuredly is that of the Saviors Passion. Now, what it produces in us is not jubilation. No, on the contrary, it produces pain, this sorrowful sympathy spoken of by the prophet, saying: "In my memory, I will remember, and my soul will be consumed within me by sorrow."¹¹⁰

Moreover, continues the Holy Doctor, devotion is marked by interior sacrifice. Did not the Psalmist say, "True sacrifice to God is a crushed spirit, *sacrificium Deo, spiritus contribulatus*"? Therefore, affliction is the effect of devotion, rather than joy and jubilation.¹

In fact, tears are a frequent accompaniment of devotion. Now, as laughter is an effect of joy, tears are an effect of sadness, said an ancient Christian philosopher.¹¹² What becomes of jubilation in this case?

Behold what you say to me, O devout souls! And are you surprised by it? Do you not know that what we here have is a condition which will befall our devotion, indeed all our joys, for as long as we remain "in this vale of tears"? Charity itself is not exempt from it. Nonetheless in God Himself there is nothing but rejoicing. But for now, our charity is upset by various causes that are opposed to the reception of the divine good, as much in ourselves as in our neighbors.¹¹³ The same is true for the case of devotion. Of itself and nor-

109. See the discussion in "The Nature of Devotion" above.

no. See 5711-11, q. 81, a. 4, obj. 1.

111. See *ST* II-II, q. 82, a. 4, obj. 2. [Tr. note: this wrongly cites *ST* II-II, q. 19, a. 3, obj. 1.]

in. Nemcsius, cited under the name of St. Gregory of Nyssa by St. Thomas in 5711-II, q. 81, a. 4, obj. 3.

113. See *ST* II-II, q. 38, aa. 2-3; q. 82, a. 4.

mally, devotion is made for causing spiritual jubilation; however, by a kind of repercussion and against its primordial intention, it produces sadness.¹¹⁴

The thought of the divine goodness that is its principal stimulant and the goal of the soul's movement provoked by devotion, all in dedication to God, can be nothing if not ravishing. "The thought of God came to me," says the Psalmist, "and I was filled with joy." But when we come to consider how distant we are from fully possessing God, we find ourselves to be invaded by sorrow. We had set forth saying, "My soul thirsts for God, the living source of happiness." And here, we fall back on ourselves and, continuing the Psalm: "My tears are my bread by night and by day." Devotion is not the cause of this. Its cause is our present state of existence.¹¹⁵

For all that, happiness does not necessarily exclude such tears, and we must recall this fact to souls who allow this to banish jubilation from their devotion. Do not tears, St. Thomas notes, pour forth from the eyes of those who recover their children or loving friends whom they believed were lost? This is not sorrow. It is filial piety.¹¹⁶ An analogous sentiment is encountered every time this intermingling of good and evil is experienced in our wayfaring happiness, provoking tenderness of heart in us. Indeed, this is why the imperfect manner in which devout souls experience the divine goodness excites their tears. And yet, concerning these tears, St. Augustine was able to say: *Et bene mihi erat cum eis* [And well was it for me with them!]¹¹⁷

This is also the case, *a fortiori*, in the devotion provoked by the consideration of our insufficiencies. Contrary to the preceding case, which began in joy so as to be colored with melancholy, the consideration of our insufficiencies begins in sorrow and is comes to

114. See STII-II, q. 81, a. 4, co.

115. Ibid.

116. See ST II-II, q. 81, a. 4, ad 5.

117. Augustine, *Confessions* IX.8.

its fulfillment in joy. Doubtlessly, the sentiment we feel on account of our faults leads us to not take rest in ourselves and to abandon ourselves to God. Nonetheless, this sentiment is woeful at the start: it is only afterward that it is colored with jubilation, to the degree that the hope for the divine assistance grows stronger within us.¹¹⁸

Thus, in this case, as in the first, there is doubtlessly an intermingling involved, but devotion is not responsible for this fact. The principal object that provokes our devotion, the object toward which it tends—God to be served and God served by it—naturally renders it buoyant. For now, the circumstances wherein we currently struggle obscure this joy, but the sorrow that results from this has nothing of the character of evil, since everything here is in accord with God.¹¹⁹

Therefore, far from standing in contradiction with the sorrowful sentiments of souls devoted to Our Lords Passion, spiritual jubilation, such as we can experience it as wayfarers, finds its perfect type in this intermingling of sorrow and jubilation. Nobody will claim that in the contemplation of Christs Passion affords only subjects of sorrow *\peine*. What causes such sadness in it is sin, which Christ had to redeem by His sufferings. But, all the same, it offers something for rejoicing, namely the goodness of God who, through such means, has assured us of our liberation.

The same is true for the sacrifices that devotion inspires. Sorrowful on account of the weakness of human nature, they find their consolation in thinking upon the divine goodness, which demands them for us for our good, as well as in the hope of divine assistance.¹²⁰

Thus, the devout soul bears in its complete physiognomy the twofold mark of the mystery of love and the suffering with which it is presently associated. The jubilation of its gaze, which is fixed on

118. See STII-II, q. 82, a. 4, co.

119. Ibid.

120. See STII-II, q. 82, a. 4, ad 2.

the divine goodness, is tempered by a kind of melancholy in view of the miseries that still hold it at a distance from the ideal while, all the same, arousing it to go out of itself in order to be devoted to the Lord's service and to become a host offered in praise to His honor. *Ad laudem gloriae gratiae suae.*

DEVOTION AND DEVOTIONS

The term "devotions" is used for certain *objects* or *practices* that the Church's designation, or the more-or-less authorized experience of the faithful, present to us as being so intimately united to devotion that they commonly borrow its name.

For the good government of our devotion, it is of great interest that we know the rules of conduct pertaining to devotions. However, in order to formulate these rules in a fully truthful manner, it is important that we do not allow ourselves to be taken in by our attractions and preferences, which are always unreliable. The resolution of this practical question depends on the resolution of this doctrinal question: "On what grounds are these objects and practices introduced into the principal act of religion, to the point of justly being regarded as things that are united with it?"

Indeed, if we come to see that devotions are not superimposed on devotion like something adventitious and extrinsic but, instead, are integrally one with its life, we would be able to promulgate from on high and in a well-informed manner the conduct we should exercise in matters of devotion. Moreover, we would render a more eminent service to devotion itself than we would have been able to do were we armed solely with the enflamed rhapsodies presented by the partisans of certain devotions.

This is what we propose to attempt here, first for objects of devotion and then for the practices of devotion.

OBJECTS OF DEVOTION

Having¹²¹ set forth from God, the act of devotion leads to God.

Indeed, as an act of religion, devotion has the divine excellence as its end. As the most elevated of our supernatural moral acts,¹²² it exists under the motivating influence of charity, which has God as its object.

Now, on this double head—as an act ordered to worship of the divine excellence, its end, and as an act elicited in special sympathy with charity, its lofty extrinsic cause—devotion can receive a beneficent influence from [particular] objects of devotion.

On the one hand, these devotions will place in arresting relief the end of devotion: the divine excellence. On the other hand, by the intermediary of the charity that they intensify, they will act on the very root of the act of devotion, speeding up its promptness and increasing its jubilation.¹²³

The first and most essential aspect of devotion is also its most apparent one. Indeed, it is clear that the more we know the divine excellence (and not only, therefore, this excellence considered in its lofty dignity, but also in its radiation and various expressions), we will be able to better orient and direct the act by means of which we hand ourselves over to His service, in His honor. Now, objects of devotion like the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Heart, and, at their own level, the Most Holy Virgin, this mirror of the divine

in. [Tr. note: throughout this section, Fr. Gardeil uses the expressions “devotion-objet” and “dévotions-objet.” The expression seems to intend to avoid slurring together “particular object of devotion” with *the formal object of devotion precisely as a unique virtue*. I have chosen to render this “object(s) of devotion,” presuming the reader knows, from the context, that he is not referring to the formal object of devotion. Other options for this expression would be “devotional object(s)” or even “devotion-object(s).”]

in. See the subsection “The First Cause of Devotion: The Love of God” in “The Causes of Devotion” above.

113. These ideas are only a brief reminder of what we said above in the last pages of “The Nature of Devotion” and in the subsection “The First Cause of Devotion: The Love of God” above.

excellence, the Church, His masterpiece, the saints in whom she radiates, and so forth, all illuminate with a new brilliance our idea of the divine excellence and enable us to fix more securely this end of our devout efforts. Indeed, we no longer have to seek out, with our restless and rapacious eyes, this incomprehensible splendor that made the Apostle say, *O altitudo*! Here, we are educated about Him by concrete, graspable objects, cut to the measure of our human understanding.

Hence, we know that in addressing our homages to the Blessed Sacrament present before us, to the ever-so-evocative Sacred Heart, and to the Holy Spirit remaining so intimately close in the sanctuary of our souls, we have honored the impenetrable and incomprehensible divine excellence. Likewise, we know that by addressing our homages to the Immaculate Conception, our devotion has encountered the divine excellence. If I were to dare to adapt an expression that Our Lord uttered in an analogous circumstance, here using it for what happens in this case of devotional exercises, I would say that the devout person hears the divine excellence say to him: "Whatever homage you render to these representations and extensions *of myself*, you render it to me."

Therefore, objects of devotion set the *end* of devotion in high relief, rendering it present and adapting it to our sensible modes of conceiving, thus placing the most elevated acts of devotion within the reach of the simplest of people. And thus, we can see how, on this head, from the perspective of its end, objects of devotion are inserted into subjective devotion. They provide a precious auxiliary for the act of devotion, one that is practically indispensable, given our human nature.

However, we need to know how to make use of this auxiliary. On this subject, St. Thomas has transmitted to us a golden rule. Speaking of the devotion that we have for certain creatures, he said: "The devotion that one has to the saints, dead or living, is not fixed in them as in its ultimate goal but, rather, traverses them in order to

pass on to God, for we venerate them inasmuch as they are God's ministers."¹²⁴

And doubtlessly, this principle of conduct directly pertains only to objects of devotion that are concerned with creatures properly so called. However, nonetheless, to the degree that a number of objects of devotion, so to speak, materialize the pure but unfathomable idea of the divine excellence, this principle is applicable to them. Now, does not St. Thomas teach us that, even Christ, who, inasmuch as He is God, is one with the divine excellence, belongs to the order of means from the perspective of His humanity? And is not the very plan of the *Summa, Theologiae* inspired by this thought?

This takes us far. Indeed, whatever might be the object of devotion that expresses the divine excellence for us, we must never replace the final end of our devotion with what in reality is a means leading to this end. We are forbidden to tarry in the created modalities of our objects of devotion as though they were our definitive destination. We must, as St. Thomas said, "traverse them and pass on to God."

Therefore, an object of devotion must never be, as it were, an opaque screen that would conceal the depths of the divine excellence, on which, perhaps, we would project the image of our own individuality which, in this way, would become the real object of our worship instead of God, replacing Him with ourselves. Do we not encounter a kind of self-gratification in certain devotions that are, at bottom, only forms of self-worship?

In such circumstances, we thus miss the very end of devotion, which is the homage of our will offered to God alone and to His unique excellence.

This practical remark will suffice for now. We will take it back up again, more urgently, as we examine the second way that objects of devotion act on our devotion.

124. *mi-II*, q. 82, a. 2, ad 3.

As we have said, this second kind of influence is indirect and, as it were, by way of repercussion. In this case, an object of devotion acts directly on charity and the latter, thus nourished and set into motion, activates our devotion after the manner of an efficient cause.

But here, a side remark is needed.

In principle, charity has no other object than what faith presents to it. Faith is, as it were, an intellectual mouth which nourishes charity upon the divine good, its own proper object. Now, according to a certain theological maxim, the revelation of the truths of faith came to a close with the Apostolic era. The subsequent definition of dogmas by the Church during the years that followed merely functioned to manifest the truth which had been revealed by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles.

Consequently, among objects of devotion, there are those that, being objects of faith, properly speaking, are formally designated for nourishing our charity and, through it, take grasp of our devotion. These are universal, Catholic, obligatory devotions.

By contrast, other devotions, namely those that were invented by pious souls or even those that have come from private revelations (which cannot formally be an object of faith¹²⁵), cannot be the formal object of charity. The approval and recommendation of the Church herself does not bestow upon them a prerogative belonging solely to revealed data, namely the ability to directly and obligatorily rule charity and, hence, Catholic devotion. They are pious beliefs. When the Church recommends them or approves them, they are, moreover, sure, conformed to faith and generative of true piety.¹²⁶

115. See *STI*, q. i, a. 8, ad i. Cf. Melchior Cano, *De locis*, bk. u, chap. 3: "That which was seen by Brigid [of Sweden] or Catherine of Siena most certainly cannot at all be referred to faith.... Private revelations, of whatever kind they may be, are not matters of Catholic faith." [Tr. note: upon consultation with Cano's *De locis theologicis*, it seems that Fr. Gardeil is citing the aforementioned text from *ST*. He incorrectly cites "SF!, [j/c] a. 8, ad 3."]

116. See *Les nouvelles religieuses* (August 15, 1918): 491-93. [Tr. note: Fr. Gardeil provides no further citation details for this article, and it could not be found based on further research at the time of publication.]

However, even in this case, they are not indispensably united to the life of the theological virtues, nor, hence, to the essence of the Christian life. Provided that, in complete obedience and respect for the approval that the Church gives to them, a Christian regards them as good and holy in general and has a heart that is ready to join in them when the occasion urgently calls for the exercise of such devotions, he can live a full and complete Christian life without being particularly occupied with them.

Still, certain devotions of this kind deserve special mention apart, namely mixed devotions. Dogmatic in their content, though in their historical origin, they fall within the domain of "pious devotional practices."¹²⁷ Such mixed, dogmatic devotions include the Holy Rosary or the Sacred Heart. The Holy Rosary, whose mysteries, for the most part, are objects of faith, is in no way an object of faith in its particular arrangement, any more than in the tradition related to its origin. The Sacred Heart of Our Lord, an object of faith through its connection to the dogma of the Hypostatic Union, no less than through its manifestations in the Gospel, cannot be an object of faith in the modalities of presentation to our worship that it owes to the apparitions of Paray-le-Monial. From the latter perspective, the Sacred Heart remains a sure and pious belief, guaranteed as being generative of piety, and, in the present case, that is much. Indeed, because the pious belief is closer to us historically than is the object of faith, presenting us the object of faith with details specifying the merciful intentions of God in our regard, it is indeed fit for giving the dogmas that it illustrates an actuality, attraction, and stimulating influence on our charity and, by overflow, on our devotion to these divine objects.

Therefore, there will be two classes of objects of devotion, con-

127. [Tr. note: in French, these are referred to by Fr. Gardeil as "devotions de pure devotion." For the sake of euphony in English, I have chosen to use the expression "pious devotional practices," but the reader should be aware that everywhere that this expression is found, the French "devotion de pure devotion" is functioning as a quasi-technical designation.]

sidered from the particular perspective of their action on devotion by the intermediary of charity. On the one hand, there are dogmatic devotions, which are essential to the devout life because they are of direct interest to charity, the proper extrinsic cause of devotion. On the other, there are "pious devotional practices," which are auxiliary and optional in themselves. Between these, semi-dogmatic devotions pose a particularly delicate problem for Christian asceticism.

Dogmatic Devotions

First, among dogmatic objects of devotion, there are ones that have a sovereign dignity, namely, those that are directly related to the Godhead. Others, although less lofty, ultimately are more efficacious and, in particular, more accessible to all (for example, those that treat of Our Lord's humanity).

This distinction furnishes St. Thomas with an occasion to formulate directive principles of great interest. His words are as follows:

The Godhead and all that concerns it are, in themselves, the most proper object for arousing our charity and, thus, our devotion, since God must be loved above all else. However, the weakness of the human mind is such that, needing to be led, as it were, by the hand to knowledge of divine things by the consideration of sensible things, it bears this law into its love. At the first rank of these sensible stimulants of love, we encounter Christ's humanity, whose own manifestation has as its goal, as the preface of the Mass of the Nativity proclaims, "That, knowing God visibly, we would be drawn by Him to love of invisible divine realities." And therefore, everything that is related to Christ's humanity acts sovereignly after the manner of an introduction [*manu ductio*] in order to arouse devotion in us, although the latter has as its principal object that which is related to the Godhead.¹²⁸

118. *ST II-II*, q. 81, a. 5, ad 1. Note well in this passage of St. Thomas, the detour that the object of devotion accomplishes, passing through charity, so as to activate *a radice*, from its very root, and no longer objectively, subjective devotion.

Consequently, devotion to the Holy Trinity, to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is commendable among all. It is what holds the first place in the heart of saints favored with divine lights—someone like St. John, St. Paul, and, at their own level, St. Thomas and St. Catherine of Siena. The Church gives it an incomparable place in her liturgy, with the Feast of the Holy Trinity as the keystone toward which we mount upward from Advent, descending again, at least in the ancient liturgy, preserved in the Dominican Rite: an ascent and descent, ceaselessly punctuated by the unflagging *Gloria. Patri et Filio et Spiritui sancto*.

Also, a theologian cannot fail to rejoice at seeing this unique devotion come back into favor in our own days for profound and holy souls and at being able to assist in its revival, which finds a signal expression in the Carmelite order in particular, as seen in the pious revelations¹³⁰ of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity and her emulators [emules]. Similarly, the search for the Holy Trinity in its temple, the souls of the righteous, arouses in all the mystical schools works that find an almost popular reception. In this, we certainly are faced with lofty form of progress in the devotion of Christian souls.

However, the dogmas concerning Our Lord's humanity must nonetheless retain the place that St. Thomas assigns to them, an essential place, for if Our Lord is the "way," He is nonetheless the "life," the destination of the route, through the "Godhead realized bodily, or *wpiaTtKW*, in Him." Even if the devout soul were carried to the ultimate degree of contemplation, it must not neglect "the eminent knowledge of Christ our Lord,"¹³¹ and "the supereminent charity of the knowledge of Christ."¹³² It is in Him that we find access to the Father, an access that is easy, forever thrown wide open, which our sense-dependent souls need in order that their devotion may

119. The Dominican liturgy numbers Sundays on the basis of the feast of the Holy Trinity, not the feast of Pentecost as is done in the Roman Rite.

130. [Tr. note: Or, perhaps, "elevations"; however, here reading *revelations* for *rélévations*.)

131. Phil 3:9.

131. Eph 3:19.

be enflamed. It is here that, in all its simplicity, the Sacred Heart is encountered before its time, something which St. Paul commended in terms that no person devoted to the Sacred Heart could equal: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."¹³⁵

The Gospel, which "recounts God" and His magnificent attributes by transposing His intimate life into the words, sentiments, gestures, attitudes, and actions of the God-Man, is the inexhaustible reservoir where this devotion will be nourished. On the other hand, in their letters, St. Paul, St. John, and St. Peter furnish us with the actions which should be our response to how we are influenced by the revelation we receive from the Gospel. Did not the Fathers of the Church, men of unequalled devotion, who had neither our modern devotions nor those books of spirituality and methods of prayer which certain devout people consider a kind of new New Testament providing more spiritual advantage than the New Testament of yore, find within Scripture's treasures of divine objects the secret of all those magnificent states of soul, filled with true devotion, which they spread out through the immense repertoire of their works?

To this devotion to Christ's humanity is connected devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, both in its original form in the sacrifice of the Mass, from which holy communion is inseparable, as well as in the truly ancient form of worship at the tabernacle, a marvelous discovery, brought about through the Church's pious reflection on the inestimable value of the treasure that she possesses. Consider the love with which the generations of the faithful sing anew the hymns of someone like St. Thomas Aquinas. Their attitude shows quite well just what such an object of devotion can beget in the way of personal devotion in souls, provoked as an effect brought about by means of a presence that is, as it were, material and so close, some-

135. Gal 1:20 (RSV). [Tr. note: Fr. Gardeil cites Gal 1:19-11.]

thing appropriate for beings who, after all, are bodily. Here, we truly have the focal point in which both the mystery of the Holy Trinity (which is inseparable from the real presence) and the whole Mystery of Christ (which, moreover, is actualized in its most sublime moment, each day, at the Holy Sacrifice) converge so as to enflame our wills. To follow the Holy Sacrifice or to adore Jesus Christ in His tabernacle, the Gospel in hand or, rather, living in our memory—as the Church does at Mass with the chanting of the Gospel, with the *Benedictus qui venit*, the *Pater*, the *Agnus dei*, the *Domine non sum dignus*—as St. Thomas Aquinas does, putting himself in the place of Thomas Didymus or of the good thief in his *Adoro te*, and evoking the band of the Twelve, assembled at the Last Supper, in the *Pange lingua*—or again, like the pilgrims of Lourdes, crying out at the passing of the Blessed Sacrament with the very cries of the crowds in the Gospel: behold with certainty an unqualified object of devotion where everything that is stirred up in the beliefs that are dear to our heart in the *Credo* is put into action at a single stroke. Along with devotion to the Holy Trinity residing in the soul, it is the substantial devotion *par excellence*.

We must not forget the Holy Spirit in the enumeration of these first dogmatic devotions—no longer the Holy Spirit proceeding, which is one with devotion to the Holy Trinity, but the Holy Spirit exercising a mission parallel to the mission of the Incarnate Word. The Father reveals Himself in the Spirit of the Son no less than in the Son Himself. Therefore, the mission of the Holy Spirit is, by way of interior touches and suggestions, itself just as revelatory of the depths of God as is the mission of the Son by way of doctrinal illumination and sacramental sanctification. Let us go even further and not fear to add that we currently live in midst of the sanctifying reign of the Paraclete, by the very will of the Son who, from His departure, sends Him to us as the Comforter. Therefore, there will be, felt under the profound action of the sanctifying Spirit, a powerful rousing of this willingness that does nothing but spirate homage to God and is properly called “devotion.”

Second, dogmatic objects of devotion are not always related to the Godhead itself. Many of them offer creatures for our worship [*culte*]. However, these creatures have an intimate connection with the Godhead, without which they could not be dogmatic devotions. Moreover, this relationship is explicitly expressed by the declarations that are authoritative in matters of dogma, namely Holy Scripture, the symbols of the faith, and the Church's definitions making them *actually* dogmatic. Let us cite most especially the Most Holy Virgin, with her prerogatives which have been defined as matters of faith, then the Holy Angels and certain dogmatic saints (like St. Joseph, St. John the Baptist, the Apostles), then the Holy Church, which we should perhaps designate as the first, the sovereign Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ and him in whom many dogmas are incarnate, the sacraments of the Church, the causes of grace, the living or dead saints (and, in the latter case more living than ever), their relics, etc.

St. Thomas said to us a moment ago how our devotion should be oriented toward creatures, considered as objects of worship. "We must," he said, "not be fixed in them as in our worship's ultimate goal but must traverse them in order to pass on to God." This line of conduct formulated for devotion holds true for charity, the mother and nurse of devotion. The created object that faith presents to it like something with a divine affiliation is never an absolute terminus of love. It is a path opened toward the divine excellence. Only in this capacity, after having strengthened our charity, does it become a stimulant for devotion.

This was to be expected. If already Our Lord's humanity, the "conjoined" instrument of the Godhead, had to be classed as a means for arousing our charity so that we may love the invisible divine realities, *a fortiori* must these "separated instruments" be classed as means. Nonetheless, in the Incarnate Word, we found an end on which to support our charity and our devotion. Here we find pure means. Saints, sacraments, and relics do not of themselves possess the inspiring focal point of charity but only irradiations of this focal point. It is impossible to separate the worship [*culte*] of the saints,

even that of the Blessed Virgin (perhaps less the Blessed Virgin than other saints) from the worship [*culte*] of God who makes them saints, and the worship of the sacraments from the worship of God whose omnipotence traverses them. Therefore, in our own turn, as St. Thomas says, let us traverse them and rise upward through the divine current in the opposite direction. Let us go to the source. Thus, let this idea be capital, so that we might be correctly oriented in our devoted worship rendered to dogmatic, though secondary, objects of our devotion! It alone vindicates the true devotions of the second rank, as well as Catholic devotion itself, before the incomprehension expressed by its adversaries, all the while assuring it a divine sustenance that nourishes it and fortifies it.

Indeed, what can we not say about the living influence of secondary devotions on our fundamental devotions? What power for attracting us toward God is found in devotion [*culte*] to a holy soul in whom we see an irradiation of the virtues whose focal point is the divine excellence! What true devotion to God has not been begotten by devotion [*a/Zte*] to the sublime creation of grace who bears the name of the Most Holy Virgin Mary!

Alas! There is also a counterweight. There are devotions that are superstitious, counterfeit, and sometimes caricatures of true devotions. However, wrongs committed by certain devout persons must not prevent dogmatic objects of devotion from being, in themselves, if not of themselves, qualified objects for arousing, by means of the authentically certified divine element that they conceal, our faith in God and our love of Him and, consequently, our willingness to hand ourselves over to God's service for His love and His glory.

Semi-Dogmatic Devotions

Here, we are faced with a difficult practical problem. Semi-dogmatic devotions are, in their content, matters of dogma. However, in their origins and what is added to their content by the historical circumstances that begot them (e.g., apparitions, private revelations, etc.), they are no longer matters of dogma, and thus, have no *direct*

claim either on faith¹³⁴ or on the charity flowing from faith. Hence, how are we to harmonize in a single movement of soul (which the act of devotion indeed is) two influences that recommend themselves on unequal grounds, all the while putting forward a single and unique object, for example in the Sacred Heart of our Savior, which offers influences on dogmatic grounds and on the grounds of the private revelations of Paray-le-Monial?

Nonetheless, this question contains nothing surprising for the theologian. It arises whenever an act that by rights should be absolute is conditioned by an assent that is not. For example, we must hold on faith that the consecrated host must be adored, but not that a given host must be adored (e.g., the one that is in this particular tabernacle). "The believer's faith," says St. Thomas, "is not related to this or that host. Its object is that the true body of Christ is under the sensible species of bread that have been validly consecrated."¹³⁵ When we adore the Blessed Sacrament, our faith-adoration is conditioned not only by the dogma of the real presence but also by the judgment (one that is normally sure and certain) by which we believe that the consecration of the holy species was carried out in a valid manner. The same is the case for the veneration of relics, for sacramental absolution, etc., etc.

Thus, we grasp the need to have a rule that will fix our practice in the face of these semi-dogmatic objects. I say, "our practice," for our faith is fixed. In what concerns, for example, the Sacred Heart, our faith is fixed by the dogma of the Hypostatic Union and the Gospel. It cannot be fixed by the revelations made to Blessed Margaret-Mary. These revelations are not matters held on faith, and yet they are all the while present to our pious belief with all the guarantees that the Church can give, in addition to the human faith that we owe to history.

The rule we are speaking of can only be: when a dogmatic object

134. See the letter of Cardinal Billot, disclosed in *Le Figaro* (May 4, 1918); *La Croix* (May 7, 1918); and *Les Nouvelles religieuses* (August 18, 1918): 491-95.

135. See STII-II, q. 1, a. 5, ad 4. [Tr. note: the original omits "q. 1."]

is presented to us in the form of private revelations that are authorized and recommended by the Church or that are historically evident, we must *practically* receive this presentation of the dogmatic object as being something certain and, thus, give the object of devotion that she suggests the worship [*calte*] that we render to the object of faith itself. And, therefore, our devotion must be practically absolute. Why? Because an object of faith that is presented to our worship [*calte*] in a morally certain manner (e.g., the case of the consecrated host) has the right to rule our practical conduct in its regard, as the object of faith itself does. This is how we act in all the circumstances of life where moral certitude determines the law of our practice. And, clearly, this certitude is all the more urgent—let it be said between believers—to the degree the Church has more officially pledged on behalf of an object of devotion the undeniable authority that she herself has for directing our worship [*culte*]. This latter case is certainly true for devotion to the Sacred Heart, such as it emerges from the manifestations of Paray-le-Monial.

Therefore, the devout Christian people is fully permitted to not distinguish in its worship [*culte*] the Sacred Heart of Our Lord as it emerges from dogma and the Sacred Heart as it emerges in its dogmatic elements from the historical events of Paray. Thus, they are permitted to address to the Sacred Heart of the revelations their homages to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord purely and simply.

Obviously, this rule is obligatory for us only in practice. From the theoretical perspective, it leaves undisturbed that which is to be held on faith and that which can only be a sure and pious belief. As it is, it suffices for assuring our good self-government in matters of semi-dogmatic devotions. And that is what we are preoccupied with in these studies.

Indeed, this rule makes it clear that, on the basis of the fact that the historical modalities of a given object of devotion are not matters to be held by faith, the believer does not have the right to allow himself to reject, condemn, or declare that the contempo-

rary form of this devotions presentation is baseless. Instead, quite to the contrary, while maintaining the freedom of choosing our devotions in accord with the particular things that attract us, we must have a heart that is ready to render homage to this devotion when the occasion for it is urgent, for example when the Church makes it an object of public worship [*cu/te*]. However, on the other hand, we reserve the right to distinguish internally that which coincides with dogma and that which is the object of pure and simple private revelation (for example, the promises made to the blessed Margaret-Mary, the commands that were given to her related to the devotions to be instituted, etc.). We will return to these additional elements in our discussion of "pious devotional practices."¹³⁶

For all the more reason, we will separate off the accidental modalities of historical presentation (e.g., in what concerns the Sacred Heart, whether the Our Lord's fleshly heart is the emblem, the seat, or organ of Christ's love, whether this love is uniquely Christ's love for men or whether it involves the Father's love as well—questions that the theologians debate).¹³⁷

Indeed, even more so, we must exaggerate neither the promises nor the obligations, acting (for example, on the basis of the imposition of the Sacred Heart upon the French flag, the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in family homes, on the basis of the national or worldly kingship of the Sacred Heart, on the basis of questions so linked to Catholic devotion, or even to the faith) in such a way that one ends up thinking that those Catholics who are reserved in these matters are tepid or even lacking in faith. For all the more reason, we must not form an incorrect notion of certain promises or obligations, superstitiously attaching to communion practiced on nine Fridays the power of procuring eternal salvation in an infallible

136. See the Pastoral Letter by His Eminence Cardinal Emette for Lent in 1910 where the essential dogmatic element and that of the new element in the worship of the Sacred Heart are simultaneously used and distinguished. See *Sent. reh. de Paris*, February 14, 1910.

137. See "Sacré-Coeur" in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 5, cols. 1-4-93.

manner no matter what we might otherwise do, or practicing the devotion of the communion of first Friday of the month in preference to the great feasts of the Church to the point of sacrificing the latter for the former.

Moreover, the Church has intervened on a number of occasions to rectify matters when differences arise in devotion to the Sacred Heart. She has forbidden the public veneration of images wherein Our Lord's heart is represented separately from Our Lord Himself; she has condemned the expression "Penitent Heart of Jesus," disapproved the claim that the merciful heart is the equivalent of the Sacred Heart, as well as the emblems of the Sacred Heart placed on hosts, and finally has protested against the mania for innovation and the invention of new forms of devotion.¹³⁸ For his part, in a private letter, Cardinal Billot recently clarified the issue concerning the emblem of the Sacred Heart on the [French] flag.¹³⁹

The Church's conduct in guiding believers' practices provides a kind of teaching: Do not be overly meticulous, and do not give in to ambient excitement out of fantasies that are no longer related to true devotion. Joubert said, "The more an expression resembles thought, a thought a soul, and a soul God, to this degree is all of this all the more beautiful!" Let us paraphrase and say: "The more that an object of devotion approaches dogma, and the more the dogma sets the divine excellence in relief, the more all of this is truly devout."

Pious Devotional Practices

By contrasting "pious devotional practices" with dogmatic and mixed devotions, we do not mean to claim that the former have no connection with dogma. What we mean to say is that the object that they represent is not an object that is dogmatic in itself, like the Blessed Sacrament, for example. We also wish to indicate that no dogmatic decision by the Church has intervened in favor of the

138. See *ibid.*, col. 345.

139. See the text cited above.

specific object that they offer to our worship. Consider Lourdes for example.

It often remains the case that a dogma distantly provides a foundation for the devotion [*culte*] we render to these devotions, as the dogma of the glorification of the saints or of the veneration owed to their relics founds the devotion [*culte*] rendered to a given saint or of a given relic. Above all, it remains the case that no object of devotion can be opposed to dogma.

“Pious devotional practices” are sometimes commanded by the Church, such as the worship [*culte*] owed to the Cross of Our Lord. At other times, they are simply recommended or approved, and this all takes place with an infinite number of nuances. They can still have as their cause historical or local facts, miracles, revelations, traditions, and ancient beliefs.

However, what establishes a “pious devotional practice” is its special relation with properly subjective devotion, that is, such as it results from the aspirations, manners, habitual sentiments, needs, etc., of the subject. It is produced like a forward-projection of the subjects preferences (however honest and supernatural they may be) onto the object.

This is the source of national objects of devotion, devotions whose object is colored by material interests, devotions, which, by contrast, are dear to interior souls, etc., etc.

Therefore, what characterizes these objects of devotion is their propriety for the given subject, thus presupposing something subjective and, hence, contingent and optional, in their *raison d'être*.

This does not mean that these devotions cannot act on our love of God. Instead, it only means that the way they lead us to the love of God is not simply through the manifestation of that which is divine. For example, the sight of a holy soul can lead us to love God even more. However, for one person this will be St. Paul, for another, St. Teresa, for a third, little Thérèse of the Child Jesus, and for a fourth, nothing will be as valuable as St. Michael the Archangel.

To one, the way of the Cross will speak, to this other, Our Lady of Mercy [*Notre Dame de pitié*], to others the Holy Face or the Image of the Shroud of Turin. Lourdes will be everything for this person, and Our Lady of the Rosary for another.

We will never come to an end if we were to strive to list the forms that "pious devotional practices" take on, even if we merely limited ourselves to those that are officially approved. Also, we have something better to do with ourselves. We must attempt to give some directives to devout souls concerning this subject.

And first of all, without a doubt, one may follow one's attraction, provided that one be attracted by what makes us truly good (that is, what makes us honor God more and is not merely pleasing for us, that which leads us to offer our lives in homage to His excellence and not simply to turn back on ourselves in an egoistic savoring of God). This same requirement holds for every devotion, which, by definition, is a willingness to jubilantly offer ourselves in the service of God's honor.

We only need to take one more step in order to formulate a rule for our attractions in the question of objects of devotion. Doubtlessly, the attraction itself is not in our control. However, there are devotions that, in themselves, deserve to attract us more ardently. And this is particularly true in view of what we have been considering, namely, their action upon us by way of the love of God, for an order does exist for the objects of our love: *ordinavit in me charttatem*. It is clear that devotion to the saints specialized in material benefits (which are doubtlessly of a more pressing attraction for those who remain in need of these benefits) obviously passes away before devotion to saints who have their value as a spiritual example. I do not deny that devotion to St. Anthony of Padua or to St. Joseph, as foster fathers [*pères nourriciers*], can lead us to God. However, St. Joseph as patron of interior souls leads to Him more effectively. Therefore, an objective gradation exists and, hence, a corresponding gradation of attractions in the soul in whom charity is well ordered.

The principle formulated by St. Paul in what concerns charisms here finds an application: *Aemulamini charismata meliora*, aspire to the better gifts.

Whatever may be the chosen devotion, it is important not to cherish it with such exclusivity that we think little of the others or even regard them haughtily. Indeed, what characterizes “pious devotional practices” is the fact that, however approved they may be, they remain subjective in the special attraction that they inspire in us. Therefore, from this perspective, they are free and optional, and we must take this intrinsic property into account when considering our attachment to them as well as our ardor exercised in spreading them. If we fail to do so, we will somewhat resemble the good La Fontaine who went about everywhere repeating the question, “Have you read Baruch?”¹⁴⁰ There is a given way of being attached to a devotion that akin to infatuation, as well as a way of spreading it that akin to sectarianism. This is not the place for such attitudes, for here the expression of St. Augustine holds true: “On God’s pathway, one person walks after this manner, another after another.” This is indeed the case for the matter of “pious devotional practices.”

These few counsels will suffice. Still there is one more that should be given to amateurs in these devotions, a counsel that is very urgent, namely: you must not encumber yourself. However, we will come across this precept again, more urgently still, with regard to the practice of devotions.

140. [Tr. note: this obscure point is recounted in Jean de la Fontaine, *Fables de la Fontaine (With Grammatical, Explanatory, and Etymological Notes)*, ed. Francis Tarver (London: Hachette, 1895): “From what our readers have already learnt of La Fontaine’s manner of living, it will be believed that he was not an assiduous performer of religious duties, nor a constant attendant at the services of the Church. It appears that the first reproach to anything like serious thoughts was attributed to an accidental study of the Prophet Baruch, which had been placed in his hands one day by Racine during a long service which he had introduced La Fontaine to attend with him, and for some time after, La Fontaine would constantly ask persons that he met, ‘Have you read Baruch? He was *1 grandgenius*’”]

THE PRACTICES OF DEVOTION

The practices of devotion consist primarily in the various ordinary acts by which the virtue of religion manifests itself: prayer, adoration, sacrifice, offerings, pious works, etc. Indeed, given that devotion is nothing other than the outpouring of the virtue of religion in its first, full act, expressing its whole character, he who says, "An act of devotion," says, at the same stroke, "An act of religion."

However, given that religion can order to its own end the whole of morality, thus imbuing all our activity with a religious value, the practices of religion can indeed be extended outside of these acts of piety. As we already noted, in this way, all of our moral activity thus becomes a tributary of the spirit of devotion.

Before so vast a field, we must indeed restrain ourselves. And this is why the Church, through the various instruments that interpret her authority, has approved a certain number of devotions (rather than having prescribed them), indicating and directing the inventive piety of the Christian people.

Generally, these practices of devotion correspond to an object of devotion and are one with it. An object and practice are sometimes so intermingled that they constitute a single organism, truly composed of matter and form, as profoundly united as a living beings body and the soul. This is the case, in particular, for the Holy Rosary.

We do not need to enter into the details of these practices in their infinite number. A single counsel seems to summarize everything that we could say on this subject. It is the counsel offered by the Apostle: "Test the spirits; hold to what is good."

The best means for testing the spirit of a devotion (and above all the spirit that lead us to be attached to it) is to have one's eye fixed above all on the Holy Church's own preferences. Here, more than ever, it is a question of harmonizing our feelings with hers, *sentire cum Ecclesia*. The Church knows better than we do what can ani-

mate us in the service of God's honor. Through her insistent recommendations placing certain devotions in the first rank and then through the degrees expressed in her approval of others, from public worship all the way to mere permissions, she places in our hands a sure method for testing the spirits that stir up our devout souls. And because we must make a choice among so many practices that are set before us, the best thing for us to do is to make the same choice as the Church. If practices of singular devotions, which perhaps are attractive for us only on account of their peculiarity or their sophistication, suffer from this choice, this will not be an evil. True devotion, namely, that which is inspired by dogma, stands in line with charity, and is oriented directly to the greater honor of God, *ad majorem Deigloriam*. will emerge from these executions of inferior devotions more strengthened and more buoyant.

Once we have used this touchstone to test the spirits that work upon our devout souls and have encountered some good practice that is indeed substantial and that makes us good, *quod bonum est, tenete!* [Hold on to what is good!] It is useless to go elsewhere and dangerous to pass from one set of practices to others, forever hoping that new devotions will provide us with a soul-jarring experience that we have not heretofore experienced in our earlier devotions! How many souls thus go forth in "hunt" for devotions, ultimately less seeking God than new impressions, forever unsatisfied! How many others heap up devotional practices, thinking that devotion grows by stretching out its matter, ultimately ending by being encumbered to the point of feeling more connected to practices, however optional, than to essential duties (e.g., the duty of observing charity in one's words). Such are these Pharisees, straining out gnats while devouring the property of widows. Let us remember that Christ's religion delivered us from Pharisaical chains and that, if there is a domain for the exercise of the freedom of the children of God, it is here.

And nonetheless, all this is necessary, and without it, our souls

would too often remain cold and idle. Yes, it is necessary—but as we need means in order to arrive at ends, no more, no less. St. Thomas, discussing religious poverty, spoke these wise words: the most praiseworthy poverty is not necessarily found in the most sordid form thereof. The most praiseworthy form of poverty is that which is the best accommodated to the end pursued by a given religious order. This also holds true for our practices of devotion: the best devotions for each of us are those that fit best with the end of the virtue of religion, taking into account our state and our different duties. A single practice of devotion, judiciously chosen and well-adapted, is more efficacious in procuring God's honor than fifty practices that are rushed and that, by the subjection that they beget, sometimes lead us to lose all devotion.

Such are the principal remarks that we have thought to be opportune concerning the subject of objects of devotion and the various practices of devotion. They suffice for our end, namely, the task of connecting devotions to the act of devotion, drawing from this synthesis some rules of conduct useful for the good government of ourselves in this matter. We keenly feel the incomplete nature and insufficiency of these remarks. However, to prolong them would be to go beyond our own end, requiring us to construct an entire treatise on devotions. *Alius vero superaedificet!* [But, let another man build it upon what is here!]

PRAYER

The will is the central mover, leading all of man's powers to their ends. Because of this centralization, religion, as *a virtue of the will*, can order all our powers' acts to the worship of God.

Among all the powers moved by the will, the intellect holds a distinct place not only because of its nobility as a spiritual faculty (a nobility it shares with the will) but also because of its proximity to the will, on

account of which the will can immediately influence it. And therefore, immediately after devotion, which is purely an act of the religious will, the first place among the acts of religion belongs to prayer, by which the virtue of religion orders the human intellect to God.¹⁴¹

Nothing needs to be added to these lines, which are decisive in their clarity. We merely will focus on the nature of the continuity existing between prayer, devotion, and external acts of religion. The words "after devotion" must not be interpreted as indicating a kind of simple progression from one act to another but, rather, as indicating the primacy of influence exercised by the act of devotion over all the subsequent acts of religion, offering them all together as a universal willing of worship and service to God. Devotion, prayer, adoration, sacrifice, and all the external acts of worship all exist in hierarchical dependency. All these religious acts realize the devotional ends which are the very ends of religion, which fully expresses itself in devotion. On the other hand, the whole of our religious activity is exercised in service of devotion, which motivates this entire pursuit, enriching it in virtue of the law given once and for all: in religion, external acts are performed for the sake of internal ones.

We will begin by discussing the nature of prayer, turning next to its object, then to those for whom we should pray (all things that are summarized in the study of the Our Father), next considering those who pray, then the kind of efficacy that prayer has, and finally, different species of prayer.¹⁴²

THE NATURE OF PRAYER

First—in Latin, the equivalent for the word "prayer" is the word *oratio*, whence comes the French word *oraison*, a synonym for

141. *ST II-II*, q. S_j, a. 5, ad i. [Tr. note: the section begins with a footnote attached to the header signaling that the section is based upon *ST II-II*, q. 85.]

141. The effective distribution of the sections in this question do not respond exactly to what is announced here. (Note by Fr. H.-D. Gardeil.)

prayer, although it is reserved in current usage for contemplation and mental prayer. We must briefly reflect on this very word, *oratio*, for like all carefully chosen words, it provides us with indications concerning the original meaning of prayer, indications that the word "prayer" does not give.

In Latin, *oratio* signifies discourse, speech expressing a thought: Cicero and the Latin orators named their discourses *orationes*, orations [*oraisons*]. Similarly, we speak of funeral orations. St. Isidore of Seville translated this primitive meaning in his *Dictionary of Etymologies*, which was well-known in the Middle Ages, by saying that *orare*, to pray, is nothing other than *dicere*, to speak. Cassiodorus¹⁴³ saw the same meaning even in the structure of the word *oratio*, which he broke apart into two words: *oris* and *ratio*, that is, a reason that is expressed by the mouth, a spoken reason.

These questions of etymology are not completely indifferent for piety, as we will see in the way that the notion of prayer can be enlarged on the basis of them. It is not an indifferent affair in spirituality to know that our prayer is nothing other than our reason itself, the faculty that makes us men, so to speak, expressing and exposing itself before God. Will not St. Thomas draw a formidable conclusion from this fact, utterly overthrowing the secularist prejudices claiming that prayer is an act befitting inferior mentalities? The activity of prayer, he says, belongs only to natures endowed with reason. Those beings that do not pray are precisely those which lack the power of reason, that is, animals, *brutal*

However, a simple etymology¹⁴⁵ cannot decide such an important question, and we still must explain how *oratio*, which signifies discourse, reason expressing itself in a form of speech, has become "prayer" in the sense that we understand the term.

Quite simply, our reason has two fields of application. Some-

143. See Peter Lombard's treatment, which is more complete.

144. See I-II, q. 83, a. 10.

145. On the power of etymology, see 57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 91, a. 1, ad 1.

rimes, it grasps, judges, and coordinates speculative ideas, solely for the sake of knowing the truth. At other times, it orders this work of truth to a practical end, combining truths in view of action, in order to realize its ends. In this second case, it is no longer only actively involved in the domain of ideas, but instead, is productive. It begets realities, determining our actions or the actions of others. This active reason is called practical reason, and it is practical in the full strength of the term. That is, it rules life in an effective manner and is a *cause* of what is executed in conformity with its dictates. Obviously, in order to efficaciously realize these dictates, it appeals to the will, the moving faculty; however, here, the will is only an executive faculty, and the disposition realized in reality finds its source in ordering reason. It is ordering reason that is the true cause of the order realized, just as the architects plan (and not his external acts) is the cause of the building.

Now, these abstract notions are necessary for our subject. Without them, we can indeed say good and excellent things about prayer. However, its true nature will remain unknown, and hence we will never govern with full knowledge of the facts. Moreover, we need to take but one more step in order to reach our conclusion.

We are causes in two ways. We exercise our causality in a complete manner when the things we act upon are completely in our power, completely dependent upon us. Along these lines, our reason commands our inferior powers, the members of our body, and even other men when they are submitted to us, such as soldiers, subjects, and domestic servants.

However, we can also influence events even without being able to dispose them with this total efficacy. For example, if we cannot command someone else, we can, by way of influence, dispose his mind, will, or whatever other faculty, and if we succeed in doing so, we will have the right to attribute to ourselves some part (often a decisive one) in the results achieved. The causality of prayer belongs to this sphere of influence, here still understanding the notion of

prayer in its general, ordinary, and human sense, which includes the prayers that we address either to our equals or to our superiors, to all those who do not depend upon us, looking to dispose them to act.

Whether in commanding or praying, in both cases, what acts externally, rules, and causes is the plan that we have brought together in our mind. In prayer, we uncover this plan, placing it before the person who is able to realize it. Thus, we find ourselves back at the common notion of prayer, but how enlarged it now is!

Therefore, prayer is human reason itself, uncovering itself before God, uncovering the plan that it desires to see be executed by Him who alone can execute it. Such is the profound and great meaning that is hidden under the request made in our prayer: man's noblest faculty, that which sums him up in his sovereign nobility, exposing himself to Him who is the Master of all things, something that we can do only for superior goods. The great philosopher [Aristotle] had glimpsed this fact. He said that reason takes on the attitude of prayer in view of excellent things. Indeed, reason has another attitude in relation to ordinary things, namely, that of command, for inferior things depend upon us.

Here, we should bring ourselves to a halt so that we may take a moment to contemplate the beautiful unity of the moral doctrine involved in what we have said. Reason is man's master faculty. However, situated on the frontier of two worlds, one that is inferior (his faculties, his body, and the beings that depend on him) and the other superior (the divine and infused virtues in particular), it must make use of two different attitudes in its governance of these two domains. In relation to the external world and man's own inferior world, both of which are submitted to him, man has the attitude of *command*. Through prudence, practical reason rules the world like a commanding mistress. In relation to the superior world that does not depend upon man, he has *prayer*, reason setting its thoughts before Him who can make man's plans into realities. What a harmonious synthesis! Here, in man's most intimate depths, when he turns

to things that are superior to him, he takes leave of the prehensile gesture of his hand, which makes use of tools, so that he may extend his open palms, no longer seeking to implement things by himself but, rather, receptively taking up the attitude of the ancient *orantes* and of the priest at the altar. What an illustration of the expression from St. Thomas that we recalled a moment ago: the ability to pray is a property *of* a rational creature.

Second—however, whence comes prayers dispositive causality in relation to the things that we ask of God? When we pray to a man, there is no difficulty involved in discovering the secret of our prayers' efficacy. Man is variable in what he wills. We can act on this variability either through the intrinsic force of our reasons or through what is added to these reasons by the affective interests or pity which incline it toward us. However, God has an immutable will. Therefore, who will change what He has decided once and for all in His eternal wisdom?

In posing this question, we are not trying to consider things from the perspective of the adversaries of our faith, those who deny providence. Nor do we intend to make the divine acts of will into a necessary and implacable destiny.

However, in all honesty, no more can we admit that God's will changes at the discretion of our desires, as though prayer could change the dispositions settled by the infinite wisdom from all eternity. God would no longer be God if we, His little creatures, could ourselves efficaciously press upon Him and make ourselves the masters of the course of human affairs, forcing His will to change. If this were the case, our prayer would no longer be a form of worship and an act of homage rendered to God. It would be an impious act, dethroning God from His rank as the absolutely first cause of all things. This difficulty forces us to delve more deeply into the nature of prayer. After having recognized its rational value, which gives it the character of being expressed to God, we will discover its other value, which renders it efficacious by making us God's instruments.

Divine providence is immutable in its dispositions. The whole topic we are here considering is dominated by this dogmatic fact. Moreover, let us say that providence is so perfectly immutable that not only its effects, but also the second causes of its effects, as well as the order according to which they unfold, are all foreseen and willed from all eternity. The overall roadmap is complete.

Now, human acts are among the causes that God uses to His ends. When man acts, he does not change the dispositions that God has decided upon. Rather, through his acts, he accomplishes certain effects in conformity with the divine plan.¹⁴⁶

Because prayer is a human act, it enters as a particular case into this universal order. We do not pray in order to change what God is prepared to do. Rather, we pray in order to ask that what God has settled in advance may come about by determining that it may come about only by means of our prayers. And thus, as St. Gregory expresses the matter, through his prayer, man merits to receive what the All-Powerful God resolved from all eternity to give to him.

This is a notion of prayer that will trouble certain devout persons' habits of mind and heart. Nonetheless, on a closer examination, is it not more sensible and more satisfying than the idea that prayer would change the eternal One's dispositions at our own discretion? For discerning souls who reflect upon their desires is this not simultaneously a deliverance and an explanation? It is a deliverance, for we found ourselves faced with an insurmountable intellectual difficulty in imagining the idea of an Absolute Wisdom and Power submitted to interventions by our utterly relative wisdom and by our causal power, which remains only that of a second cause. Moreover, this notion provides an explanation because we asked ourselves why our prayers are not always all-powerful and also why one of the rules of their efficacy is that they must be conformed to God's will.

146. This is not the place to discuss how this sovereignty of the divine will is not opposed to human freedom. To give full value to this absolute sovereignty, let us note that according to Sr. Thomas, sin itself enters into the divine plan.

Everything is illuminated when we see that prayer is one of the masterpieces of the divine governance, one of the secondary causes, instruments employed by God in bringing about the eternal designs of His providence. Prayer retains its full meaning and role as an efficacious arrangement since it is necessary for the fulfillment of these designs. We are no more dispensed from praying than we are from governing ourselves through the virtue of prudence. In both cases, we stand in God's service, who without our cooperation can neither make us righteous, nor realize His designs for us. The mind sees that this is how things must be, that the secondary cause must remain in its place and not take the place of Him who unconditionally rules the universe.

Moreover, how could this notion of prayer fail to be dear to truly devout souls, to souls who, through love of God, are devoted to worship and to the service of Him whom they love? It is useful for us in a superior manner.¹⁴⁷ Prayer's quality as God's instrument is what definitively makes it an act of religion, not its character as the means for obtaining what we ask for.

Third—indeed, if prayer were only the expression of our desires, it could doubtlessly be reconciled with the love of God every time that this desire is praiseworthy. However, this would no longer be an act of the virtue of religion. And this was precisely the difficulty that we experienced in connecting prayer to the virtue of religion: religion offers, whereas prayer asks, which is exactly the opposite of offering.

These difficulties cease when we see that the prayer of request is, before all else, an act by which we place our mind [*esprit*] at God's disposal, as the instrument is at the disposal of its cause. By praying in this way, we profess that we need God, the Author of our goods. We submit ourselves to God, giving our mind to Him in an act of homage. Now, in this, we have the distinctive trait of the virtue of

147. See 5711-11, q. 83, a. 2, ad 3.

religion. It is a form of worship, one that here exceeds every other form of worship because what we are offering in God's service is neither our body, nor our external goods. Rather, something greater is offered here in prayer: man's master faculty directs all of this. Therefore, properly speaking, prayer, thus understood, is an act of the virtue of religion.

THE OBJECT OF PRAYER

If prayer is efficacious only inasmuch as it is the instrument of those things that God, in His wisdom, decreed from all eternity, then it is, quite clearly, for our part, supremely an act of worship, an act of homage to God, an act of religion. However, one may well say that it no longer is clear what use is served by prayers which have determinate objects, offered either for our spiritual needs, for our temporal needs, or for the intentions of others. It seems that we can offer only one prayer to God: "Thy will be done!" Everything is decided in advance. And thus we find ourselves, along with all our desires and all our belief in our prayers' efficacy, sacrificed in advance before God's immutable will!

Socrates remarked that one need not ask for anything from the immortal gods except that they do good to us. They know what is useful for each. We, on the contrary, most of the time ask for what it would have been better for us not to ask for.

Then why did Christ say, "Ask and you will receive"? Why did He teach us the Our Father, which contains requests that are detailed and that correspond to our legitimate desires?

DETAILED PRAYER

Our prayer can indeed have objects that we cannot use wrongly, which cannot have any untoward outcome for us: for example, our eternal beatitude and everything that we need in order to attain it.

Here, prayer is never deceived. Behold a prayer that has never been frustrated: "Lead me, O Lord, in the way of Your commandments." Such a prayer can enter into details. Inasmuch as it respects the spirit that animates it, it will succeed, for—and this is certain—it is conformed to the will of God, who "wills that all men be saved."

However, we must indeed admit the fact that our prayer has objects that do not have this beautiful simplicity but, rather, so to speak, are potentially subject to two outcomes. We can make use of these objects for good or evil: "Such are riches which cause the ruin of so many human lives, honors which sometimes bring about so many evils, political influence which turns into wretched circumstances, and beautiful marriages which sometimes cause the destruction of families." Uh

Can we demand that God make Himself the sworn accomplice of our requests when they aim at such hazardous objects? If not, the sovereignty and independence of those things that God wills find themselves at once justified in opposition to our desires when they aspire to obtain such goods.

God cannot shackle His infinite wisdom and goodness to such perspectives, which are sometimes so earthly and base, at least to those issuing from our timid thoughts and our myopic foresights. Therefore, an entire detailed domain escapes the absolute efficacy of our prayer's initiatives. Nonetheless, this is just and, far from diminishing the value of prayer, on the contrary, stands in proof of the superior considerations of divine providence, which reserves itself for true goods.

Does this mean that our prayer should solely concentrate on eternal goods? Assuredly not! We do not always know what is good for us. However, God does. He aids our infirmity and rectifies our prayer. "Likewise," says the Apostle, "the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit

himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind *of* the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”¹⁴⁹ Even for these goods which are open to two outcomes, detailed prayer remains permitted, provided that it be submitted in advance to what God has decided.

Nonetheless, some may claim that we are here sacrificed as regards our detailed requests, inasmuch as they come from our desires.

Is this so certain?

Here, we must take as our foundation the principle that God wills our good more and better than we ourselves do and that He knows it better than we do. Granted, in making this estimation He looks on things from His perspective, not ours. Living on the level of eternity, He is interested in giving us eternal goods. In this, He does for us what He does for Himself. Could we reproach Him for it?

From this perspective, He never forgets a prayer whose object represents a true good placed before His wisdom. Certainly, we may indeed pray for an immediate result but then sometimes find that we are paid in the currency of immortality. Everything depends on the purposes of God's wise goodness, for His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways ours. As the heavens are above the earth, so high are the ways of God above our ways and His thoughts above our thoughts.

He who understands these things will not cease praying and asking for specific things in his or her prayer. The mere fact that one prays with righteousness and confidence in God is the sign that God's power is coming forth in our prayer and that His divine providence is on the march. The mere fact that one is inspired to pray for a given object piously and with perseverance must lead us to hope that this object enters into the eternal plans. The coincidence is frequent. It was by seeing St. Monica pray in this way that St. Ambrose

¹⁴⁹. Rom 8:26-17 (RSV).

had the intuition of the future victory of her maternal prayer. How many saints have thus experienced victorious prayer, and much later, upon noting the result, said, paraphrasing the words of the disciples on the road to Emmaus: "When we were inspired to pray in this way, were we not certain about what has taken place?"

The Gospel and Prayer for Temporal Goods

Granted, the Gospel, which is so consoling elsewhere, sets before our eyes a depressing rejection of our prayers for temporal goods. How lofty are the heights to which our Gospel aspires! "Seek first the kingdom of God and its justice," it declares, "and the rest will be given to you by way of overflow." This "rest" spoken of here are temporal goods. Once more, the Gospel pronounces: "You must not be anxious about these latter, neither about food, nor about clothing." This is the doctrine of detachment and indifference that the Apostle will formulate in his own turn in these terms: "Let us not have eyes for what is seen but for what is unseen. What is seen is something temporal; only that which is unseen is eternal." If this disdain for earthly things is imposed on the Gospels disciple, how could he make a room for them in his prayer?

St. Augustine was responsible for responding: "We are permitted to ask in prayer for that which we are permitted to desire." Now, we are permitted to desire temporal things, doubtlessly not as ends willed for themselves, but as aids and means for arriving at eternal beatitude. Indeed, they maintain the life of the body and moreover are indispensable instruments for the life of the virtues. "Therefore, it is not amiss," concludes the Holy Doctor, "to wish for what is sufficient, provided that one goes no further. Such desires do not come from cupidity. Rather, they are desired for the health of one's body or for holding one's station among those with whom one must live. If we possess it, let us keep it; if we do not possess it, let us pray to have it."¹⁵⁰

150. See *ST* II-II, q. S3, a. 6. [Tr. note: Fr. Gardeil wrongly cites a. - Here is a good

By telling us to seek *first* the kingdom of God, the Gospel gives voice to the fact that something can then be sought thereafter. However, this will no longer be our good, the good that we imagine to be worthy of us. It will be, as St. Augustine says, what is necessary for us. The difference is clear. What the Gospel condemns is exaggerated solicitude for worldly goods, a solicitude that would definitively fix us in them. Such solicitude can only degrade the soul. However, when one desires and asks for the same goods in view of beatitude, such degradation no longer takes place. Wholly to the contrary, it is an ascent toward the heights, *elevatur sursum*.

These final words bring us back once again to the principle that dominates this entire question concerning prayer. What is the ultimate benefit of the request for temporal goods? Its ultimate benefit is that, taking up such means which appear to be so foreign to religion, it transforms our attitude into an act of homage to the divine majesty. As we have seen, this homage is reconciled with our rightly understood interest as soon as our prayer has a voluntary character. And henceforth, the prayer of request, without losing anything of its legitimate efficacy in relation to temporal goods, is enriched with a superior dignity, *elevatur sursum*. Yes, our soul is elevated by this prayer, which sometimes has an ever-so-material object. It is transfigured and, in turn, transfigures our desire, giving it the nobility of being a form of worship rendered to God, in other words, the nobility of an act of religion.

Prayer for Others

This is the prayer whose failure is the most difficult to understand and accept, above all when it is concerned with legitimate interests. When we have commended to God the griefs that menace us, the sorrows of the hearth, and the hardships that are caused for us by the faults of the souls whom we love, we are scandalized when

example of a passage wherein he adapts the original quotation, though without altering its main sense.]

we receive no answer. We understand quite well that God does not answer our material demands. However, we no longer understand this when it comes to our neighbors and our friends. "They are dead, and nonetheless, I had prayed so insistently"—such are the words of the mothers of many sons who died on the field of honor!

The heart's instinct here is not deceptive. The Gospel confirms it, for it makes such an instinct into a precept of fraternal charity. If we must love our neighbor, we must desire his good. Indeed, since one of the two ways that we procure this good is by praying for him, prayer for others is required of us, and like everything that God requires, it is not useless.

On the other hand, theology, in setting the order of fraternal charity, commands us to have greater love for the neighbor whom providence has connected to us by special connections. Therefore, we most especially must pray for such persons, and such prayer is sweet in proportion to the charity that inspires us. St. John Chrysostom said: "To pray for oneself is a necessity; to pray for others is an invitation to fraternal charity. The prayer that does not convey necessity but, rather, supports a fraternal heart rises more sweetly before God Himself." Therefore, it is good to have the heartfelt desire that the prayers that we offer on behalf of others succeed in their aims. This bears witness to the liveliness of our charity.

However, on the other hand, precisely because this pressing invitation to prayer for others is the work of our fraternal charity (that is, of the love that we must have for one another in view of God), it must respect the hierarchy of goods willed for us by God. The principles established for every derailed prayer and for our requests for temporal goods return here once again. "Pray for one another so that you may be saved," said St. James—eternal life first, and all the rest according to the order ruled by God, as means to eternal life. Now, as we have said, God alone knows what is good for us in this matter. It is communally that He orders us to say: "give us today *our* daily bread." Therefore, let us say this communally, and with full as-

surance, for He also said: "If you ask for bread from your father will he give you a stone?... If you who are evil know how to give what is good to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give what is good to those who ask it of Him?" Yes, whatever may be the appearances and terrible realities that sometimes are our lot, let us hold with utter surety that God does not give us a stone and that, at the very hour when He tests us in those for whom we pray, our prayer is the instrument of a superior good for them.

Even in what concerns eternal goods, it is true that prayer for others runs into an obstacle that prayer for oneself does not encounter. The latter is absolutely infallible, for it presupposes that he who prays is well disposed.

If it were not infallible in this way, would it ask for eternal goods and all things to the degree that they can lead to it? Christ's promise is at work here with all its efficacy. By contrast, in the prayer that we address to God for others, we cannot guarantee that we will find all the necessary conditions present at once. Man's perverse will can arrest the efficacy of the best prayer. "If Samuel and Moses stood before me," said the eternal One, "my soul would not be for this people," the Jewish people. Doubtlessly, God can exercise coercion against these resistances raised by the wicked will. However, must He do so? Assuredly not. There is a struggle between His justice and His goodness, where the latter often has the last word, as St. Paul noted in what concerned himself: "He judged me faithful by appointing me to His service, though I formerly blasphemed, persecuted, and insulted Him ... but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life."¹⁵¹ And, as he says elsewhere: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?'"¹⁵² This is the mystery of predestination and

¹⁵¹1. Tm 1:12-13, >6 (RSV).

¹⁵². Rom 10:16 (RSV).

of the divine vocation. Prayer can indeed often be the divine instrument of this vocation. However, it cannot coerce it. Just as our opinions and fraternal corrections, which are also commanded by charity, normally succeed, though not always, so too our prayer for sinners. And just as we must not refuse to reform the latter, so too we must not refuse any sinner the aid of our prayers. "He who sees his brother sin, provided that the latter has not sunk into his sin to the point of irremediably fixing his destiny in it, let such a man not fear to pray for him; and his brother's life will be given to him."¹⁵³

Thus, prayer for the hardened sinner is not useless. It makes a return to him who prays—for he prays out of charity, and the love of God is always meritorious. "My prayer will return into my heart," the Psalm says. What does this mean if not that, whatever may happen, I will be compensated for my sorrow?

These reservations, which, despite their restricted domain, retain a kind of sorrowful character, are no longer necessary when speaking of a righteous man. The righteous man is a choice subject for our prayer. He is in a state of receptivity in relation to divine graces. Thus, during the war, there was justly a redoubling of confidence in pious souls when they saw invested with the supreme command a man habitually in fervent communion with God.¹⁵⁴ And as in the time of Joan of Arc, the prayer of little ones, great through their unanimity, obtained its effect, showing the proud that it is not sufficient that one say and repeat, "Lord, Lord," nor to take pride in the protection of one's ancient God, but rather, that he who does the will of God and asks for prayer from the humble is the privileged worker of divine bounties.

¹⁵³. Sec 1 Jn 5:16.

¹⁵⁴. [Tr. note: given the context of World War I, Fr. Gardeil perhaps here refers here to Philippe Pétain, who was so invested in the midst of the war. Certainly, one must not read into this patriotic flourish, one that was aimed at a general who at the time had received broad acclaim for his command during the Great War, any anachronistic positions regarding Pétain's later unfortunate role in the Vichy government during the Nazi occupation of France. In any case, any such speculation would be quite out of turn, given that Fr. Ambroise Gardeil died years before that sad era of French history.]

Prayer for Our Enemies

If prayer for those who love us meets with our eager suffrage, this is not so in the case of prayer for our enemies. We experience a kind of pain, if not in conceiving the obligation to offer it, at least in performing it. Here, we stand in need of an education.

At bottom, it is less an education for our prayer than an education for our fraternal charity. When the latter is placed at its heights, prayer follows, for as St. Thomas says, we must pray for our enemies in the same way that we must love them. The same directive principles are involved.

Therefore, let us recall an important fact: in our enemies, we do not need to love the fault that makes them our enemies but, rather, must love the human nature through which they remain our brothers in God. To love them in general, with a sincere and true love, is a precept. As regards a more specific form of love, we must be interiorly disposed not to refuse to fulfill this duty if we are presented with the occasion to aid our enemies in a case of necessity or if he asks for our pardon. To go further still, to have a specific and effective charity-love for one's enemies is no longer an affair falling to the obligatory precepts of Christianity but rather to full Christian perfection.

These principles trace out our duties in the matter of prayer. On the one hand, there is the prayer that we must offer for our enemies in our prayers for all people, especially praying for them when they suffer and when they repent. On the other hand, those souls who wish to be perfect should regularly form a special intention for them.

Doubtlessly, Scripture is filled with imprecations against our enemies, which the Church places on our lips when we pray with Her. We must understand this aright. Most of the time, these threats, made in the name of God, are only a way of predicting punishment. They are oriented toward the temporal evils that God sends to sinners, though doing so in order to correct them. The object of

the divine condemnations is the kingdom of sin, not sinful men. If the latter are sometimes hardened in their sin, the condemnatory prayers made against them represent our assent to what God wills in justly condemning and punishing them. None of this authorizes us to borrow the words of Scripture in order to appease our personal sentiments. This would not be Christian. For Scripture and for the Holy Church, which have a mission, they have their role. Ours is doubtlessly to associate ourselves with their spirit, to rejoice even in these divine retributions as being the accomplishment of justice and to assist in these very retributions when we are its designated instruments, so that such people may cease sinning, which is a way of willing their good. Therefore, all of this is to be done while maintaining fraternal charity and the prayer that flows forth from it. There is no contradiction in this, no more than there is a true contradiction among our various duties.

THE OUR FATHER

The Our Father offers us a synthesis of all these teachings.

In his letter to Proba, a quite complete guide to Christian prayer, St. Augustine says of the Our Father: if you wish to pray rightly and as is fitting, we cannot say anything other than what is found in this prayer. Let us listen to how St. Thomas explains why this is so.

Given that prayer is, he says, the interpreter of our desire placed before God, our requests will be just if the desires that inspire them are just. Now, the Our Father not only sets before God the just objects of our desires but also presents them in the order in which they are justly desired. Thus, in teaching us how to express our petitions, this prayer achieves more than this, bringing about the formation of our sentiments, *informativa totius affectus nostri*.

Indeed, it is clear that what first falls under our desire is the end. The means arrive only afterward.¹⁵⁵

155. Sec *ST* II-II, q. 85, a. 9.

As souls purely animated by charity, our end is above all the glory of God willed in itself and for its own sake. This is what we ask for through this prayer: "Hallowed be thy name." Souls who love ourselves, though in God, our end is still for us, our participation in this glory. We ask for this to come about by saying: "may thy kingdom come."

There are two kinds of means. First, there are those that have no other *raison d'être* than to lead us to our end. The principal one is that our life may have such a character that, through submission to God, it may merit our beatitude, and this is what we ask for by saying: "may thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Alongside this foundational means, there is another, one that is indispensable as a condition for our merit: we must live. We ask for it by saying: "give us this day our daily bread." This includes the spiritual (and, as St. Matthew says, "super-substantial") bread of the Eucharist, which implies all the sacraments that are ordered to it and that prepare for its reception, as well as bodily bread, the principal source of man's nourishment, which implies everything that one needs in order to live in this world and thus to sustain merit of soul.

However, given that accidents threaten our forward march toward God, we must join to these fundamental prayers other incidental requests: "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" (a request against sin, which excludes us from the kingdom); "let us not succumb to temptation" (a request against the traps set for our obedience to God); "but deliver us from evil" (a request against the sorrows of this life which seek to wrest from us what is indispensable for life).

With such an admirable order, this prayer draws to its close, a true portrait of the interior state of a truly Christian soul. No, better than a portrait, it is the Christian soul itself, pouring out its entire self, living out loud the mystery of its interior life. What poet's inspiration is ever exalted to the lofty heights where the soul who prays his Our Father moves about? In fact, St. Augustine connected each

petition of the Our Father to a special inspiration of the seven gifts of the divine Spirit, and St. Thomas does not miss the chance to note here this connection of Lord's prayer to its proper principle, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who alone situates it in its true environment.¹⁵⁶

And nonetheless, we have not yet noted the principle of all this, the words that give the Our Father its full meaning while, at the same time, being its source and its crowning: "Our Father, who art in heaven."

We must look upon this appeal from the Christian soul to God his Father as though it radiated over the entire Our Father, reverberating through the ordering of its requests, permeating it with its accent and soaking it with its savor. "Our Father," such is the cry of this charity "that the Father possesses in His children" acknowledging the eternal charity of God who wills our good. What a stimulant for my prayer's piety! "Who art in heaven," not on earth like our earthly fathers, who will our good without being able to give it to us perfectly, but rather, in heaven, where the Will that brings about all that is good reigns. What a guarantee for my prayer's confidence!

I now understand that, in this prayer's order, everything proceeds from this first expression. What is my Our Father if not the very organization of my love for my Father, *ordinavit in me caritatem*?

And just as it proceeds from Him, it ascends toward Him as toward its goal, its *raison d'être*, and its crowning. And in this way, the religious character of our requests is made manifest. Given the interest that it involves, does not the prayer of request seem like an action that is utterly distant from the intention of the virtue of religion, the virtue that most resembles the divine virtues, and in particular, resembles charity by its object (i.e., God [loved] for His own sake and

156. We reserve this portion, "The Direct Government of Ourselves by the Holy Spirit," like everything concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit, for our third study. [Tr. Note: this study is not included in this volume as compiled by Fr. H.-D. Gardeil.]

above all else)? With the Our Father, we need not fear the forms of narrowness which we can find in prayers of request. Its supplications are related entirely to God's glory, and everything converges with a perfect order toward a religious end, God's honor. And in this, we find the supreme praise of this sublime prayer, namely to have made this rebellious material pertaining to our self-interest serve the ends of the virtue of religion and to have transformed the expression of our needs of body and soul into religious ascents toward the divine excellence, toward the Father who *is in beauen*.

THE WAY THAT PRAYER OPERATES

As we have said, prayer owes its efficacy to its character as an instrument of divine mercies. We place our prayers between our human miseries and the eternal intentions of the infinitely wise and infinitely good God. And through our prayers, which have thus become the agents of His omnipotence, God brings about the benefits that He resolved from all eternity to bestow by their intermediacy. The efficacy comes from Him alone.

However, in this activity whereby we place our most intimate depths at God's disposal, we should distinguish two modes in our activity, both of them constituting a form of service to God for the ends in view: merit and impetration, properly speaking.

THE MERIT OF PRAYER

Merit is not unique to prayer. It is found in all the acts that have their root in the love of God, that virtue whose proper object is the divine good in itself. Through such acts, we justly merit participation in this divine good, for charity has placed us at the lofty heights of the divine life, thus communicating an eternal value to those activities which we vitally elicit.

Therefore, in the strict sense of the word, merit is reserved for

the prayer of the just, those who are in a state of grace. The sinner's prayer places no strict right before God.

Though full of spiritual riches on account of all the meritorious energies that it requisitions and sets into motion, this merit pertaining to the just man's prayer is not directly rooted in the love of God [i.e., directly in the activity of the theological virtue of charity]. Prayer is an act of the virtue of religion and, moreover, on account of the interconnection of the virtues in the soul in a state of grace, a great number of virtues come to its assistance, each thereby being uniquely crowned with prayer's own goodness.

The desire for the good sought in prayer itself returns back to charity. Faith is needed, given that we address God in prayer: in order to pray, we must believe that we can obtain from Him what we ask for. From our perspective, humility is needed, for without it, would we recognize our poverty? Finally, devotion is needed, though this falls under the virtue of religion, which has devotion as its first and fundamental act which is essential for animating all those that follow it.

"Thus, we can see riches of the particular merits that good prayer sets into motion and concentrates in itself. So too, we can understand the words of St. James: "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects."¹⁵⁸

However, while prayer itself is specifically ordered to obtaining that for which we ask, we must heed the fact that its merit does not share in this same characteristic. As we have said, prayer merits, but it does so just as every act done out of charity merits. Now, what such acts merit is, above all, eternal beatitude. Therefore, when our prayer extends to other objects, it is without meritorious effect if these objects are harmful to our salvation. If, without being opposed to it, they are not expedient to our salvation, we doubtlessly increase our merit for eternal life through our prayer, even though the object aimed at is not necessarily obtained. "When we obtain what

15- 571I-II, q. 85, a. 15.

158. Jn 5:16 (RSV).

we asked for, this is through God's mercy," said St. Augustine, "and when we do not obtain it, this is still through His mercy. It falls to the Doctor to know what is useful for the sick person." When St. Paul asked God to remove from him the thorn that tormented his flesh, this prayer was not granted. If, in the end, what we ask for is part of the means by which God wills to lead us to our beatitude, then our prayer doubtlessly merits, as does every other good deed performed in view of this same end. Only, the result is sometimes delayed, and this is why we must persevere in prayer.

Of course, these principles hold true only for prayer made for oneself. Salvation is a personal affair. We must personally merit it. We cannot merit for others. In other words, whatever our holiness, we cannot place before God a strict right for the salvation of others through any act on our part. It is true that, in His mercy, God often imputes this prayer's merits to the soul who is the object of a righteous person's prayer. This is even a rather frequent occurrence, given that it is connected to a law which is the very life of the Church, namely, the communion of saints. Therefore, what we have said about it is not meant to exclude every form of merit from the prayer of holy souls. Rather, we only wish to note the nature of this merit, namely, that it is not a right, even though it is in harmony, *conduit*, with how the God of mercy conducts Himself in the distribution of His graces to those who are worthy of them.

Moreover, prayer's own proper power, namely, impetration, comes to the aid of its meritorious power and enlarges its domain.

THE RECEPTIVE, IMPETRATORY VALUE OF PRAYER

This word, "impetratory," seems barbarous, and nonetheless it has the most human of meanings. This mode of prayer's action is something so special, so reserved, so proper to prayer, and at the same time, something so new and so incredible among the means of salvation, that a new, unique name had to be forged for it, one whose incommunicable meaning would call to mind prayer itself.

Impetrare—the word means *to pray*. It is as though we said, “The ‘prayer value’ of prayer.”

Prayer’s impetratory efficacy does not have as its merit a foundation in our state of righteousness and in our love of God. It builds its entire foundation upon the grace of God for which we pray, in other words, upon the gratuitous gift of His mercy. Prayer itself is a gift, and obtaining what we ask for is another.

Everything thus takes place between God and God. Through the gift of the object for which we pray, He merely crowns the gift of good prayer which He Himself also gives. At our prayer’s point of departure, as well as at its culmination, the divine mercy is the unique energy source for our prayer’s impetratory efficacy.

However, how can we speak here of efficacy, given that everything in our prayer’s success comes from God’s utterly free and benevolent largesse?

We can say this because God invites us all, without distinction, to pray, and He promises us absolute success for our prayers. “Could we engage in prayer,” says St. Augustine, “if He did not wish to give it to us?” And St. John Chrysostom, going further, says, “Never does God, who urges us so tenderly to never cease praying, refuse to bestow His benefits upon prayer.” God’s own promise is the solid assurance of prayer’s impetratory efficacy.

Therefore, this efficacy implies no condition concerning one’s state of grace, as is the case for merit properly so-called. Sinners’ prayers can be just as effective as (and, indeed, even more so than) the prayer of the righteous. The words of the Gospel, “We know that God does not hear sinners,”¹⁵⁹ are those of a disciple who has not yet been perfectly illuminated, and hence they only hold true if they are understood as referring to sinners who pray for God to come to their aid in their sins.¹⁶⁰

159. Jn 9:51.

160. [Tr note: Fr. Gardeil does not cite the text, but he is here referring to STII-II, q. 83, a. 16, ad i.]

Indeed, it is clear that the sinner who is impelled to pray through his sinful desire is not granted this prayers request but, instead, draws down the divine punishment upon himself. "Sometimes," says St. Augustine, "God will concede through anger what it would have been benevolent for Him to refuse." Let us not put proper names forward here, but everyone will recall here certain prayers, first crowned with success, to a certain "Ancient God."

However, when the prayer of the sinner proceeds from a good desire, God heeds it. The sinner does not have grace. He only has his nature. However, God his Creator does not stop loving this nature. In the sinners whom He hates precisely as sinners, He recognizes the human nature made in His image. And when the sinner utters a prayer coming from these good depths of his nature, God grants it, not out of justice (for the sinner has no right here) but rather out of pure mercy, for He has promised it and, through this infallible promise, the sinner finds himself on the same footing as the just man, not from the perspective of merit, but all the same, from the perspective of his prayers own proper impetratory power. No difference exists between them in this matter, says St. John Chrysostom: "Whoever prays receives, the righteous man or sinner."¹⁶¹ The only conditions placed on this success are those that were formulated earlier for the prayer of the righteous: to ask *for oneself* those things which are necessary for salvation, with piety and perseverance. If he asks for others, the prayer of the sinner encounters the same obstacles as the prayer of the righteous man and consequently is exposed to the same vicissitudes that the latter faces. It is not, for all this, useless, although it may be less favored because it cannot "plead" in its favor the law of communication which exists among the merits of the saints.

Let it not be said in opposition that the sinner can have only the appearance of piety, given that he is fundamentally fixed in evil and therefore cannot pray piously. Certainly, he does not have the virtue

161. See the *sal contra* of 577 II-II, q. 83, a. 16.

of piety, which emanates from charity. Nonetheless, he can all the same have a pious intention whose object would be good and praiseworthy. For example, he can pray for his salvation or his conversion, just as a will devoted to injustice can sometimes have just intentions. And this suffices for obtaining an answer to one's prayers, for if merit requires charity, prayer presupposes only actual grace, the proper grace that it constitutes, namely, the grace of good prayer.

Moreover, let it not be objected that, given that good prayer is conformed to the Our Father, the sinner who does not will to pardon his neighbor is excluded from prayer, which on his lips can only be a lie. Obviously, he would lie and would be frustrated in the reward of his prayer if, at the very moment when he prays, he were actively filled with hatred, though this would not be an utter lie, for in being associated with the official prayer of the Church (though without any strict right), he would speak in the name of the latter and on that account his prayer would be truthful. However, not all sinners are evil to this extent. Someone was able to say: "The sinner is what is best in man." And this is profoundly true of the sinner touched by grace, the sinner who repents and in his depths is ready to pardon the offenses done to him, even though he may not yet be removed from his sinful state. The words of Sirach were written for him: "Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray."¹⁶²

Therefore, the impetratory power of prayer is a marvelous invention by the God of mercy for enabling all, with no strings attached, to emerge from every situation of soul, even from utter shipwreck, thereby raising himself or herself toward God. From the perspective of how we are to lead the supernatural life, this is the *punctum alienis*, the initial outpouring, the first sign of life in the seed destined to grow. Floating on the sea of this world, it is a raft that is ever-ready to rescue the shipwrecked.

161. Sir 18:1 (RSV).

As I have said, this kind of efficacy is something *sui generis*, unique, and incredible. It is tempting to say that it is something miraculous.

And nonetheless, it is not a miracle. It is a law which is part of the ordinary course of the order of grace.

As we have seen in the first volume [j/c], mercy is the most fundamental attribute of He who is Pure Act. He who speaks of Pure Act speaks of absolute perfection, completely in actual exercise of himself. He also speaks of the repulsion of misery, which is the highest degree of the absence of the good. What is a miserable being if not one that is supremely imperfect, a being completely in need, completely deficient in all things? Therefore, just as the sun, by its natural law, never stops driving back the shadows that are exposed to its irradiation, so too does He who is Pure Act drive back all miseries, the misery of inorganic matter without form, without beauty, without life, as well as the misery of miseries, the misery of sin. But there is this difference, namely, that Pure Act, the perfection of all perfections, including voluntary perfection, freely and voluntarily—and therefore cordially—carries out this law of effusion and of succor. This is why it is called mercy in Him. However, there is this similarity, namely, that human misery must consent to expose itself to this sun, to allow it to have its vivifying efficacy, and this too is a freely-willed deed, this time of our will, which allows the foundation of our master faculty, our reason, to unveil itself before God through prayer. Yet, “where sin has abounded, mercy super-abounds,” and it happens that in contrast to the physical star, which cannot illuminate those recesses which are closed off to it, our purely merciful act bursts open the seals which our own rebellious wills have placed upon our spirits and, through its efficacious preveniences, makes the very life that frees it surge forth from the heart of the hardened sinner: “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

What is marvelous is that this admirable law of mercy, the most profound attribute of Pure Act, attains its culminating expression in

the Gospel, which is not a metaphysical exposition of these matters. Wishing to present Jesus as God, it represented Him as merciful, good, sweet, and tender to the sinner, all in a way beyond expression ... *above all to the sinner!* Therefore, who but God has known God's heart so well—*nemo nisi spiritus qui est in ipso*.

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

This question raises many further questions. Should prayer be *vocal* or *simply mental*, and which of these two ways of praying is the best? To what degree must prayer be *attentive* so as to remain a true, good, and efficacious prayer? What should we think about the contradictory expressions we find in the texts of the Gospel, some telling us not to speak much when we pray and others telling us to persevere and never cease praying?

THE (QUESTION OF VOCAL PRAYER OR EXCLUSIVELY MENTAL PRAYER

These are the explicit terms used by St. Thomas for posing the question in his commentary on the Master of the *Sentences*. Most especially from the time of the sixteenth century onward, expressed in this form, this question has never ceased to be pertinent. Its full urgency has been displayed in recent, lively discussions between, on the one hand, Benedictine theologians, for whom the Church's divine office is the principal form of spiritual nourishment and the most perfect fulfillment of the duty to pray, and on the other, theologians whose preferences are for mental prayer.

Vocal Prayer

At first glance, the Gospel seems to favor mental prayer. It presents the *multiloquium*, the flow of words, as a practice befitting pagans who imagine that this abundant locution is necessary for our

prayers to be fulfilled.¹⁶³ "Do not do as they do," said the Savior. And the reason given for this injunction is obvious: "Before you open your mouth, your Father knows what you need." Therefore, what is one to do? Our Master did not fail to tell us: "When you pray, enter into your chamber, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret, and your Father who is in this secret place will hear you." Does this not cast a ban on vocal prayer which, by force of things, is never hidden, and logically, as St. Thomas says, does this not represent the recommendation of a prayer that will be solely mental, indeed as it ought to be, exclusively for God who scrutinizes hearts? And it is quite easy to understand the fundamental reason. What is prayer, for the soul, if not an ascent toward God, undertaken by that which is most intimate in us, the mind, *mens** What is an outward expression, like every bodily action (and, moreover, like all sensible things), if not an occupation diverting the soul from its fundamental occupation, given that the human soul cannot undertake many tasks at one time—a distraction, a dissipation, an obstacle? This is what once was bluntly suggested by a venerable Jesuit Father¹⁶⁴ who came to spend time in a Dominican convent on the feast of St. Dominic. Having participated in all the liturgical and canonical prayers on that feast day, he said, "This is indeed beautiful, though like a kind of spiritual bouquet for me. I prefer five minutes of mental prayer to all vocal prayers." I replied to him: "Without a doubt, my Father, at least if these vocal prayers are not themselves mental."—"Obviously," he replied politely, though with a softness that betrayed a kind of afterthought on his part. He clearly found the matter to be terribly riddled with difficulties.

And nonetheless, from the perspective of Christian institutions, as well as of its dignity and efficacy, primacy is held by prayer in common and, hence, by vocal prayer, which alone actualizes the union of spirits.

163. Sec Mt 5:7.

164. Fr. Pisas, who was the first tutor of Cardinal Zigliara.

Indeed, Our Lord presented us with the typical form of prayer in the Our Father as a communal prayer. It was to all His disciples together that He said: "Behold how you will pray, Our Father who art in heaven, ... give us this day our daily bread - - And all the other requests are likewise plural. Granted, the plural form of these requests in the Lord's Prayer must not be interpreted as casting discredit on individual prayer and, even less, as representing a prohibition against saying the Our Father solitarily and mentally. But, it is nonetheless clear that, according to the intention of what has been divinely instituted, it is the typical and officially approved prayer, of which it is said: Here, when you pray, you do not do so in your own, individual name but, rather, do so in the name of the entire Church and in union with all those who pray. Even when prayed alone, the recitation of the Our Father retains the social character of a prayer said in common, which we cannot strip from it and must respect. Moreover, this is what gives its content the dignity which we praised above, as well as its proper and incomparable value. He who prays his Our Father has around and behind himself the Church and Christ Himself, and only speaks on their behalf. In such a person, Our Lord's promise is realized to the fullest extent: "If two of you agree on earth about whatever they ask for, this will be granted them by my Father who is in Heaven. Indeed, where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in their midst." He is in the midst of those who are gathered together in His name. He prays with them, He who was able to say to His Father, "I know, O Father, that you ever hear me." He who in His days in the flesh was heard on account of His filial fear can perpetually save those who approach God through Him, ever living to intercede for us.¹⁶⁵ How could we call God our Father, understanding this in terms of the singular paternity that adopts us all as brothers of Jesus Christ, if we were to isolate ourselves from our brothers, being concerned

165. See Heb 7:25.

only with ourselves, without the whole Church participating in our prayer? But if the Church participates in this prayer, then Jesus, the inseparable head of this glorious body, is present in our prayer. It is made in His name and thus realizes what had been contained in the promise: "Everything that you ask my Father in my name is granted."

Thus, in the gathering of the faithful, we see prayer in common welling forth, as from its wellspring, from the very first days of the Christian life. The first witnesses to faithfuls "perseverance" in prayer are found first in the Upper Room, then in the Church and the churches.

Now, vocal prayer does indeed seem to be the indispensable means for effectively realizing this prayer in common, for without such vocalization, there could not be communion between the intention of the ministers who direct it and that of the brothers who pray together. Moreover, vocal prayer also mutually arouses devotion in those involved, entailing and giving birth to the harmony and piety of rites and chants. St. Augustine spoke about the abundant tears provoked in him by the Church's melodies in her singing and how, charmed by the Ambrosian music, the truth flowed forth, *eliquabatur*, through his ear canals and into his heart.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, let us say that if prayer in common is the most worthy form of prayer that we can think of (given that prayer in common is the obvious execution of Christ's command instituting the Our Father with its plural verbal form, as well as the consequences regarding communion with the Church and in Christ presupposed by this plural form), we must indeed acknowledge that vocal prayer is prayer *par excellence*, as much in itself as in the Master's own intention, as well as from the perspective of its own proper dignity and efficacy, and in the resources that it affords for devotion.

And this is what St. Ignatius of Loyola himself confessed when,

166. See Augustine, *Confessions* IX.6.

in sketching out a new direction to be taken by his disciples on account of the overburdening nature of the modern apostolate, he declared that, if he would have consulted only his own inclinations and the fruit that he personally drew from the Office and from the ceremonies of the Church, he would have written completely different legislations for the Society. You see, it is incidental: even for the saint who did the most to substitute mental prayer for official prayer, vocal prayer remains prayer in its fullness, the prayer that does the most good, always the more intrinsically estimable and desirable form of prayer. I am not judging here but, rather, am merely noting the facts. But, nonetheless, I think that if one could do one and not omit the other, reconciling the apostolate and its requirements with the service of public prayer such as Our Lord and the Church recommend, God would only be better served by such a state of affairs.

Hence, what should we think about the Gospel attitude toward the pagan *niilitoquimi*? This: it is not concerned with Christian prayer as something coming from the institution of the Our Father and as it is practiced in the Church. We do not use speech in order to make our needs known to God. Rather, we use it so that we may pray in unison and may arouse ourselves to prayer. Would this be forbidden? No. If Our Lord wishes for us to seclude ourselves in our chamber, closing its door behind us, the metaphor is crystal-clear. As St. John Chrysostom said, the Lord forbids us to pray in the assembly, that is, to parade our prayer about in public.—And this is why, in public, we must guard ourselves against all forms of unusual demonstrations, shouting, gestures with outstretched hands, and breast beating.—Again, as St. Augustine insists, what is evil is to will to be seen, not the mere fact of being seen.

Moreover we need not fear that words would distract us from praying if their meaning is related (as is fitting) to divine and pious objects capable of arousing our devotion. Indeed, as St. Thomas says, vocal prayer is the only way “less devout” souls (i.e., souls that

are less apt to be interior) can come to elevate their soul to God. As regards more perfect souls, outside of public or canonical prayer, as well as the penitential and satisfactory prayers which they must render to God as a duty of justice, such people will doubtlessly not need to suppress the use of vocal prayer completely in their private prayers but, instead, will need to moderate it. St. Thomas traces out the golden rule for this self-governance in prayer. He says:

Even in personal prayers [*oraisons*], vocal prayer is useful for arousing the interior devotion by which the soul elevates itself to God. Our own gestures, words, and ritual actions are naturally suited to strike our minds and, consequently, to move our hearts. And this is what St. Augustine said in his letter to Proba: "Through the words pronounced aloud and through all sorts of gestures, we arouse ourselves in a livelier way to grow in our holy desire." This indicates the path we should follow. We should make use of speech and expressive behaviors *to the degree that they profit our interior prayer*. Therefore, if the mind finds itself distracted by them and if these exterior things become an obstacle, we must abstain from them, *a talibus cessandum*. This is the case for souls who find themselves sufficiently prepared for prayer without the use of these manifestations. Such people are those who say with the Psalmist, "It is my heart that speaks in your name and says, 'Seek my face,'"¹⁶⁷ and those who with Anna, the mother of Samuel, "speak in their heart without making their voice heard."¹⁶⁸

However, let us not forget that it can happen that, even in solitary prayer, devotion could be so vehement that it would reveal itself in speech and provoke sighs, cries of joy, and involuntary groans, *fetus, suspiria, et jubilas voce inconsiderate*^{TM*}

This page drawn from St. Thomas places us on the path for situating mental prayer in its proper place.

167. Ps 16:8.

168.1 Kgs 1:13.

169.57¹¹⁻¹¹, q. 8?, a. 12. [Tr. note: the last portion seems to be an adaptation of *In IV Sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 2, q.c. 1.]

Mental Prayer

The profound cause of so many debates concerning the primacy of vocal prayer over mental prayer and vice-versa is found in a confusion begotten by how the word "prayer" [*oraison*] has been used from the sixteenth century onward.

As we have said, according to Latin etymology and usage, "prayer" [*oraison*] means a *spoken thought* (think of funeral orations). In the Church's language, as well as in theological language (in that of St. Thomas in particular), this meaning was reserved to indicate a prayer of request. In the Mass or in the divine office, a prayer [*oraison*] is a prayer of request. By means of this term, it is distinguished from other parts of the liturgy that are made up of readings, meditations, and contemplations. For all theologians without exception, *orare* is to make a prayer of request, be it vocal or mental.

Thanks to the great movements in the contemplative life that took place in the sixteenth century, from that time onward "prayer" [*oraison*] has become a synonym, not only for mental prayer [*oraison*], but for all the acts by which we interiorly unite ourselves to God: acts of faith, hope, charity, and above all, acts of contemplation. Today, the term "prayer" [*oraison*] indicates meditation and contemplation, accompanied by acts of faith and love, just as much as (and indeed more than) prayers [*prières*].

Certainly, this manner of speaking and thinking does not lack antecedents in the tradition, in St. Augustine in particular and in a number of spiritual authors, including, among others, the Victorines. Did not St. Augustine say that prayer [*prière*], *oratio*, is a pure sentiment of affection directed toward God? And elsewhere: faith believes, but hope and charity pray and thus obtain what they seek. Hugh of St. Victor identifies prayer with devotion pouring forth from compunction of heart. According to him, prayer is one of the elements of contemplation.

Understandably, this enlargement of the traditional domain of

prayer, one could say this annexation of the entire interior spiritual life to a primarily mental prayer, gives pride of place to the advocates of "prayer [*oraison*]" And this is the principal reason why, for many minds [*esprits*] this matter seems to be a settled affair. This is especially true given that certain partisans of the Church's prayer have not themselves failed to utter the word "prayer [*oraison*]" without sufficiently distinguishing between its ancient meaning as a prayer of request, which, as we have seen, finds its full form only in vocal prayer, and its new meaning as referring to an interior act of union with God through charity and contemplation, which we must concede surpasses every form of vocal prayer.

Nonetheless, St. Thomas had noted this distinction quite well when, interpreting the words of St. Augustine cited above ("prayer is an affective sentiment directed toward God"), he asked, "What does it mean to say that it is directed toward God?" Is it directed toward God as an *object* of our affection? In that case, prayer would be charity. But this is not what St. Augustine means here. Is it directed toward God who can grant it? Yes. Then, it is prayer which, so to speak, launches our hearts desire toward God. Here, the hearts desire is understood in its objective sense, like "the Christian faith," designating not the act of faith but, rather, its object. It is a kind of projectile directed and launched toward God through the prayer of request.

Those who identify prayer [*ont/son*] with the acts of the divine virtues take up the meaning of St. Augustine's words, neglected by St. Thomas, and interpret them as meaning a prayer [*oni/son*] of hope and love. In a certain sense, they are justified in this interpretation, for every act by which we worship God itself presupposes the theological virtues, which, so to speak, pray with and in our worship. Indeed, prayer would be vain if we did not believe, if we did not hope, even overconfidently, and if we were not united in some manner to Him to whom we pray through charity.

However, all the same, the divine life of the theological virtues, which has God Himself as its object, is one thing, and prayer, an act

of the virtue of religion attaining God only as an end to be honored through worship, is another. Let us not fall into confusion. This will be completely advantageous both for “mental prayer [*oraison*]” in the modern sense, rendered to that which gives it its excellence, namely the divine life, which is exclusively interior, and also for prayer in the strict sense of the term, restored to what its true role is, namely to render worship to God through religious devotion, which is not opposed to finding its culmination in vocal prayer. When it is a question of worship, it is of little importance whether it be vocal or purely mental, above all if, of itself, the vocal embraces the mental in itself.

St. Thomas presents his thought even more clearly in the commentary that he made concerning the Victorine [theologian]. As regards prayer, understood as being a part of contemplation, we can first of all see what is false, if we understand contemplation in its strict sense as an act of the intellect under the influence of charity. Such contemplation is the proper act of the gift of Wisdom. If we are speaking of contemplation in a broad sense, meaning every act by which man, sequestered from human things, attends only to divine ones—then so be it! However, prayer is not the only thing playing a role in this contemplation. There is the instruction [*leçon*] (or reading [*lecture*]) wherein man listens to God speaking to him through His Scripture in order then to turn toward the prayer by which man speaks to God. Between the two, reading [*leçon*] and prayer, there is meditation in which, on the basis of what Scripture has said to us, we communicate with God through thought and affection, and thus in God’s presence, we can speak to Him through prayer. According to Hugh of St. Victor, reading, meditation, and prayer are indeed the three parts of contemplation. Nothing prevents us from adding others (e.g., kneeling), for every act ordered to God, even be it external, is part of the contemplative life in the broad sense of the term.¹⁰ However, precisely speaking, having of-

i-o. Sec *In IV Sent.*, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1, q. 1, ad 1.

ferred such broad hospitality to so many elements that are foreign to prayer, we can no longer allow contemplation in the Victorine sense to have any pretention of calling itself mental prayer [*oraison*], as is done in our days. It is not prayer [*oraison*], as this is the term reserved to the prayer of request properly so called, *oratio*, which is one of its parts. It is not mental, as it contains parts like reading (which, during the age of Hugh of St. Victor, was oral and not silent, visual reading), external postures, and prayer itself, all of which are not mental or, at least, are not necessarily and exclusively mental.

Therefore, let us conclude that in this debate mental prayer [*oraison*] has an equivocal meaning. If the word "prayer [*oraison*]" is understood in conformity with its etymology, as well as with liturgical and theological tradition, in its proper sense, indicating spoken thought (and, especially, as a prayer of request), mental prayer [*oraison*] is not superior to vocal prayer: neither in authority, nor in dignity, nor in efficacy for the reasons that we have presented, which are summarized by saying that an *act of worship* (which is what prayer is) is all the more perfect, first, to the degree that it more fully gives us over to God and, second, to the degree that it gives us over to God not only individually but also socially. If, without ceasing to understand the word "prayer [*oraison*]" as meaning a prayer of request, we make it a part of contemplation in the broad sense, contemplation will thus prevail over prayer [*oraison*], as the whole over the part. However, given that such contemplation is not exclusively mental, we will not be able to thereby draw any conclusions concerning the present debate.

In order for mental prayer [*oraison*] to hold a superior place over vocal prayer, we must therefore understand the word "prayer [*oraison*]" in a complex sense (i.e., the modern sense): including the reading of Scripture, silently accepted by faith, along with meditation on this truth, the acts of faith, hope, and love that this meditation begets, as well as contemplation in its strict sense as an act of the Holy Spirit's gift of wisdom, coming forth from meditation made in faith

and charity, and finally, prayer properly speaking, into which this contemplation resolves itself, though here in silence. Then, mental prayer, understood along these lines, is superior to every form of vocal prayer. However, this superiority does not come from the place that it accords to mental prayer. Rather, it comes from the fact that it deploys our entire divine life, indeed at the supreme degree where we no longer are content with acting but, rather, are acted on by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

If this is what is meant, then we are in agreement. However, we have passed out of the domain of the virtue of religion. In this domain, where the debate is concentrated between the vocal prayer [*prière*] of request and mental prayer [*prière*] of request, vocal prayer (be it liturgical, canonical, familial, or even solitary) remains unequaled.

Synthesis

However, faced with this complex mental prayer [*oraison*] which unites together the divine life, contemplation, and the silent prayer of request, can we not erect another “prayer” [*oraison*] having a vocal texture, though a mental armature, containing these same elements—the acceptance of the revealed truths in faith, meditation, contemplation, and the prayer of request—though also interwoven with speech and physical postures, the latter sometimes intervening to nourish and arouse contemplation, at other times as a sensible overflow from interior devotion pouring forth from contemplation, and at yet other times the instrument of social communion among those who pray? After all, if St. Thomas recommends that we should moderate external signs in private prayer, this is to the degree that they impede interior devotion. However, if on the contrary, these signs assist, serve, and exalt it, do we not see that this is a more complete and more perfect form of contemplation? Prayer [*prière*] finds its excellence not in silence, but rather, in the mental soul animating contemplation, the divine life within us, the theological virtues, and

prayer itself. Now, in this "prayer" [*oraison*] which I have described, the mental character not only exists but, moreover, is elevated to its loftiest degree by these supports and these sensible expressions. Are the divine life, the contemplative life, and its external manifestations opposed to each other when the latter are ordered the former? Would contemplation necessarily mean hiding oneself in silence?

Indeed, it seems that this is not the case and hence that (even in this domain, which is not only the partial domain of worship and the prayer request but also that of the supernatural life and of contemplation) superiority remains definitively with the liturgical life, the canonical life, and the divine office. It is perfectly fine that, for incidental motives, like those that governed St. Ignatius, we would sometimes find it preferable to close ourselves up within purely mental (i.e., silent) prayer [*oraison*]. However, in itself, the Church's [public] prayer [*oraison*] is the perfect prayer [*oraison*], not only as a form of worship but also as a practice of the divine life and the contemplative life. And this prayer [*oraison*] is not silent.

Besides, upon leaving the recitation of choral prayer, nothing prevents us from preserving and maintaining in ourselves the rhythm of the divine life and contemplation that this prayer has provoked in our hidden, interior prayers, *orationes secretae*. This was how things took place in the Middle Ages. In those days, prayer [*oraison*] was not governed by periods and commas as it is today. But setting out from Matins and from the office of Compline, all those who had devotion were permitted to continue silently the elevations of soul aroused by choral prayer, gathering them together into their heart. Like the petals of the calyx of flowers, they close back and fold themselves over the mystery of light and love just accomplished in their hearts. And thus, behold how we can reconcile St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Benedict of Nursia!

ACTUAL, VIRTUAL, AND HABITUAL ATTENTION

If we consider things in themselves, we see that because prayer is the expression of human thought, offering itself through requests in homage to God, prayer cannot be thoughtless (and hence inattentive). This is what is unambiguously stated in our Savior's words: God is spirit, and those who adore Him must adore Him in spirit and truth.

Therefore, how can St. Thomas pose this question: "Must prayer be attentive?"

He can ask this because God is not the only one involved in prayer. We too are involved here. And for us, there is the problem of weakness in producing, and above all in maintaining, our attention when an end, an objective, and a spiritual act are involved. This is a universally experienced fact, one that cannot be merely imputed to a deficiency in good will. "Saints themselves," declares St. Thomas, "Experience these distractions of mind that made the Psalmist say: 'My heart has forsaken me.'" However, my heart is what I place into my prayer. It is what I hold onto with all the tighter grip, and behold, it is what slips from my grasp and gets away. Indeed, no good intention holds fast: "On account of the weakness of its nature, the human mind cannot remain for a long time in the heights. Weighed down by human weakness, it is (drawn) downward. Thus, it happens that the soul that had begun to elevate itself toward God through prayer suddenly flees away through fragility."¹⁷¹

Therefore, the question emerges with all its practical acuteness: "Will this congenital weakness lead me to lose the fruit of my prayer?" Quite obviously, we are not here asking about the perfection of prayer. Clearly, because prayer is essentially the self-offering of human reason, attention, which places my reason in act, is absolutely required in order for prayer to be perfect and, moreover, the

171. STILII, q. 83, a. 13, ad i.

more attentive that we are, the better will prayer attain its end: "Let your heart meet with what your mouth pronounces," said St. Augustine in his Rule. This is the ideal.

Rather, here we are concerned with knowing whether, in the absence of actual attention, prayer is inevitably frustrated in reaching its effects.

What are these effects? Three of them can be assigned. First, as we have seen, there is merit, which is reserved for the prayers made by those who are in a state of grace. In relation to this effect, we will concede that attention is not necessary for the whole of prayer but, rather, that the vigor of the first intention, which is at play at the moment when one begins to pray, pours out over the whole prayer, rendering it meritorious. This is one particular application of the law ruling the merit of all our acts: in order for them to have meritorious efficacy, it suffices to have willed them through the love of God.

Another effect, the proper effect of prayer this time, is to obtain [that for which one asks]. Here again, one's first intention suffices, for this is what God is primarily concerned with. Therefore, if it is lacking, the prayer is neither meritorious nor efficacious. It is, as St. Gregory said, completely natural that God not pay attention to a prayer performed without the intention to pray.

And, given that we must indeed make room for discipline in prayer, the same is true if we voluntarily allow our attention to dissipate while praying. Here, we have a sin taking away all of its fruit. I said "voluntarily," for as St. Basil said, "If debilitated by sin, one fights against oneself as much as one can, God pardons us for not being able to hold ourselves in His presence as we ought to have: this is not negligence; it is mere fragility."¹⁷²

Finally, there is an effect that prayer brings about ordinarily by its mere presence, namely, spiritual solace. In order to experience

171. 5TII-II, q. 83, a. 13, ad 3.

this effect, attention is indispensable, for as St. Paul said, "If my tongue alone prays, my mind draws no fruit from it."¹⁷³

We must only note that in vocal prayer there are three ways of paying attention: we can pay attention to pronouncing the words well; we can pay attention to the meaning; and we can pay attention to God, who is the end of the prayer, as well as to the thing for which we ask. The first two ways of paying attention are good, and the third, which is the most necessary, is accessible even to uneducated people. When it has God as its object, it can sometimes abound to the point that "the soul comes to forget all things," says St. Thomas, who, for easily ascertainable reasons, here feels the need to invoke a pious alibi by placing this remark under the cover of Hugh of St. Victor's name.

SHORT OR PROLONGED PRAYER

The Lord said, "In your prayers, do not speak much." Therefore, based on what he says, prayer must be short. Is not the heart's desire which prayer looks to set forth concentrated in a central point, in our end, namely, God? Everything else is a consequence so that, as we have said, we must will only in accord with what God wills, acting wisely by handing it over to Him, sure that nothing will be lost by this. "I have asked only one thing," says the Psalmist, "but this I require, namely, to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." The Our Father is the perfect expression of this prayer. With its character as an injunction, "This is how you will pray," does it not mark out the obligatory limits for prayer? And therefore, it is short and good, indeed, good precisely because it is short and, in its brevity, says everything.

i-5. In 1 Cor 14:14, St. Paul is concerned with the gift of tongues and the speaking of unintelligible words by the tongue. However, there nonetheless is a real application here to our subject, for through inattention in prayer, the words spoken are meaningless for the person who speaks them.

However, on the other hand, did not our model, Jesus Christ, spend whole nights in prayer, and did He not prolong His prayer in His agony? Did He not say that we must so insist through our prayer that by dint of "importunity" we may obtain what we ask for? Is it not from Him that we received the recommendation that goes further in this direction than we ourselves could imagine, "One must always pray and never let up," something that the faithful St. Paul tersely translated: "Pray without ceasing."

Yes, doubtlessly, this is the ideal. However, as we just discussed, our fragility is arrayed against our attention in prayer, and here, we encounter the various needs and multiform earthly occupations that will be our lot so long as we are not face-to-face with God. Therefore, we must find a middle way, using this [golden] mean which, of course, is not a mere compromise between two excesses but, rather, is the establishment of a superior rule that gives both sides of the problem the satisfaction that they deserve, *prout sapiens determinavit* [inasmuch as the wise man has determined it].

In prayer, we can consider prayer itself as well as its cause.

Its cause is charity's desire, or at least, in the imperfect prayer of the sinner, desire in agreement with charity. Indeed, prayer is an act of religion, and as we said above, the love of God is the arousing cause of religion, giving it its particular fervor. Now, charity should continuously reign in us, if not in act, at least as a virtual intention ever ready to enter into act. Even when it is virtual, it animates everything that we do and, in a wholly unique way, animates the act that has so great an affinity with it, namely, the act of rendering glory to God in all things. Therefore, we must say that, in the case of this prayer interior to our prayer, it is, by rights, continuous. "In faith, hope, and love," says St. Augustine, "We always pray by a continuous aspiration."

From this Tabor, let us descend back to reality, to the busy man, overwhelmed by concern for these earthly things, our very selves. Here, prayer, understood in its material sense as the exercise of reli-

gion, no longer can be continuous. “Therefore, it will suffice,” continues St. Augustine, “that on certain days and at certain hours we pray to God in words. This will be, as it were, a way of rendering account of our progress in this intimate desire from earlier and of arousing ourselves in a livelier manner to bring about its increase in us.”

However, this does not yet tell timorous souls how long they should remain in prayer. St. Thomas delivers to them a second golden rule for the good government of their soul on this delicate point:

The quantity of all things must be proportionate to the end that one pursues or that they pursue. For example, consider the quantity involved in medical remedies. Therefore, it is suitable that prayer should last as long as is useful for arousing the fervor of the interior desire of charity. If it exceeds this measure so that further prolongation would beget lassitude, it must be brought to a close. And this is why, as St. Augustine reports, the Egyptian Desert Fathers who prayed with great frequency, made their prayers very brief, like javelins thrown rapidly, out of fear that the movement of the soul that is thus awakened and established, with the greatest of profit for him who prays, might vanish and be weakened if one were to prolong it. This brevity, joined to this frequency, testifies that, if we must not allow the leading edge of the intention to be dulled by putting it to the test for too long, nonetheless, we must not, for all that, break it if it lasts.¹ 4

This is a good counsel, as St. Thomas stresses, one that will be usefully extended from individual prayer to prayer in common, so wearisome at times for the devotion of the people.¹⁵ *Et nunc erudimini... parisiennesparochi!* [And now be you warned ... Parisian pastors!]

Thus, both for the length of prayer and for the attention required, as well as for its vocal form, we have the same principle ever at hand: what is external is ordered to what is interior. What we give

1-4- STII-II, q. 85. a. 14.

1-5. See *ibid.*

over to God in prayer is our soul, *mens*. Pouring forth from devotion (an act of the virtue of religion, under the influence of charity), prayer makes its way to devotion and, through the virtue of religion, to charity. And this will also be the case for all the acts of religion. Thus, you can see how many practical problems are illuminated and resolved.

The points that we just raised above with regard to the Gospel now immediately find their resolution.

If the interior sentiment is present, we will not be guilty of the *multiloqtuum*, spreading ourselves out in words, praying for a long time. The Lord was able to spend whole nights at prayer. He only had to place in that prayer the accent of His prayers to the Father preserved for us by St. John. "Let an abundance of words be absent from our prayers," says St. Augustine, "but not an abundance of prayer, when the intention that animates them remains fervent: to say much is a superfluous concern, even though the thing requested be necessary. To pray much is, through a pious and persevering arousal of our heart, to arouse Him to Whom we pray. It is an affair in which groanings play a greater role than do discourses."

We must grant the fact that we do not need to make numerous requests; however, this does not mean that our prayer should not be prolonged. Like the Psalmist, we can request only the one thing necessary, but such a request can be made with a continuous desire.

The Our Father is short, but it does not intend to suppress every other prayer formula. Rather, it intends to reveal to us the end that must guide our prayers intention, in whatever way we happen to conceive it or formulate it.

Therefore, we will practically fulfill the divine command to pray ceaselessly either through the continuity of our interior desire of charity (moreover proving itself to itself in the prayers that we perform at fixed times), through the effect of our prayer remaining in us in the devotion that follows from it, or finally, if through our own merits [*bienfaits*] we have come to deserve [*meritions*] others'

prayers for us if our own prayer happens to doze off or to be interrupted.

And corresponding to this preoccupation we have the custom of pious souls who feel their helplessness, thus recommending themselves to our prayers and meriting them through their good services.

CONCERNING PRAYER MADE TO THE SAINTS

Ultimately, prayer resolves itself into our mind's religious homage offered to God. In the divine strategy executed by God, the requests that we make to Him in our prayers are, as it were, a means for attracting us and for attaching us to this worship of God by means of our own interest. Doubtlessly and quite really, we obtain [something]. However, on account of its dependence on what God wills, giving our requests their efficacy, the worship of God is what benefits supremely from prayer. It is His honor and His glory.

And it is a question of justice, as prayer is above all an act of religion and because God alone is the object of the virtue of religion.

Moreover, even in what pertains to the efficacy of our prayers material requests, it indeed seems that we should only pray to God. He alone knows the depths of our hearts, where our prayer is often enclosed, giving even vocal prayer its value. It seems that it also falls to Him alone to grant our petitions, as the legitimate object of our prayer is our eternity and the means that lead to it—all things that God alone holds in His hands.

Therefore, the invocation of the saints poses a problem for the faithful soul. The saints are not God. They do not know the depths of the heart and can do nothing for our beatitude.

To resolve this issue, we must note that a prayer can be addressed to someone for one of two ends: either so that he may grant it by himself if he can or at least so that he may be able to commend us to him who can. It is clear that only God can by Himself grant our prayer because, if it is made well, it must order everything that it

requests to our beatifying glory and to the grace needed for us to arrive at it, things which, as we believe *defide*, God alone can give.

However, we can present our prayers to the saints, the angels or the blessed, not in order for God to know them, as happens in human commendations, but rather in order that their efficacy may be reinforced by the merits and prayers of these saints. Thus, in one of his visions, St. John saw the smoke of incense rising before God, coming from the "prayers of the saints and from the hand of the angel." Therefore, prayer to the saints is a prayer in two degrees. The way the Church has recourse to them bears witness to this fact: she prays to the Holy Trinity to have mercy on us, and she turns to all the saints, whoever they may be, to ask them to pray for us.

We need not fear that the worship and homage rendered by prayer would halt *en route*. Only He can grant what it honors, and He is the one whom it proclaims to be the Author of our goods. Now, this is what constitutes the form of worship proper to prayer. The saints to whom we direct our requests are only intercessors, beings who pray for us and like us. Therefore, the homage of our prayer is not addressed to them. On the contrary, the homage thereby rendered to God becomes, so to speak, doubled, because it grows from the homage rendered by the saints, which moreover qualitatively exceeds our own. Therefore, we need not fear that the worship of God would suffer any diminution through our prayer to the saints, understood according to the mind of the Church.

However, a twofold difficulty remains, the first of which has already been touched upon. Can the saints pray for us and do so efficaciously? Do they wish to do so?

Can they do it? And, first of all, do they know our prayers, at least the prayer of the heart? There can be no doubt on this subject when it comes to the blessed in heaven. It is an incontestable principle of theology that the blessed, seeing God face-to-face, such as He is, can know everything that is manifested by this Word which

terminates their intellectual gaze and consequently can know all of God's effects, among which are numbered the things that concern us, in particular the interior movements of our hearts. They *can*, I say, know them, because all this is known, in its source, in God, spread out before their gaze. Indeed, they have a right to know only what can contribute to their beatitude. Beatitude is the state of those who lack nothing with regard to those things that can contribute to their happiness. But there can be no doubt that knowledge of the requests made to them, through voice or in the depths of the heart, are of concern to this beatitude. Therefore, God owes it to the excellence of their state to grant it to them, and He does. Therefore, they hear us.

But are their prayers efficacious? Indeed, the efficacy of prayer seems guaranteed only for those who are on earth. It is for them that it has been instituted, like a kind of divine springboard enabling them to emerge from sin and to fling themselves into the domain of the efficacious motions by which God governs the world. It is to them that Our Lord made the promises of irresistible efficacy.

By what right can we transpose this concession made to wayfarers (for whom it was wholly necessary) to those who have arrived at their journey's goal and who, no longer having the possibility of meriting, can no longer render their prayer meritorious either for themselves or for others, who, no longer having anything to desire, because they are blessed, have no reason to make requests?

"This was," according to St. Jerome, "the error of Vigilantius: he admitted that we can pray for one another for as long as we live but that after death mutual prayer was no longer granted. And he explained this by saying that the martyrs who, according to Scripture, request that their blood may be avenged, cannot obtain what they ask for." Did we not say as much in the midst of the massacres of the last war? It is quite a natural error for those who live in the midst of interminable persecutions.

The response we are looking for is within our grasp. First, we

have a response in what concerns the *merit* of the saints' prayer. It is quite true that they no longer merit. However, they merited in their lifetime, and their merit has no more disappeared than has the merit of a brave man after the war. There, we find a foundation for merit that is never exhausted, which beatitude itself does not exhaust, because it admits of indefinite accidental supplements. Supported on this meritorious foundation, the saints pray to God in view of the glorification of their bodies, which they still lack. Obviously, if knowledge of the prayers made by those who love the saints and trust in them, as well as the successful outcome of those prayers, can concur in these supplements of happiness, why could they not use these unoccupied merits to this effect? Their prayer for the success of our prayers therefore has the efficacy of their merits.

As regards the impetratory power of their prayers, like ours, it is founded on the divine acceptance of them. Admittedly, the infallibility of the divine promises no longer holds for them. However, compensations for this do exist. First of all, there is the fact that they know better than we do what God wills and hence know how to apply their prayers much better than we do. They know more perfectly what God wishes to realize through their prayers and consequently insert them with greater exactitude into God's designs, who brings about the definitive efficacy of prayer, this particular instrument of His government. This is a first advantage. Secondly, the blessed are the blessed. That is, they are beings whose desires have a right to be satisfied, for God placed them in their beatitude precisely for this end. Thus it follows that, if they indeed wish to pray for us, it is necessary that their prayers be granted, by right of their beatitude. Therefore, there is only one question to be resolved in order to be sure of the success of their prayers for us: do they wish to pray for us? The whole affair comes down to that question.

How could they not wish to do so? Fraternal charity is what leads us to pray for one another and even makes it a duty, strictly speaking. Now, where does charity exist if not in heaven? *Caritas*

nunquam excidit. Heaven is charity's natural habitat. There alone, removed from the obscurities of faith, it is the perfect love of God, with its indispensable overflow, the love of all things in God and for God:

Therefore, the more perfect the charity of the saints *in patria*, the more do they pray for their brethren, "the wayfarers," who can be aided by their prayers; and the more that they are united to God in virtue of their merits on earth, the more efficacious are their prayers. This is part of the very order of the divine government which wills that the excellence of superior beings pour forth upon inferior ones. What a sad thing would our atmosphere be without the light of the sun. In the order of prayer, the sun is Christ, "having access *by Himself* nearby to God so as to intercede for us," says the Apostle. However, He is not alone, for as the great saint Jerome responded to Vigilantius, "What idea do you form for yourself, therefore, concerning the Apostles and the martyrs, who, even when they had solicitude for their own salvation, prayed for others? And you would have it be the case that they do not pray for us more fervently after their triumphs."16

Therefore, they wish to do so. However, will we not need to address ourselves solely to the great saints of paradise, to those who are best positioned, neglecting the others? Suffice it to say, remarks St. Thomas, that were that so, we would need to implore solely the divine mercy, a point that is implied in the adage stating that it is of better value to address oneself to God than to His saints. But no! Everything has its *raison d'être* and value in God's ordered plans. Therefore, it will happen that a minor saint will be more helpful, either because we have more devotion in praying to him or because God has designs for him, such as to make His holiness known to us.

Given that we are being so liberal, could we not go further yet and speak of prayer made to souls in purgatory? I know that this is the intimate wish of many pious souls. Indeed, it is not baseless from a certain perspective. Are not these souls united to God by grace

and, in a sense, more favored than us, since they are unable to sin, thereby guaranteeing their future happiness?

Such reasoning is tempting. Therefore, why has the Church not gone there? Whatever may be our desire to give a consoling response here, we must halt. The souls of purgatory do not see God face-to-face; therefore, they cannot know what we think or say, outside of a special permission granted by God, concerning which we ourselves cannot judge one way or the other, though we have no strict right to expect that such a thing would be granted. Moreover, we must hold that if these souls are superior to us on account of their inability to sin, they are inferior to the living because they are in the state of expiation. They are akin to prisoners expiating for their faults. For as long as it lasts, such a state does not include active prayer. Rather, it calls for the prayer of others. I do not mean to say that, upon remembering us, the souls of purgatory will not pray for us. But it is the concern of the God of infinite mercy to decide what He will do for the prayer offered by the prisoner of His justice. What I do know is that this prayer, of itself, is neither meritorious (as these souls are not in the state of utilizing their prior merits, even for themselves), nor impetratory (given that its efficacy has no guarantee). Therefore, it can have an impact only as an act of voluntary benevolence toward us and, perhaps, as was said above, on the pretext that God's mercy has made its entrance onto the stage.

THE FRAMEWORK OF PRAYER

Prayer is unified, completely made in homage to God as the opening and exposition of our intimate thought. And there are many parts or members of this unified prayer, corresponding to the successive phases in which a complete prayer unfolds.

St. Paul, a man of great experience concerning all of the soul's movements leading us to God, described the framework of prayer in these terms to his disciple Timothy: "I earnestly ask you, before

all things, that there be offered, for all men, supplications, prayers
oraisons requests, and thanksgivings.”

In the presence of this rich array of expressions for designating prayer, St. Thomas reflected, judging and pronouncing that these expressions are not a mere accumulated list of repetitions. Rather, each has its own proper nuance and savor so that, drawing an analogy from the grammarians' discussion of the parts of speech, we here find an inventory of all the parts that, through their interconnection, beget the organic structure of prayer in its typical form.

In order to pray, he says, we must first approach the God to whom we pray. Indeed, this is what gave prayer its name, *oratio*, but it is here taken in the restricted sense of being an ascent by the intellect toward God, as John Damascene defines it. This ascent is principally realized by the act of faith, above all by the act of living faith, expressed under the influence of charity. Through prayer [*oraison*], man's mind is placed at the heights needed for engaging in the rest.

Then, says St. Thomas, he can request. This is prayer properly so-called, with its modes borrowed from the rules for this kind of discourse: a determinate request, a general supplication, or a simple suggestion, like that of Lazarus's sisters to Jesus, when they sent to Him to say: "He whom you love is ill."¹

However, given that our prayer is set before God by our reason, the request should be supported by reasonable motives. Now the motives on which we can base our prayer are of two kinds. One kind rests on God Himself, and the other on us. From God's perspective, the guarantee of our prayer's success is his holiness, summed up in all of His moral attributes, among which, from our perspective, His mercy and justice stand out in particular. Therefore, those who pray call it forth as a witness, and as St. Thomas says, this is the supplication spoken of by St. Paul. We make use of it when, for example, invoking one of the effects of the divine mercy, we say, "By your Na-

tivity, save us, Lord!" From our perspective, the proper motive for assuring the success of our prayer is thanksgiving, which has past benefits for its object. Nothing could persuade [*determine*^ God to bestow new graces upon us like this disinterested attention of hearts who gladly recognize what He has already done for them and thereby show themselves worthy of it.

Therefore, these different parts of prayer are not enumerated by St. Paul at random but, rather, come from his perception of an internal structural necessity. They are truly the parts and indispensable organs of prayer.

We also find them once more in the Church's own prayers. St. Thomas mentions the collect of the feast of the Holy Trinity which contains all of them. First it says, "All powerful and everlasting God"; this represents the soul's ascent toward God through prayer [*MIISM*] properly so called. It continues, "You who have given to your servants to know the glory of your eternal Trinity, etc.;" this is an act of thanksgiving. The request follows, "Grant us, we pray, that through the firmness of our faith in it, we may be preserved from every adversity." The closing, "Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, etc.," is the supplication.

According to a gloss on the Letter to Timothy, the same ordering is found in the Holy Mass. Everything that precedes the consecration is reduced to supplication, on account of the holy things that are commemorated in it, in the verses and the Psalms, the Epistle, the Gospel, the Creed, and the prayers of the Offertory. Prayer [*VKUSM*] accompanies the consecration, the moment when the soul must mount higher toward God, and this doubtlessly extends from the *Sursum corda* of the preface to the doxology that terminates the Canon. Then, with the Our Father and up to the communion that consummates its efficacy, we have the prayers of request. And everything is crowned by thanksgiving after communion.

Clearly, the order of the parts differs in these two examples. In the Collect, the thanksgiving precedes the request as the reason sup-

porting it; in the Mass, the order is reversed, with a kind of recognition for the benefit that has been bestowed. If the prayer [*oraison*] by which we draw close to God naturally precedes the request (an order respected in our two examples), the supplication, which finds its place at the last rank, as a supreme effort, in the Church's prayers [*oraisons*], finds this same place at the first rank in the Mass, where it intervenes like an appeal to the divine goodness so that the latter may enable us to ascend to God through prayer. The Mass also follows the typical order indicated by St. Paul. However, in being typical, this order is not rigid. In the ordering of its parts, prayer is no less an art than are other human forms of advocacy. There is nothing more varied, nothing more adapted to our minds, nothing suppler, nor anything more ingenious than this. It is a form of life, a drama in thought, a battle tactic unfolding under the influence of the ardent desire to win a case. Let us not strip prayer of this suppleness, nor this adaptation, nor this ingenuity, provided that its desire to win its case proceeds from charity's desire, which is just as imperious as that of the most ardent courtroom advocate, and provided that it be governed and tempered by the divine Spirit who scrutinizes the infinite depths of God and who, given that He is the Wisdom of God, knows how to accommodate our prayer to those depths like an infinitely "subtle and eloquent" artist.

APPENDIX

Analytic Table by Fr. H.-D. Gardeil

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Chapter i. The subject of the divine life

- I. Man's life is a spiritual life
- II. The human spirit is made to live the divine life
- III. The image of God sketched into the substance [*fond*] of the soul

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Chapter 3. The divine life's productive causes

- I. The Fall
- II. The Savior
- III. Christ the Head of the redeemed
- IV. The influence of Christ (distribution of grace)
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- II. To believe God
- III. To believe in a God

Chapter 2. The divine life of hope

- I. Desire for God

Note: This table is drawn from the draft and the published articles included in this volume. It summarizes the content of Fr. H.-D. Gardeil's introduction.

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- III. Social justice
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Chapter 3. The Education of the passions

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Chapter 1. The growth and diminution of the moral virtues

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Epilogue. The active life

General Conclusion

The complete Christian life: a synthesis of the active and contemplative lives

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