

3 Ways of Spiritual Life

THE THREE WAYS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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Source Material - Bibliography

Three Ways of the Spiritual Life (Tanquerey 1923)

Importance of Study:

There is a diversity of degrees in the spiritual life, different stages to traverse. One has to know general principles, as well as be able to use them in relation to the needs of individual souls, taking into account their peculiar characters, their various attractions and callings, and also the degree of perfection they have so far attained, so as to be able to guide them accordingly.

Going to approach this as though we were following a soul in its ascent from the moment it first conceives a sincere desire of advancing toward God, on to the loftiest heights of perfection.

When we make use of the expression the "three ways", we are not speaking of parallel or divergent ways. Rather we are speaking of 3 different stages or marked degrees, which souls who generously correspond to grace, traverse in the spiritual life. Each way in turn, has many degrees which a spiritual director must take into account. And each stage has many forms and variations, depending upon the character, the vocation, and the providential mission of each soul. But you can reduce these degrees to three; accordingly as a soul begins, advances, or reaches the goal (childhood, adolescence, adulthood).

This doctrine of the three ways, comes from Scripture and Tradition. And reason also shows the correctness of this division.

It is evident that before arriving at an intimate union with God, the soul must first of all be purified of its past faults and be strengthened against future ones. Purity of heart is, on the authority of Our Lord, the first essential condition for seeing God, for seeing Him as he is in the next life, and also for seeing Him now imperfectly and obscurely but truly, and for uniting ourselves with Him: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God."

This purity of heart presupposes a cleansing expiation, an earnest and relentless fight against sinful tendencies, and the practice of prayer and meditation and such other spiritual exercises as are required for strengthening the will against temptation--in a word, all those means that tend to purify the soul and ground it in virtue. The sum-total of these means is what is called the purgative way.

Once the soul has been thus purified and reformed, it must be adorned with Christian virtues, virtues of a positive character that will make it more like unto Christ. Its task then is to follow the Master step by step and gradually reproduce Christ's interior dispositions by the concurrent practice of both the moral and theological virtues.

The former mold and strengthen the soul; the latter already initiate its union with God. Both are practiced simultaneously according to the needs of the moment and the attractions of grace. The better to attain this end, the soul perfects its own form of prayer, which becomes more and more affective, and strives to love and to imitate Jesus Christ.

It thus advances through the illuminative way, for to follow Jesus is to walk in the light: "He who followeth Me, walketh not in darkness."

A moment comes when the soul, purified from its faults, made strong and docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, longs but for an intimate union with God. It seeks Him everywhere even in the midst of the most absorbing occupations; it clings to Him and enjoys His presence. Mental prayer grows in simplicity; it becomes a lingering, loving thought of God and of things divine, under the influence, latent or conscious, of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is the unitive way.

Regarding prayer in general, we shall speak specifically about contemplation. Within these three great stages there are indeed many degrees and diversities of "the manifold grace of God."

To make right use of these distinctions, great tact and intelligence are required. One must study the principles, but still more study each soul in particular, with its special traits, taking note of the special action of the Holy Spirit upon that particular soul.

There is nothing absolute or mathematical in the distinction of the three ways:

-a soul passes imperceptibly from one to the other, for there are no well-defined boundary lines dividing one sharply from the other. To decide therefore, whether a soul is as yet within the limits of the purgative way, or has already crossed the borders of the illuminative way, is often impossible, for there is between the two a common ground, the exact bounds of which cannot be determined.

-the soul's progress is not always a sustained advance; it is a vital action, with its ebb and flow; at times the soul presses onward, at times it recedes; at others it actually seems but to mark time, making no apparent headway.

There is also, in each of the three ways, a number of different degrees. Among beginners, there are those who have a heavy burden of sin to expiate. Others have never lost their baptismal innocence.

There are differences arising from temperament, degree of earnestness and constancy. There are souls that eagerly embrace penitential practices, while others, on the contrary, do so with reluctance. Some are generous and would refuse Almighty God nothing. Some respond to His advances only half-heartedly.

Undoubtedly among such souls, all as yet in the purgative way, there will be marked differences. And there will generally be a difference between those who have devoted a few short months to the purification of their souls, and those who have already consecrated many years to this task.

Likewise and above all, account has to be taken of the action of grace. Some souls seem to receive it in such an abundance that we see swift advance toward the heights of perfection; others seem to receive it in far smaller measure, and there progress is slower.

Important to study the 3 ways in order to avoid several dangers. Some by a forced march, would rush through the early stages, the sooner to arrive at divine love. Others, on the contrary, but mark time and, through their own fault, tarry in the lower levels because of a lack of generosity, or lack of a method. A spiritual director would have to remind the first group that to love God is indeed an excellent thing, but that we do not attain to a pure and effective love, except through self-abnegation and penance. The latter he must encourage and advise, in order to stir them to action and aid them in perfecting their method of prayer and self-examination.

Also must note when speaking of particular virtues as being proper to this stage or that stage—all fundamental virtues belong to each of the three ways, varying only in degree. For instance, beginners cannot do without the practice of the theological and cardinal virtues. They simply exercise them in a way that is different from those in the illuminative way or the unitive way.

This same thing holds true for purification and the soul through penance and mortification. The perfect soul (unitive way) does not give up the purification of his/her soul through penance and mortification. But a purer and more intense love mellows their penitential practices, and gives them greater effectiveness.

A similar remark must be made with regard to the different kinds of prayer. Discursive meditation is generally speaking, suitable for beginners; affective prayer adapted to advanced souls, and the prayer of simplicity and contemplation, proper to the unitive way.

Yet experience shows that the degree of prayer does not always correspond to the degree of virtue, that owing to temperament, training or custom, some persons linger in

the exercise of discursive meditation or affective prayer, who are the while intimately and habitually united to God; and others possessed of greater insight and more affectionate natures, readily practice the prayer of simplicity without having as yet attained that height of virtue which the unitive way demands.

Keep these things in mind so as not to place the virtues in imaginary, air-tight compartment, not to limit the workings of God's grace.

Importance of studying the 3 stages becomes evident. It is obvious that beginners and perfect souls are not to be guided by the same rules, because the grace given to beginners is not that bestowed on souls already advanced.

"Thus, discursive meditation, necessary to beginners, would paralyze the efforts of more advanced souls. Likewise with regard to the virtues, there is a manner of practicing them adapted to the purgative way, another to the illuminative, another to the unitive. A spiritual director who has not delved into these questions is liable to guide almost all souls after the same fashion and to counsel each according to what has answered his own purposes.

Example: because he finds affective, simplified prayer of great avail to himself, he will be led to prescribe the same method to all his penitents, unmindful of the fact that, as a rule, this is reached by gradual stages. If he finds in the habitual practice of the love of God, all that he needs for his own sanctification, he will be inclined to recommend to all the ways of love, forgetting that fledglings are unable to fly to such heights. Should he never have been initiated himself into that form of prayer which consists in a lingering loving thought of God, the prayer of simple regard, he will blame those who exercise themselves therein, claiming that it is but spiritual sloth.

The director on the other hand, who has carefully studied the gradual ascent of earnest souls, will know how to give competent counsel and effectual guidance adapted to the greatest measure of good for each soul.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL OR THE PURGATIVE WAY

The characteristic of the purgative way, or the state of beginners, is the purifying of the soul, in view of attaining to intimate union with God.

Who Are Called Beginners?

Essential Characteristics: In the spiritual life, beginners are those that habitually live in the state of grace and have a certain desire for perfection, but who have still attachments to venial sin, and are exposed to fall now and then into grievous faults. We shall explain these.

Beginners live habitually in the state of grace: hence they generally struggle successfully against grave temptations. This therefore rules out anyone who frequently

commits mortal sin and does not avoid its occasions, even though they might wish to be converted. Since they lack the necessary firm resolution, they are not really on the way to perfection. They cannot be classed among beginners until they sever their attachment to mortal sin and its occasions.

Beginners have a certain desire for perfection or for progress, even if this desire is as yet feeble and imperfect. Excluded therefore from the category of beginners would be those people whose highest purpose is to avoid mortal sin, but who have no earnest desire of advancing further. The desire for perfection is the first step along the way.

Beginners have some attachment to venial sin (deliberate) and therefore they frequently fall. This distinguishes them from souls already advancing along the way of perfection, who although they may from time to time commit some wilful venial sins, yet earnestly strive to avoid them. The existence of these attachments is due to the fact that their passions are not as-yet subdued, hence they yield to temptations of sensuality, pride, vanity, anger, envy, jealousy and uncharitableness in word and deed. Many souls who consider themselves devout retain attachments of this kind which cause them to commit deliberate venial sins, and which expose them from time to time to grievous falls.

Different Categories: There are different categories of beginners

Innocent souls desiring to grow in the spiritual life, who are not content with the mere avoidance of mortal sin, but wish to do something more for God, and want to become perfect.

Converts from sin, who after having transgressed grievously, return to God with all sincerity and who, in order to withdraw further from the brink of the abyss, want to press further in the ways of perfection. Here it is important for confessors to encourage their penitents and to remind them that in order not to fall back, they must advance, and that the safest means of avoiding mortal sin, is to tend to perfection.

The lukewarm, those who after having given themselves once to God and having advanced in the way of perfection have fallen into a state of remissness and tepidity. These, even if they had once reached the illuminative way, need to return to the austere practices of the purgative way and begin once more the work of perfection. To aid them, one must carefully put them on guard against the dangers of carelessness and lukewarmness

Two classes of beginners:

Very simply: Those that show greater generosity, and those that show less.

St.. Teresa describes these souls. In the first mansion of the Castle of the Soul, she gives a description of those souls that have good desires, are faithful to recite some prayers, but who are taken up with the world and have their minds filled with a thousand and one things which absorb their thought. Though they retain these many attachments,

they strive from time to time to free themselves from them. With these efforts they gain an entrance into the first and lower halls of the castle. With them however, enter a multitude of mischievous animals (their own passions) which hinder them from gazing at the beauty of the castle and abiding peacefully within it.

To have entered this mansion, although it is the lowest, is already a singular good fortune; nevertheless, the machinations and subterfuges employed by the devil, to keep the soul from advancing here are ruthless. The world still lures them, and hence they are easily conquered, even though they want to avoid sin, and do perform good works. In other words, these souls really are trying to harmonize piety and worldliness. Their faith is not sufficiently enlightened, their will is not strong enough, nor generous enough to determine them to renounce not only sin, but its occasions. They have not fully realized the need of frequent prayer and mortification. Still, they not only want to work out their salvation, but they also grow in the love of God by making some sacrifices.

The other class of beginners is described by St. Teresa in her second mansion. They are souls that are already initiated in the practice of mental prayer. They understand the necessity of sacrifice as a means of perfection, but through lack of courage they retreat at times to the first mansion, exposing themselves once more to the occasion of sin. Occasionally they fall into some grave fault. But hearkening to God's call, they rise again. In spite of the appeals made to them by the devil and the world, they meditate on the emptiness of the world's false goods, and on death that shall soon take these away.

They grow in the love of God from Whom they receive so many proofs of love; they realize that apart from Him they shall find neither peace nor safety. And they wish to avoid the wanderings of the Prodigal. This then, is a state of struggle in which souls have much to suffer from the many temptations that assail them, but wherein God also very really comforts and fortifies them. By acting in conformity with God's will they will finally emerge from these mansions with their venomous creatures, and they will pass to the other mansions, beyond the reach of their poisonous sting.

With the first group, it is necessary to draw their attention to the consequences of sin, and the necessity of avoiding its occasions. It is necessary to awaken in them a longing for prayer, penance, and mortification.

With the second class, one would want to advise more time given to meditation, and to taking the offensive against the capital vices, those deep-seated tendencies which are the source of sin.

THE END TO PURSUE

Must reiterate that perfection consists essentially in union with God through love. Because God is holiness itself, we cannot be united to Him unless we are clean of heart. That implies a two-fold condition: atonement for the past, and detachment from sin and the occasions of sin for the future. Can add here that the union of the soul with God will be the more intimate as the soul grows in purity and detachment.

The purification remains imperfect if it is inspired chiefly by motives of fear and hope-fear of hell and hope of heaven and heavenly gifts. The results of this kind of a purification are incomplete because the soul renounces mortal sin, which would deprive it of heaven, but it does not renounce venial faults, even deliberate ones since these do not deprive it of its eternal welfare.

There is then a more perfect purification, which, though not excluding fear and hope, has for its ruling motive, the love of God, the desire to please Him and hence to avoid whatever would constitute even a slight offence. Here is verified the word of the Savior to the sinful woman: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much."

It is at this second purification that souls should aim. Yet it is important to remember that for many a beginner it is not possible to rise thereto at the outset, and while one may speak to them of the love of God, they will not forget to offer them the motives of hope and fear which make a stronger impression.

Once we know the end, we must determine the means necessary for its attainment. Basically they are two: prayer, through which grace is obtained. And mortification, through which we correspond to grace.

Clarification of the word mortification: It is called penance when it prompts us to atone for our past faults; and it is called mortification when it sets upon the love of pleasure in order to reduce the number of faults in the present and obviate their recurrence in the future; it is called warfare against the capital sins when it combats those deep-rooted tendencies that incline us toward sin, and warfare against temptation, when practiced by way of resistance to the onslaughts of our spiritual enemies.

Will cover 5 areas in looking at beginners:

- Prayer
- Penance (to atone for the past)
- Mortification (to safeguard the future)
- Warfare (against the capital sins)
- Warfare (against temptation)

All of these clearly presuppose the practice in some degree of the theological and moral virtues.

No one can pray, no one can do penance and mortify himself, without a firm belief in revealed truth, without the expectation of a heavenly reward, without love of God, without the exercise of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. But it is in the

illuminative way that we speak more about these virtues, because it is there that they gain their full development.

PRAYER

The necessity of prayer is based on the necessity of actual grace. It is a truth of faith that without such grace we are utterly incapable of obtaining to salvation, and still more or attaining to perfection of ourselves, no matter how we use our freedom, we can do nothing positive that would prepare us for conversion to God, nor can we persevere for any length of time, much less until death. "Without Me you can do nothing..."

Now, barring the first grace, which is gratuitously given, it remains true that prayer is the normal, the efficacious, and the universal means through which God wills that we obtain all actual graces. This is the reason why Our Lord in the Gospels insists so frequently upon the necessity of prayer: "Ask and you shall receive ... " Almost all the commentators add that it is as if He had said: Unless you ask, you shall not receive ...

On this necessity of prayer Our Lord constantly insists, especially when it is question of resisting temptation: "watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

God assuredly knows all of our needs, yet He wills that prayer be the spring that sets in motion His loving mercy, so that we may acknowledge Him as the Author of the gifts He bestows on us.

This is the way that Tradition has understood the teaching of the Lord. God does not command the impossible. He commands us to do what we can, and to ask His help for what we cannot do. This manifestly implies that there are things, which without prayer, are impossible.

Such is the conclusion of the Roman Catechism: "Prayer is 'Is the indispensable instrument given us by God in order to obtain what we desire: there are things, in fact, impossible to obtain without the aid of prayer."

This often is a necessary principle to reinforce with beginners, who often think they can do all things through sheer force of will. They need to come to a personal conviction of the necessity of prayer.

When St. Paul says that "the Spirit helps us in our infirmity, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself asks for us with unspeakable groanings." Important to note that this is a grace that is offered to all, even sinners. Therefore all are able to pray.

Although the state of grace is not necessary to pray, yet of course it increases the value of the prayer since in that prayer we are living members of Jesus Christ.

Important to stress with beginners that the object of prayer is to ask only for those things which lead to eternal life: supernatural graces in the first place, and then for temporal goods, in the measure in which they are conducive to salvation. Our Lord Himself laid down this rule: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God then all these other things shall be yours..."

If man's happiness consists in the possession of God, then we are not to ask for anything that is not in harmony with that. In asking for supernatural graces, it is necessary also to relegate them to the Will of God. St. Francis de Sales says we must desire our salvation after God's own way ... for He knows what is best suited to us, etc.

In this relationship with God, the most essential conditions on our part, that which pleases God most in listening to us: humility, confidence and attention, (or at least the earnest effort to be attentive). The objective in view is to train souls gradually in the habitual practice of prayer, in such a way that their life begins to become a life of prayer. Most important, besides the morning and night prayers, and the practice of meditation, the soul should be taught how to profit from attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion. If they are unable to attend Mass daily, they should be taught to make Spiritual Communions. Another help here is to initiate the beginner into an appreciation for the Liturgical cycle. Recitation of the Rosary is a good way to begin meditative prayer. Renewal of an offering of self to God throughout the day, aspirations, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament are also helpful to increase devotion and strengthen the habit of union with the Lord.

Examination of conscience is also necessary for beginners. Should be noted though that it is generally better not to burden the beginner with too many exercises, especially if they interfere with their state in life. This is important too because some beginners can suffer from the delusion that they grow in piety as they multiply their vocal prayers.

Distinction Between Meditation and Mental Prayer

Often these terms are interchanged. When differentiated, meditation refers to that form of prayer wherein consideration and reasonings predominate, and is therefore called discursive meditation. Mental prayer chiefly refers to that type of prayer where pious affections or acts of the will predominate.

However, it is important to note that discursive meditation itself, already contains affection, and affective prayer is often preceded or accompanied by some considerations, except when the soul is seized by the light of contemplation.

The kind of prayer generally suited to beginners is discursive meditation. They need it in order to acquire convictions and to strengthen them. And there are at the same time some souls who from the outset give considerable place to affections. But everyone has to learn that the best part of mental prayer lies in the acts of the will.

ADVANTAGES AND NECESSITY OF MENTAL PRAYER

Meditation is most helpful for the attainment of salvation and perfection. It detaches us from sin and its causes. Usually when it is through thoughtlessness and lack of will-power. Meditation corrects this.

Meditation enlightens one to the malice of sin and its consequences, and leads us to that solitude wherein we are able to find God. Therefore it helps us to withdraw from everything that is passing away, and which only causes anxiety and ennui in the soul (worldly goods).

Meditation also strengthens the will not just by providing us with strong convictions, but because it gradually heals our languour, cowardice, and fickleness.

And meditation brings us to practice all the great Christian virtues. It enlightens faith, sustains hope and enkindles love. It brings us to prudence, justice, and a sharing in the strength of God's own power. It cools the passions and brings us to hold fast to the truth, wherein we are freed from our vices and enabled to practice virtue. (You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.)

So can see that meditation is extremely important though we often tend to downplay it, and earnest beginners want to skip by it because they have the idea that it's a baby sort of prayer. But meditation, if you look at it, actually initiates our union with God, our transformation into Him, and so it is extremely important. It is the beginning of a conversation with God which day by day becomes more intimate, and brings about this transformation.

Meditation is therefore most useful and most profitable to all for salvation and perfection; to beginners as well as to more advance souls. St. Alphonsus says that the habitual practice of mental prayer cannot suffer one to remain long in a state of sin. One either relinquishes sin or meditation/mental prayer.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MEDITATION OF BEGINNERS

We have already said that the mental prayer of beginners is chiefly discursive, where, even though affections have a place, reasoning predominates.

In order to acquire a growing horror for sin, beginners need to meditate on the end of man and the Christian, and therefore upon the creation of man to the supernatural state, his fall and redemption, and upon the particular attributes of God that would inspire them to see the true malice of sin.

Beginners also profit by meditating upon the means of expiating and preventing sin. It is good for them to meditate on the positive duties of the Christian: love of God and neighbor, mistrust of self on account of knowing our own weakness and helplessness. What impresses beginners most usually are external acts of these virtues' but this is a preparation for the more perfect practice of the same virtues in the illuminative way.

Meditating upon the particular duties of their state and fulfilling them will prove to be the best kind of penance for them.

Beginners gradually need to be instructed in the role of grace in the Christian life. Though they may in the beginning understand only a little, it will exert a powerful influence on their spiritual formation and progress.

Then it becomes easy to propose Jesus as the Model for our life: Jesus choosing to live a life of poverty, obedience, and toil, that he might be an example to us. Jesus doing penance for us in the desert, and in Gethsemane, in His Passion. And Jesus dying for us on the Cross.

The yearly cycle of the liturgy then begins to become alive, and the beginner begins to be able to practice penance in union with Jesus, and with greater generosity, love and therefore efficacy.

THE OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED BY BEGINNERS

There are basically 3 obstacles which beginners struggle with in relationship to prayer. They arise from their inexperience, their lack of generosity, and the many distractions to which they are subject.

Briefly look at this: on account of their inexperience, they are liable to turn their mental prayer into a sort of philosophical or theological thesis, or into a kind of sermon to themselves. This is not necessarily a waste of time, because it helps them to give thought to the great truths of religion, and strengthen their convictions.

But even greater benefit is derived if they proceed in a more practical and supernatural way. Considerations have to be made personal and applied to oneself. One needs to check to see if the truths that are being meditated upon really influence their life, and what could be done to live these truths day to day.

And one has to come to understand that the most important part of meditation is found in the acts of the will: acts of adoration and thanksgiving, love, humility, sorrow, firm purpose of amendment, acts of petition for graces to correct faults, etc.

Lack of generosity exposes beginners to discouragement when they are no longer upheld by the sensible consolations God graciously bestowed on them at the outset in order to draw them to himself. Obstacles and the first spells of aridity sometimes dishearten them. There is a tendency also at times to exaggerate the difficulties, thinking themselves abandoned by God. Thus they drift into carelessness.

It is necessary to help them see that God desires they persevere in prayer, and that prayer of this sort is richer in merit. It is good to remind them that God has been so generous to them, and to turn back now would be an act of cowardice when all that is

required is effort on our part. Always of course, direction should be tempered by mildness and reassurance.

The greatest obstacle for beginners comes from distractions. In the first stages of the spiritual life, the imagination, feelings and attachments are far from being mastered. And therefore worldly, dangerous, useless fancies, thoughts and emotions invade the soul at the time of meditation.

People often need help from a spiritual director here. They need first of all to be reminded of the distinction between willful distractions and those that are not. With regard to wilful distractions, they must be repelled promptly and persistently as soon as one is aware of them. Even if distractions are many and grievous, they are not culpable unless they are voluntary. The effort made to repel them is a meritorious act.

They must humbly acknowledge their weakness, explicitly unite themselves to the Lord, and offer their prayer to God. If necessary, a book can be used to fix the attention.

And often it is necessary to look at the causes of the distractions and attack their roots: lack of preparation or habitual dissipation of mind. In proportion as the soul is able to control the imagination and the memory and grows in the practice of habitual recollection and detachment, distractions become less numerous.

THE NECESSITY AND NOTION OF PENANCE

After prayer, penance is the most effective means for cleansing the soul of past faults and even for guarding it against future ones.

This was something very well understood by the Apostles. They insisted from the very first on the necessity of penance as a preparation for Baptism: "Do penance and be baptized, everyone of you." Acts 2:38

Penance is defined as a supernatural virtue, allied to justice, which inclines the sinner to detest his sin because it is an offense against God, and to form the firm resolve of avoiding sin in the future, and of atoning for it.

The reality of atoning or expiating past sin is accomplished through sentiments, and works of penance.

Penance has 3 motives.

It is a duty of justice toward God.

It is a duty consequent upon our incorporation into Christ.

It is a duty imposed by charity to ourselves and to our neighbor.

Briefly: sin is a real injustice since it deprives God of a portion of that eternal glory which is His due. Sin then requires a reparation to restore that which we have defrauded Him of.

With regard to the duty consequent upon us from our incorporation into Christ: because Jesus wills that His members, in order to be cleansed from their sins, be with Him victims of expiation: He willed to become a victim that He might become the Savior of mankind. But since His Mystical Body is one, if the Head be immolated, the members likewise become living victims.

To move us to comply with this, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us with all His sentiments of victim. This is what you see when you pray the psalms. You find in David the spirit of penance, reverence in silent adoration, and the interior dispositions of Christ's Spirit. Once we can come to this, our penance becomes more efficacious because it is no longer we alone who atone, but Christ within us atoning with us and through us.

Therefore, all exterior penance that does not have its source in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is not true and genuine penance. One may inflict upon oneself rigors, even the most harsh, but if these proceed not from the atoning Christ within us, they cannot be acts of Christian penance. It is through Christ alone that we can do penance.

A duty of charity: Penance is a duty of charity to ourselves and to our neighbor. Even when the guilt or fault of sin has been remitted, there generally remains a temporal punishment which is due, according to the number and gravity of the sins, and the fervor or contrition. This punishment must be undergone either here or in the next life. By far, the most advantageous course is to make satisfaction here.

This is not just in terms of lessening our punishment, but the sooner we make amends and acquit ourselves of this debt, the better fitted our soul becomes for union with God. Moreover, expiation on earth is easier, since this is the acceptable time for mercy. It is also more fruitful since our acts of penance are also meritorious, and a source of grace and greater glory.

Therefore, personal interest, and a love for our own soul are best served by a prompt and whole-hearted penance.

Also have to consider that sin has intensified in us disorders of all sorts, and weakened our will. In order to correct this and strengthen us, penance is a real answer. By bearing with fortitude, the afflictions sent by Providence, by inflaming our desire for works of penance (privations and austerities compatible with our health) the love of pleasure is weakened and the fear of sin increased. Another way in which penance is charity toward ourselves.

Penance is also an act of charity outward to our neighbor because of our oneness in the Body of Christ. Since our works of satisfaction can contribute to the welfare of others, it

becomes charitable to do acts of penance not only for ourselves but for others, especially for graces of conversion and perseverance. This is a service far better than any temporal goods we could render them.

This duty of reparation falls particularly upon priests. For them it is a duty to offer sacrifices not only for themselves but for the souls committed to their charge: "First for his own sins, and then for the people's."

It is also something particular to the religious state which is meant to be lived, in its entirety, in a spirit of reparation.

Penance is something we are obliged to do all through life. Many of the saints feel that the reason so few souls make little progress, is that they do not retain an abiding sorrow for sin. The saints on the contrary never ceased expiating even the smallest of their faults, for the whole of their lives. And when they had actively striven to expiate their faults, God also sent passive trials to complete the purification.

In order to do penance well, have to try to enter into the sentiments of Christ, and join in His acts of penance.

The sentiments of Penance, as we have said, are most beautifully expressed in the Psalms and particularly in the Miserere.

First is an abiding and sorrowful remembrance of our sins. "My sin is always before me." It is not wise to recall sin in detail since it can stir the imagination, etc. But it is necessary to retain a sense of sorrow and humiliation. This sorrowful remembrance is accompanied by an abiding sense of shame. "Shame hath covered my face." Ps 68:8 We utter the sincere cry of the Prodigal: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee." We repeat with the publican: "O, God be merciful to me a sinner."

From this, a wholesome fear of sin is born, and a horror for all the occasions that might lead to it. And therefore a great distrust of self is also present, in the face of the knowledge of our own weaknesses.

WORKS OF PENANCE

Works of penance become easy when one keeps in mind, as did the saints, that one is really a fugitive from hell, purgatory and were it not for the mercy of God, his tremendous love, that is where we would be.

The chief works of penance we must perform are:

The submissive, willing and joyful acceptance of all the crosses Providence may see fit to send us.

The faithful discharge of our duties of state in a spirit of penance and reparation. The most acceptable sacrifice we can offer to God is obedience. "Obedience is better than sacrifice." 1 Kings 25:22 St. John Berchmans said: "My greatest penance is community life." - following the rule, etc. But this applies easily to all states in life.

There are other works of penance recommended in Sacred Scripture: Fasting and almsgiving. Fr. speaks of prayer, fasting and almsgiving in light of the healing or reparation that takes place: Fasting to heal the wounds within yourself, almsgiving to heal the wounds present in the relationship to your neighbor, and prayer to heal the wounds present in your relationship to God.

MORTIFICATION

Other acts will be treated in a moment when we deal with the subject of mortification.

Like penance, mortification has its part to play in the cleansing from past sins, but its chief purpose is to safeguard us against sin in the present, and in the future, by weakening in us the love of pleasure, which is the source of our sin.

In Sacred Scripture there are seven principal expressions that describe mortification in its different aspects:

The word renouncement: "Every one of you that does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple." Lk 14:33 This presents mortification as a giving up of external goods in order to follow Christ as the Apostles did: "Leaving all things, they followed Him." Lk 5:11

Mortification is likewise an act of abnegation renunciation: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Lk 9:23

Mortification also has its positive aspects: It is an act which maims and cripples the inordinate inclinations of nature: "Mortify therefore your members ... But if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." Rom 8:13

Mortification is also a crucifixion of the flesh-whereby we attach, as it were, our faculties to the law of the Gospel, to Christ, by devoting them to prayer and labor. "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences." Gal 5:24

If we persist in this, it produces a death and burial whereby we seem to die completely to self and to be buried with Christ, to live with Him a new life: "For you are dead: and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col 3:3 "For we are buried together with Him by baptism, into death." Rom 6:4 To indicate this death, St. Paul make use of another expression Since we are given a new life in Baptism he tells us we must "put off the old man and put on the new..."stripping yourselves of the old man and putting on the new."Col 3:9

And since this is not done without a struggle, he says that life is a fight: "I have fought the good fight" and that Christians are the athletes that chastise their body and bring it into subjection. 2Tim 4:7

Mortification can therefore be seen to comprise a twofold element:

- one negative: detachment, renunciation, despoilment;
- the other positive: a struggle against the evil tendencies of nature, the effort to curb and deaden them, a crucifixion or death of the old man and his lusts, in order to live Christ's own life.

Mortification can be defined as the struggle against our evil inclinations in order to subject them to our will, and our will to God's will.

Mortification is necessary for salvation, in the sense that if we fail to practice it we can hardly avoid falling into mortal sin. This because of weakness from our past sins, original sin and the 3-fold concupiscences we suffer from, because of the disorder in our passions and our will, and because of the struggle we have with the 7 capital sins.

Mortification is also necessary for perfection, and therefore for union with God. The unmortified soul invariably clings to creatures, and to the extent that it loves created reality for its own sake, it cannot love the Creator. Therefore, real practices of detachment have to be begun.

Mortification is also necessary for our conformity to Christ. The whole life of Christ was a Cross and a Martyrdom. Jesus Himself says: "If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

And if we aspire to a life of apostolic service we find new motives. It is through the Cross that Jesus saved the world. It is likewise through the Cross that we shall cooperate in that work. Thinking of how Jesus endured all things silently we can recall that we "have not yet resisted unto the shedding of blood." Whatever we may suffer is little in comparison with value of souls and the Precious Blood that was shed for them.

These are high motives, but there are generous souls who can enter into them from the very moment of their turning to God.

Mortification is also necessary for our sanctification because it helps us to persevere against sensuality and self-love and our natural distaste for hardship and struggle.

And finally, an effect that is found upon those who are truly mortified in a Christian sense is far happier than the worldling. They possess that peace which surpasses all understanding, and are able to rejoice in the midst of even the severest difficulties.

Principles for Practicing Mortification

Mortification must include the whole man, body and soul. Even though it is the will alone that sins, it has for accomplices and instruments our body with its exterior senses and our soul with all its faculties.

Mortification must be Practiced with Prudence and Discretion

It must be properly fitted to the physical and moral strength of each, and must be in keeping with the accomplishment of one's duties of state. We must spare our physical strength for, according to St. Frances de Sales: "We are exposed to great temptations both when the body is overfed and when it is too enfeebled.

There is also the danger in mortification of so overtaxing ourselves that we reach the point where we give them up altogether and fall into a state of laxness.

There is also a hierarchy in the practices of mortification. Those that mortify our interior faculties have a greater worth than those that mortify our exterior senses, because the former attack more directly the root of the evil.

Yet it is also true that mortification of the exterior senses aid mortification of the interior senses. Whoever seeks to mortify the imagination will never succeed if they don't mortify the eyes.

Examples of Mortification of the Body and the Exterior Senses

Modesty of the Body

Modesty of the Eyes

Mortification of the Ear and Tongue

Mortification of Taste, Touch and Smell

Mortification of the Interior Senses

The two interior senses to be mortified are the imagination and memory, which generally act in accord, memory activities being accompanied by sense-images.

It is not a question of atrophying these faculties but of schooling them, of subjecting their activity to the control of reason and will. Otherwise, left to themselves, they literally crowd the soul with a host of memories and images that distract the spirit and waste its energies, causing priceless time to be lost.

In order to check the imagination and memory, idle thoughts and fancies need to be expelled as soon as we are aware of them for they are a source of temptation in a thousand different ways.

One way to do this is to apply ourselves wholeheartedly to the performance of our duties of the moment, and to strive to do well whatever we are doing at the moment.

Another way is to employ the memory and imagination; pious exercises which nourish these faculties: searching Scripture, studying Liturgy, reading the most beautiful similes and richest imagery. And if the imagination issued to enter into God's presence, to try and picture the details of these Mysteries.

The Mortification of the Passions

Another reality beginners have to deal with is the right ordering of the passions. There are eleven:

Love Hatred

Desire Aversion

Joy Sadness

Courage Fear

Hope Despair

Anger

Passions are said to be ill-ordered when directed toward some sensible good which is forbidden, or even towards a good which is lawful, but is pursued with too much eagerness and without any reference to God.

Ill-ordered passions produce blindness of soul. They weary and torture the soul, they weaken the will and they blemish the soul.

St. John of the Cross says: "I do not hesitate to affirm that one single disordered passion, even if it lead not to mortal sin, is enough to cause the soul such a state of darkness, ugliness and uncleanness, that it becomes incapable of intimate union with God so long as it remains a slave of this passion."

Passions are helpful when they are well-ordered, that is when they are directed towards good, and when they are moved in relationship to the will of God. They are live, powerful forces that stir our mind and will to action and thus are of signal help to us.

How to wage war against ill-ordered passions:

Have to avoid exterior acts and gestures which would stimulate or intensify passion. If we feel roused to anger, we should avoid excited gestures and words, holding our peace until calm is restored. If it is a question of too ardent attachment to some person,

we should avoid any meeting, any conversation with that person, and above all we should refrain from showing even in an indirect way, the affection we feel. In this way, passion gradually subsides.

If it's a question of a pleasure passion, one must strive to forget the object of that passion, divert ourselves long enough for the passion to cool and then exercise in the consideration of supernatural realities in order to strengthen ourselves.

And then positive acts directly opposed to the passion must be elicited. Example: Nothing so empties the heart of bitterness, as a prayer offered for an enemy.

In order to bring about the right ordering of passions, nothing is so effective as meditation accompanied by devout affections and generous resolutions.

But even when the passions are directed toward good, one has to know how to temper them, to make them obey the dictates of reason and the control of the will which are guided by light and faith. Otherwise, the passions by nature run to excess.

Otherwise, the desire to pray fervently could become a strain; love for Jesus may manifest itself in forced emotions which wear out both body and soul, untimely zeal results in overstrain, indignation degenerates into anger, and joy into dissipation of mind.

Wise direction is very necessary here. There must, in the training-of passions and desires, always be a certain habitual moderation, a kind of calm tranquility, without strain.

Prudence also demands that one put a certain curb or rest upon our ambitions, even the most legitimate, following the example of the Lord Who told His disciples to rest: Come apart into a desert place and rest a little." Mk 6:31

When the passions are directed and tempered, they become an effective means of daily growth in holiness.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HIGHER FACULTIES

The higher faculties, the intellect and the will, which make man what he is, also have to be disciplined, for they have likewise been affected by original sin.

The chief defects of the intellect, which enlightens the will and enables it to direct its course to good, are: Ignorance, Curiosity, Hastiness, Pride, Obstinacy

Ignorance is overcome by a constant and systematic application to study, especially of that which refers to our last end and the means of attaining it. Everyone must study that which pertains to his state and duties, but the foremost duty is that of knowing God in order to love Him.

Curiosity is a disease-of the mind, which is one of the causes of religious ignorance, for it leads us to seek too eagerly the knowledge of things that delight us, rather than things that are profitable to us. In order to overcome curiosity we must study before all else, not that which is pleasing, but that which is profitable. What is necessary, comes first. Everything else is only by way of recreation, and even then it is better to read that which feeds the mind rather than the imagination (in a worldly way). Also note here that curiosity even colors the study of spiritual things when it is done not for the sake of the purification of the heart and the practice of mortification, but when it is done out of pride and curiosity.

Hastiness, intellectual pride and obstinacy are also defects of the intellect that must be overcome.

The Will also has to undergo a training. It is the governing faculty in man, and therefore the discipline of the will means the discipline of the entire man. It has to become strong enough to govern the lower faculties and to submit them to God. Takes difficulty to bring the sense-faculties and passions under the sway of the will. And likewise great effort to yield full submission to the will of God.

The chief obstacles in the right exercise of the will are from **within**:

lack of reflection (before acting); over-eagerness which produces too great a strain; indifference which results in indecision, sloth, lack of moral stamina and fear of failure.

From **without** there are also obstacles:

human respect and bad example

Have to come to a harmonious working of the mind, the will and grace, built upon convictions that determine the will, in conformity with the will of God, and an ever-deepening dependence upon the grace of God to help and sustain us.

CAPITAL SINS

Am not going to speak too much about these except to say that beginners have these to deal with as well. And mortification is invaluable here.

TEMPTATIONS

It is also necessary at this time to instruct beginners in the realities of temptation: the solicitation to evil on the part of our spiritual foes; the providential purposes of temptation, the psychology of temptation, and the attitude to be taken toward temptations.

Have to help them understand that God does not tempt but rather allows temptations for our benefit, and will never allow anything beyond our strength or the grace He gives us

to combat them. He wants to make us merit heaven. That is His will, even though he could have bestowed it upon us as a free gift. He did not.

Temptation also needs to be seen as a purification, and a school of spiritual progress, a school of humility and distrust of self. As well, it is a school of love of God, for it is here especially that we throw ourselves into the arms of God for strength and shelter. We come to be grateful to Him for His unfailing grace, and we begin to act toward Him as children to a Father, having recourse to Him in all things.

The frequency, as well as the violence of temptation vary greatly. Some people are often and violently tempted; others are tempted but rarely and without being deeply stirred. There are many reasons for this diversity: temperament and character education (those schooled in love of God vs. those who have had worldly lives and example)

God's providential designs

Have to school beginners to understand 3 stages of temptation: 1. suggestion 2. pleasure 3. consent and train or enlighten them as to resisting and forestalling temptation

THE CHIEF TEMPTATIONS OF BEGINNERS

Beginners are subject to all sorts of temptations springing from the sources we have mentioned. But there are some that are peculiar to them:

Illusions - proceeding from consolations and aridity

Inconstancy

Overeagerness

Scruples (at times)

God generally bestows sensible consolations on beginners in order to draw them to His service; He then deprives them of these in order to test and to strengthen their virtue. There are some persons who because they enjoy consolations think they have already attained to a certain degree of sanctity; if the consolations vanish and spiritual dryness or aridity takes their place, they think themselves lost. It is therefore important, in order to forestall both presumption and discouragement, that the true nature of consolations be explained to them.

They have to know that there is a distinction between sensible consolations which are tender emotions that affect our sensibility and cause us to experience a feeling of spiritual joy (tears, beaming features, more energy) and spiritual consolations which are generally granted to more advanced souls. These are of a higher order. They act upon

the intellect by enlightening it and upon the will by drawing it to prayer and the practice of virtue.

These two kinds of consolations often intermingle, and so what is said about one can in some measure be applied to the other.

The beginner profits from knowing that consolations proceed from 3 sources:

From God Who is attracting us

From the devil who is seeking to divert

From our own nature which depending on our temperament, imagination, etc, naturally finds food for the emotions in pious exercises.

Consolations assuredly have their advantages:

They facilitate the knowledge of God

They strengthen the will (effect)

They help us to for habits of recollection, prayer, obedience, love, etc.

Consolations also have their dangers:

They excite a sort of spiritual greed, which makes us cling to the consolations of God rather than the God of consolations.

Another thing that can happen is that even though one may enjoy such consolations: (Tears at the suffering of Our Lord) often the devotion is not solidly grounded in virtue, for the person is unwilling to make this or that small sacrifice.

Solid virtue exists only when our love for God is carried as far as sacrifice. St. Francis de Sales says that: "There are many souls who experience these tendernesses and consolations, and who, nevertheless, are very vicious and consequently, have not a true love of God, much less true devotion."

Consolations may be asked for with the intention of using them to love God and fulfill His holy will. The Church prays that "we may ever enjoy His consolation," and as such they can aid us in our sanctification.

When such consolations are received, they should be acknowledged with gratitude and humility, in the awareness that we are unworthy, and that all is the grace of God. Boasting of them is the surest and quickest way of losing them. We need also to realize that as yet we are not being fed with solid food.

St. Francis de Sales tells us to profit by them. He says God gives them to us to "make us sweet towards everyone and excite us to love Him."

It is also well to keep in mind that these consolations will not last forever, and to ask God to help us to serve in dryness of soul, whenever that comes.

ARIDITY

In order to strengthen the beginner in virtue, God visits him from time to time with aridity.

Aridity is a privation of those sensible and spiritual consolations which make prayer and the practice of virtue easy. In spite of all effort, one no longer relishes prayer, and even experiences a sense of weariness, irksomeness, and boredom. One is able to act only by a sheer force of will.

Aridity, when it is not our fault (carelessness etc. serves the purposes of detaching us from all created things, even from the happiness derived from devotion so that we learn to love God for His sake alone.

God humbles us also by showing us that consolations are free gifts, and not ours by right.

God also effects in this a further purification of the soul from past faults, present attachments, and self-seeking.

God will also remove consolations because of carelessness, spiritual sloth, seeking after too human consolations, and by a want of frankness with our spiritual director which Francis de Sales likens to trying to deceive the Holy Spirit.

INCONSTANCY OF BEGINNERS

When a soul gives itself to God and begins to advance in the spiritual life, it is sustained by divine grace, by the attractiveness of the novelty and by a certain urge toward virtue, which removes many an obstacle. A moment arrives however, when God's grace is less sensible, and when they grow weary of effort. It is then that the soul is liable to relax and falter.

The tendency to inconstancy and tepidity shows itself in our spiritual exercises which are performed with less attention, shortened or omitted; in the practice of virtue especially as we begin to find penance and mortification more difficult; and in the habitual sanctification of our actions-offering of all we do to God for purity of intention. The result is that many of our actions soon become inspired by routine, curiosity, vanity, an sensuality.

Nothing assures constancy so much as the faithful practice of the particular examination of conscience.

OVER-EAGERNESS OF BEGINNERS

Often beginners, full of good will, apply themselves too eagerly and too anxiously to the work of their perfection and end by fatiguing and exhausting themselves in futile efforts. The chief cause for this is the substitution of one's own activity for that of God. Instead of reflection, prayer to the Holy Spirit, consultation with a spiritual director, such souls plunge head-long into an action, and afterwards confront him with the accomplished fact. Many imprudences and wasted efforts are the result.

Often presumption is a cause. Many would like to emerge hastily and arrive at the desired union with God, unaware of the obstacles that at times may even cause them to fall grievously.

At other times, it is curiosity that predominated. They constantly seek new means of perfection, try them awhile and discard them before they have a chance to produce results. The result is a loss of interior recollection and no solid gain.

The chief remedies are submission to and entire dependence upon the action of God, mature reflection before acting, prayer to obtain divine light, and consultation with and docility towards a spiritual director.

Just as in the workings of nature, it is not violent force that yields the best results but rather well controlled energy. So too in the spiritual life.. It is not feverish but well-directed and calm efforts that make for progress.

SCRUPLES

Scruples are a disease, physical and moral, which produces a sort of derangement of conscience, and causes one to harbor vain fears of having offended God. This is not restricted to beginners. Yet it is found in them as well as in the more advanced souls.

The term scruple was employed for ages past to designate a weight under which only the most sensitive scales would tilt. in the moral sense, it stands for some trifle which only the most delicate conscience would notice. Hence it is commonly used to designate the anxiety about having offended God which certain souls feel for little or no reason.

Scruples arise from purely natural causes, and sometime they are due to supernatural intervention.

A physical cause would be a nervous depression which hinders right judgement and tends to produce the obsessing idea that one has sinned.

A moral cause could be a meticulous mind that tends to lose itself amid the most trifling causes because it wants to reach absolute certitude about all things; also a beclouded mind that represents God not as a just judge but as a merciless one. Or a mind that confuses feeling with consent especially when the imagination is vivid and long alive. An obstinate mind can also be the cause in that it prefers its own judgement to that of the confessor and tends to let itself be led by impression rather than by reason.

If both physical and moral causes are present, it is more deeply rooted and difficult to cure the problem.

Scruples can also arise from a preternatural intervention on the part of God or of the devil.

God allows us to be obsessed either as a punishment for our pride and/or vain complacency, or as a trial, either for the sake of expiating past sins or for the sake of purifying us, detaching us from spiritual consolations and leading us to a higher degree of sanctity.

The devil also at times injects his activity to create turmoil in a soul. He persuades us that we are in the state of mortal sin to keep us from receiving Holy Communion, or to prevent us from discharging the duties of our state. He strives to deceive us of the gravity of some act to cause us to sin because of a false conscience.

There are also many degrees of scruples. Meticulous conscience to transient scruples which are eased upon consultation with a spiritual director, too tenacious and obstinate.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN A SCRUPULOUS AND DELICATE CONSCIENCE

Their starting point is not the same. The delicate conscience loves God ardently and, in order to please Him, wants to avoid the least fault, and the slightest wilful imperfection.

The scrupulous conscience is led on by a certain egotism which causes an inordinate eagerness for absolute certainty of one's state of grace.

The delicate conscience possesses a horror of sin, and knows its own feebleness. It has a rational, yet quiet fear of displeasing God. The scrupulous conscience harbors vain fear of sinning in every circumstance.

The tender conscience knows how to discriminate between mortal and venial sin, and in case of doubt, abides by the judgment of the spiritual director; the scrupulous conscience peevishly questions the decisions of the spiritual director and submits to them only with difficulty.

Scruples are a real evil to be avoided.

But a delicate conscience is a treasure.

Sometimes scruples are universal, bearing in all subjects

More often scruples bear upon a number of particular subjects, such as past confessions, evil thoughts, blasphemous thoughts, charity, correct pronunciation of words of Consecration, integral recitation of the Divine Office, etc.

Disadvantages and Advantages of Scruples

Scruples usually produce effects such as a certain weakening and unbalancing of the nervous system, which in turn depresses bodily health. They can even become a real obsession which can border on a type of insanity.

They becloud the mind and distort judgment. Loss of true devotion often results because one begins to mistrust even God. And then of course faults, and even grave ones ensue.

If we know how to accept scruples as a trial and submit ourselves to a wise spiritual director, they can have the advantage of purifying the soul, increasing humility and obedience, and purifying our intentions.

The remedy for scruples is obedience!

Once the spiritual director has the confidence of his penitent he must demand blind obedience from him. And if the penitent cannot promise that it should be suggested he seek another director.

The Director has to be clear, direct and precise. He will not speak conditionally but rather categorically. Generally no reasons must be given for decisions in the beginning until the penitent is able to understand a little more, and his conscience formed little by little. Even at that, decisions are not discussed.

The Director must never reverse his judgements. He should have the penitent restate his direction so he is clearly understood, and then have him carry it out.

Will come a time when can deal with the conditions for sin I cannot commit a sin either mortal or venial unless I am absolutely certain that the action I am to perform is forbidden under pain of sin, and that fully aware of this fact, I will nevertheless do it just the same.

When the penitent accuses himself, the confessor can ask whether he could affirm under oath that he committed that sin or gave full consent to the action.

With regard to general confession, after allowing it once, the confessor should never allow it to be repeated except when there is certainty that a mortal sin was committed and this sin has never been validly accused in any valid confession. After that, the spiritual director should declare that the past must not be touched upon under any

circumstances, and that should some sin have been omitted, it was already pardoned along with the others.

Communion is often a torture to the scrupulous. And Confession for the scrupulous is an even greater torture. Again wise direction in these matters is the most suited remedy.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BEGINNERS ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

(Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1973)

CHAPTER I

Sets down the first line and begins to treat of the imperfections of beginners.

INTO this dark night souls begin to enter when God draws them forth from the state of beginners--which is the state of those that meditate on the spiritual road--and begins to set them in the state of progressives--which is that of those who are already contemplative--to the end that, after passing through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the Divine union of the soul with God. Wherefore, to the end that we may the better understand and explain what night is this through which the soul passes, and for what cause God sets it therein, it will be well here to touch first of all upon certain characteristics of beginners (which, although we treat them with all possible brevity, will not fail to be of service likewise to the beginners themselves), in order that, realizing the weakness of the state wherein they are, they may take courage, and may desire that God will bring them into this night, wherein the soul is strengthened and confirmed in the virtues, and made ready for the inestimable delights of the love of God. And, although we may tarry here for a time, it will not be for longer than is necessary, so that we may go on to speak at once of this dark night.

2. It must be known, then, that the soul, after it has been definitely converted to the service of God, is, as a rule, spiritually nurtured and caressed by God, even as is the tender child by its loving mother, who warms it with the heat of her bosom and nurtures it with sweet milk and soft and pleasant food, and carries it and caresses it in her arms; but, as the child grows bigger, the mother gradually ceases caressing it, and, hiding her tender love, puts bitter aloes upon her sweet breast, sets down the child from her arms and makes it walk upon its feet, so that it may lose the habits of a child and betake itself to more important and substantial occupations. The loving mother is like the grace of God, for, as soon as the soul is regenerated by its new warmth and fervor for the service of God, He treats it in the same way; He makes it to find spiritual milk, sweet and delectable, in all the things of God, without any labor of its own, and also great pleasure in spiritual exercises, for here God is giving to it the breast of His tender love, even as to a tender child.

3. Therefore, such a soul finds its delight in spending long periods--perchance whole nights--in prayer; penances are its pleasures; fasts its joys; and its consolations are to make use of the sacraments and to occupy itself in Divine things. In the which things

spiritual persons (though taking part in them with great efficacy and persistence and using and treating them with great care) often find themselves, spiritually speaking, very weak and imperfect. For since they are moved to these things and to these spiritual exercises by the consolation and pleasure that they find in them, and since, too, they have not been prepared for them by the practice of earnest striving in the virtues, they have many faults and imperfections with respect to these spiritual actions of theirs; for, after all, any man's actions correspond to the habit of perfection attained by him. And, as these persons have not had the opportunity of acquiring the said habits of strength, they have necessarily to work like feeble children, feebly. In order that this may be seen more clearly, and likewise how much these beginners in the virtues lacks with respect to the works in which they so readily engage with the pleasure aforementioned, we shall describe it by reference to the seven capital sins, each in its turn, indicating some of the many imperfections which they have under each heading; wherein it will be clearly seen how like to children are these persons in all they do. And it will also be seen how many blessings the dark night of which we shall afterwards treat brings with it, since it cleanses the soul and purifies it from all these imperfections.

CHAPTER II

Of certain spiritual imperfections which beginners have with respect to the habit of pride.

AS these beginners feel themselves to be very fervent and diligent in spiritual things and devout exercises, from this prosperity (although it is true that holy things of their own nature cause humility) there often comes to them, through their imperfections, a certain kind of secret pride, whence they come to have some degree of satisfaction with their works and with themselves. And hence there comes to them likewise a certain desire, which is somewhat vain, and at times very vain, to speak of spiritual things in the presence of others, and sometimes even to teach such things rather than to learn them. They condemn others in their heart when they see that they have not the kind of devotion which they themselves desire; and sometimes they even say this in words, herein resembling the Pharisee, who boasted of himself, praising God for his own good works and despising the publican.[21]

2. In these persons the devil often increases the fervor that they have and the desire to perform these and other works more frequently, so that their pride and presumption may grow greater. For the devil knows quite well that all these works and virtues which they perform are not only valueless to them, but even become vices in them. And such a degree of evil are some of these persons wont to reach that they would have none appear good save themselves; and thus, in deed and word, whenever the opportunity occurs, they condemn them and slander them, beholding the mote in their brother's eye and not considering the beam which is in their own;[22] they strain at another's gnat and themselves swallow a camel.[23]

3. Sometimes, too, when their spiritual masters, such as confessors and superiors, do not approve of their spirit and behavior (for they are anxious that all they do shall be esteemed and praised), they consider that they do not understand them, or that,

because they do not approve of this and comply with that, their confessors are themselves not spiritual. And so they immediately desire and contrive to find some one else who will fit in with their tastes; for as a rule they desire to speak of spiritual matters with those who they think will praise and esteem what they do, and they flee, as they would from death, from those who disabuse them in order to lead them into a safe road—sometimes they even harbor ill-will against them. Presuming thus,[24] they are wont to resolve much and accomplish very little. Sometimes they are anxious that others shall realize how spiritual and devout they are, to which end they occasionally give outward evidence thereof in movements, sighs and other ceremonies; and at times they are apt to fall into certain ecstasies, in public rather than in secret, wherein the devil aids them, and they are pleased that this should be noticed, and are often eager that it should be noticed more.[25]

4. Many such persons desire to be the favorites of their confessors and to become intimate with them, as a result of which there beset them continual occasions of envy and disquiet.[26] They are too much embarrassed to confess their sins nakedly, lest their confessors should think less of them, so they palliate them and make them appear less evil, and thus it is to excuse themselves rather than to accuse themselves that they go to confession. And sometimes they seek another confessor to tell the wrongs that they have done, so that their own confessor shall think they have done nothing wrong at all, but only good; and thus they always take pleasure in telling him what is good, and sometimes in such terms as make it appear to be greater than it is rather than less, desiring that he may think them to be good, when it would be greater humility in them, as we shall say, to depreciate it, and to desire that neither he nor anyone else should consider them of account.

5. Some of these beginners, too, make little of their faults, and at other times become over-sad when they see themselves fall into them, thinking themselves to have been saints already; and thus they become angry and impatient with themselves, which is another imperfection. Often they beseech God, with great yearnings, that He will take from them their imperfections and faults, but they do this that they may find themselves at peace, and may not be troubled by them, rather than for God's sake; not realizing that, if He should take their imperfections from them, they would probably become prouder and more presumptuous still. They dislike praising others and love to be praised themselves; sometimes they seek out such praise. Herein they are like the foolish virgins, who, when their lamps could not be lit, sought oil from others.[27]

6. From these imperfections some souls go on to develop[28] many very grave ones, which do them great harm. But some have fewer and some more, and some, only the first motions thereof or little beyond these; and there are hardly any such beginners who, at the time of these signs of fervor,[29] fall not into some of these errors.[30] But those who at this time are going on to perfection proceed very differently and with quite another temper of spirit; for they progress by means of humility and are greatly edified, not only thinking naught of their own affairs, but having very little satisfaction with themselves; they consider all others as far better, and usually have a holy envy of them, and an eagerness to serve God as they do. For the greater is their fervor, and the more

numerous are the works that they perform, and the greater is the pleasure that they take in them, as they progress in humility, the more do they realize how much God deserves of them, and how little is all that they do for His sake; and thus, the more they do, the less are they satisfied. So much would they gladly do from charity and love for Him, that all they do seems to them naught; and so greatly are they importuned, occupied and absorbed by this loving anxiety that they never notice what others do or do not; or if they do notice it, they always believe, as I say, that all others are far better than they themselves. Wherefore, holding themselves as of little worth, they are anxious that others too should thus hold them, and should despise and depreciate that which they do. And further, if men should praise and esteem them, they can in no wise believe what they say; it seems to them strange that anyone should say these good things of them.

7. Together with great tranquillity and humbleness, these souls have a deep desire to be taught by anyone who can bring them profit; they are the complete opposite of those of whom we have spoken above, who would fain be always teaching, and who, when others seem to be teaching them, take the words from their mouths as if they knew them already. These souls, on the other hand, being far from desiring to be the masters of any, are very ready to travel and set out on another road than that which they are actually following, if they be so commanded, because they never think that they are right in anything whatsoever. They rejoice when others are praised; they grieve only because they serve not God like them. They have no desire to speak of the things that they do, because they think so little of them that they are ashamed to speak of them even to their spiritual masters, since they seem to them to be things that merit not being spoken of. They are more anxious to speak of their faults and sins, or that these should be recognized rather than their virtues; and thus they incline to talk of their souls with those who account their actions and their spirituality of little value. This is a characteristic of the spirit which is simple, pure, genuine and very pleasing to God. For as the wise Spirit of God dwells in these humble souls, He moves them and inclines them to keep His treasures secretly within and likewise to cast out from themselves all evil. God gives this grace to the humble, together with the other virtues, even as He denies it to the proud.

8. These souls will give their heart's blood to anyone that serves God, and will help others to serve Him as much as in them lies. The imperfections into which they see themselves fall they bear with humility, meekness of spirit and a loving fear of God, hoping in Him. But souls who in the beginning journey with this kind of perfection are, as I understand, and as has been said, a minority, and very few are those who we can be glad do not fall into the opposite errors. For this reason, as we shall afterwards say, God leads into the dark night those whom He desires to purify from all these imperfections so that He may bring them farther onward.

CHAPTER III

Of some imperfections which some of these souls are apt to have, with respect to the second capital sin, which is avarice, in the spiritual sense.

MANY of these beginners have also at times great spiritual avarice. They will be found to be discontented with the spirituality which God gives them; and they are very disconsolate and querulous because they find not in spiritual things the consolation that they would desire. Many can never have enough of listening to counsels and learning spiritual precepts, and of possessing and reading many books which treat of this matter, and they spend their time on all these things rather than on works of mortification and the perfecting of the inward poverty of spirit which should be theirs. Furthermore, they burden themselves with images and rosaries which are very curious; now they put down one, now take up another; now they change about, now change back again; now they want this kind of thing, now that, preferring one kind of cross to another, because it is more curious. And others you will see adorned with agnusdeis[31] and relics and tokens,[32] like children with trinkets. Here I condemn the attachment of the heart, and the affection which they have for the nature, multitude and curiosity of these things, inasmuch as it is quite contrary to poverty of spirit which considers only the substance of devotion, makes use only of what suffices for that end and grows weary of this other kind of multiplicity and curiosity. For true devotion must issue from the heart, and consist in the truth and substances alone of what is represented by spiritual things; all the rest is affection and attachment proceeding from imperfection; and in order that one may pass to any kind of perfection it is necessary for such desires to be killed.

2. I knew a person who for more than ten years made use of a cross roughly formed from a branch[33] that had been blessed, fastened with a pin twisted round it; he had never ceased using it, and he always carried it about with him until I took it from him; and this was a person of no small sense and understanding. And I saw another who said his prayers using beads that were made of bones from the spine of a fish; his devotion was certainly no less precious on that account in the sight of God, for it is clear that these things carried no devotion in their workmanship or value. Those, then, who start from these beginnings and make good progress attach themselves to no visible instruments, nor do they burden themselves with such, nor desire to know more than is necessary in order that they may act well; for they set their eyes only on being right with God and on pleasing Him, and therein consists their covetousness. And thus with great generosity they give away all that they have, and delight to know that they have it not, for God's sake and for charity to their neighbor, no matter whether these be spiritual things or temporal. For, as I say, they set their eyes only upon the reality of interior perfection, which is to give pleasure to God and in naught to give pleasure to themselves.

3. But neither from these imperfections nor from those others can the soul be perfectly purified until God brings it into the passive purgation of that dark night whereof we shall speak presently. It befits the soul, however, to contrive to labor, in so far as it can, on its own account, to the end that it may purge and perfect itself, and thus may merit being taken by God into that Divine care wherein it becomes healed of all things that it was unable of itself to cure. Because, however greatly the soul itself labors, it cannot actively purify itself so as to be in the least degree prepared for the Divine union of perfection of love, if God takes not its hand and purges it not in that dark fire, in the way and manner that we have to describe.

CHAPTER IV

Of other imperfections which these beginners are apt to have with respect to the third sin, which is luxury.

MANY of these beginners have many other imperfections than those which I am describing with respect to each of the deadly sins, but these I set aside, in order to avoid prolixity, touching upon a few of the most important, which are, as it were, the origin and cause of the rest. And thus, with respect to this sin of luxury (leaving apart the falling of spiritual persons into this sin, since my intent is to treat of the imperfections which have to be purged by the dark night), they have many imperfections which might be described as spiritual luxury, not because they are so, but because the imperfections proceed from spiritual things. For it often comes to pass that, in their very spiritual exercises, when they are powerless to prevent it, there arise and assert themselves in the sensual part of the soul impure acts and motions, and sometimes this happens even when the spirit is deep in prayer, or engaged in the Sacrament of Penance or in the Eucharist. These things are not, as I say, in their power; they proceed from one of three causes.

2. The first cause from which they often proceed is the pleasure which human nature takes in spiritual things. For when the spirit and the sense are pleased, every part of a man is moved by that pleasure^[34] to delight according to its proportion and nature. For then the spirit, which is the higher part, is moved to pleasure^[35] and delight in God; and the sensual nature, which is the lower part, is moved to pleasure and delight of the senses, because it cannot possess and lay hold upon aught else, and it therefore lays hold upon that which comes nearest to itself, which is the impure and sensual. Thus it comes to pass that the soul is in deep prayer with God according to the spirit, and, on the other hand, according to sense it is passively conscious, not without great displeasure, of rebellions and motions and acts of the senses, which often happens in Communion, for when the soul receives joy and comfort in this act of love, because this Lord bestows it (since it is to that end that He gives Himself), the sensual nature takes that which is its own likewise, as we have said, after its manner. Now as, after all, these two parts are combined in one individual, they ordinarily both participate in that which one of them receives, each after its manner; for, as the philosopher says, everything that is received is in the recipient after the manner of the same recipient. And thus, in these beginnings, and even when the soul has made some progress, its sensual part, being imperfect, oftentimes receives the Spirit of God with the same imperfection. Now when this sensual part is renewed by the purgation of the dark night which we shall describe, it no longer has these weaknesses; for it is no longer this part that receives aught, but rather it is itself received into the Spirit. And thus it then has everything after the manner of the Spirit.

3. The second cause whence these rebellions sometimes proceed is the devil, who, in order to disquiet and disturb the soul, at times when it is at prayer or is striving to pray, contrives to stir up these motions of impurity in its nature; and if the soul gives heed to any of these, they cause it great harm. For through fear of these not only do persons

become lax in prayer--which is the aim of the devil when he begins to strive with them--but some give up prayer altogether, because they think that these things attack them more during that exercise than apart from it, which is true, since the devil attacks them then more than at other times, so that they may give up spiritual exercises. And not only so, but he succeeds in portraying to them very vividly things that are most foul and impure, and at times are very closely related to certain spiritual things and persons that are of profit to their souls, in order to terrify them and make them fearful; so that those who are affected by this dare not even look at anything or meditate upon anything, because they immediately encounter this temptation. And upon those who are inclined to melancholy this acts with such effect that they become greatly to be pitied since they are suffering so sadly; for this trial reaches such a point in certain persons, when they have this evil humour, that they believe it to be clear that the devil is ever present with them and that they have no power to prevent this, although some of these persons can prevent his attack by dint of great effort and labor. When these impurities attack such souls through the medium of melancholy, they are not as a rule freed from them until they have been cured of that kind of humour, unless the dark night has entered the soul, and rids them of all impurities, one after another.[36]

4. The third source whence these impure motions are apt to proceed in order to make war upon the soul is often the fear which such persons have conceived for these impure representations and motions. Something that they see or say or think brings them to their mind, and this makes them afraid, so that they suffer from them through no fault of their own.

5. There are also certain souls of so tender and frail a nature that, when there comes to them some spiritual consolation or some grace in prayer, the spirit of luxury is with them immediately, inebriating and delighting their sensual nature in such manner that it is as if they were plunged into the enjoyment and pleasure of this sin; and the enjoyment remains, together with the consolation, passively, and sometimes they are able to see that certain impure and unruly acts have taken place. The reason for this is that, since these natures are, as I say, frail and tender, their humours are stirred up and their blood is excited at the least disturbance. And hence come these motions; and the same thing happens to such souls when they are enkindled with anger or suffer any disturbance or grief.[37]

6. Sometimes, again, there arises within these spiritual persons, whether they be speaking or performing spiritual actions, a certain vigor and bravado, through their having regard to persons who are present, and before these persons they display a certain kind of vain gratification. This also arises from luxury of spirit, after the manner wherein we here understand it, which is accompanied as a rule by complacency in the will.

7. Some of these persons make friendships of a spiritual kind with others, which oftentimes arise from luxury and not from spirituality; this may be known to be the case when the remembrance of that friendship causes not the remembrance and love of God to grow, but occasions remorse of conscience. For, when the friendship is purely

spiritual, the love of God grows with it; and the more the soul remembers it, the more it remembers the love of God, and the greater the desire it has for God; so that, as the one grows, the other grows also. For the spirit of God has this property, that it increases good by adding to it more good, inasmuch as there is likeness and conformity between them. But, when this love arises from the vice of sensuality aforementioned, it produces the contrary effects; for the more the one grows, the more the other decreases, and the remembrance of it likewise. If that sensual love grows, it will at once be observed that the soul's love of God is becoming colder, and that it is forgetting Him as it remembers that love; there comes to it, too, a certain remorse of conscience. And, on the other hand, if the love of God grows in the soul, that other love becomes cold and is forgotten; for, as the two are contrary to one another, not only does the one not aid the other, but the one which predominates quenches and confounds the other, and becomes strengthened in itself, as the philosophers say. Wherefore Our Savior said in the Gospel: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' [38] That is to say, the love which is born of sensuality ends in sensuality, and that which is of the spirit ends in the spirit of God and causes it to grow. This is the difference that exists between these two kinds of love, whereby we may know them.

8. When the soul enters the dark night, it brings these kinds of love under control. It strengthens and purifies the one, namely that which is according to God; and the other it removes and brings to an end; and in the beginning it causes both to be lost sight of, as we shall say hereafter.

CHAPTER V

Of the imperfections into which beginners fall with respect to the sin of wrath.

BY reason of the concupiscence which many beginners have for spiritual consolations, their experience of these consolations is very commonly accompanied by many imperfections proceeding from the sin of wrath; for, when their delight and pleasure in spiritual things come to an end, they naturally become embittered, and bear that lack of sweetness which they have to suffer with a bad grace, which affects all that they do; and they very easily become irritated over the smallest matter--sometimes, indeed, none can tolerate them. This frequently happens after they have been very pleasantly recollected in prayer according to sense; when their pleasure and delight therein come to an end, their nature is naturally vexed and disappointed, just as is the child when they take it from the breast of which it was enjoying the sweetness. There is no sin in this natural vexation, when it is not permitted to indulge itself, but only imperfection, which must be purged by the aridity and severity of the dark night.

2. There are other of these spiritual persons, again, who fall into another kind of spiritual wrath: this happens when they become irritated at the sins of others, and keep watch on those others with a sort of uneasy zeal. At times the impulse comes to them to reprove them angrily, and occasionally they go so far as to indulge it [39] and set themselves up as masters of virtue. All this is contrary to spiritual meekness.

3. There are others who are vexed with themselves when they observe their own imperfectness, and display an impatience that is not humility; so impatient are they about this that they would fain be saints in a day. Many of these persons purpose to accomplish a great deal and make grand resolutions; yet, as they are not humble and have no misgivings about themselves, the more resolutions they make, the greater is their fall and the greater their annoyance, since they have not the patience to wait for that which God will give them when it pleases Him; this likewise is contrary to the spiritual meekness aforementioned, which cannot be wholly remedied save by the purgation of the dark night. Some souls, on the other hand, are so patient as regards the progress which they desire that God would gladly see them less so.

CHAPTER VI

Of imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony.

WITH respect to the fourth sin, which is spiritual gluttony, there is much to be said, for there is scarce one of these beginners who, however satisfactory his progress, falls not into some of the many imperfections which come to these beginners with respect to this sin, on account of the sweetness which they find at first in spiritual exercises. For many of these, lured by the sweetness and pleasure which they find in such exercises, strive more after spiritual sweetness than after spiritual purity and discretion, which is that which God regards and accepts throughout the spiritual journey.[40] Therefore, besides the imperfections into which the seeking for sweetness of this kind makes them fall, the gluttony which they now have makes them continually go to extremes, so that they pass beyond the limits of moderation within which the virtues are acquired and wherein they have their being. For some of these persons, attracted by the pleasure which they find therein, kill themselves with penances, and others weaken themselves with fasts, by performing more than their frailty can bear, without the order or advice of any, but rather endeavoring to avoid those whom they should obey in these matters; some, indeed, dare to do these things even though the contrary has been commanded them.

2. These persons are most imperfect and unreasonable; for they set bodily penance before subjection and obedience, which is penance according to reason and discretion, and therefore a sacrifice more acceptable and pleasing to God than any other. But such one-sided penance is no more than the penance of beasts, to which they are attracted, exactly like beasts, by the desire and pleasure which they find therein. Inasmuch as all extremes are vicious, and as in behaving thus such persons[41] are working their own will, they grow in vice rather than in virtue; for, to say the least, they are acquiring spiritual gluttony and pride in this way, through not walking in obedience. And many of these the devil assails, stirring up this gluttony in them through the pleasures and desires which he increases within them, to such an extent that, since they can no longer help themselves, they either change or vary or add to that which is commanded them, as any obedience in this respect is so bitter to them. To such an evil pass have some persons come that, simply because it is through obedience that they engage in these exercises, they lose the desire and devotion to perform them, their only desire and

pleasure being to do what they themselves are inclined to do, so that it would probably be more profitable for them not to engage in these exercises at all.

3. You will find that many of these persons are very insistent with their spiritual masters to be granted that which they desire, extracting it from them almost by force; if they be refused it they become as peevish as children and go about in great displeasure, thinking that they are not serving God when they are not allowed to do that which they would. For they go about clinging to their own will and pleasure, which they treat as though it came from God;^[42] and immediately their directors^[43] take it from them, and try to subject them to the will of God, they become peevish, grow faint-hearted and fall away. These persons think that their own satisfaction and pleasure are the satisfaction and service of God.

4. There are others, again, who, because of this gluttony, know so little of their own unworthiness and misery and have thrust so far from them the loving fear and reverence which they owe to the greatness of God, that they hesitate not to insist continually that their confessors shall allow them to communicate often. And, what is worse, they frequently dare to communicate without the leave and consent^[44] of the minister and steward of Christ, merely acting on their own opinion, and contriving to conceal the truth from him. And for this reason, because they desire to communicate continually, they make their confessions carelessly,^[45] being more eager to eat than to eat cleanly and perfectly, although it would be healthier and holier for them had they the contrary inclination and begged their confessors not to command them to approach the altar so frequently: between these two extremes, however, the better way is that of humble resignation. But the boldness referred to is^[46] a thing that does great harm, and men may fear to be punished for such temerity.

5. These persons, in communicating, strive with every nerve to obtain some kind of sensible sweetness and pleasure, instead of humbly doing reverence and giving praise within themselves to God. And in such wise do they devote themselves to this that, when they have received no pleasure or sweetness in the senses, they think that they have accomplished nothing at all. This is to judge God very unworthily; they have not realized that the least of the benefits which come from this Most Holy Sacrament is that which concerns the senses; and that the invisible part of the grace that it bestows is much greater; for, in order that they may look at it with the eyes of faith, God oftentimes withholds from them these other consolations and sweetnesses of sense. And thus they desire to feel and taste God as though He were comprehensible by them and accessible to them, not only in this, but likewise in other spiritual practices. All this is very great imperfection and completely opposed to the nature of God, since it is Impurity in faith.

6. These persons have the same defect as regards the practice of prayer, for they think that all the business of prayer consists in experiencing sensible pleasure and devotion and they strive to obtain this by great effort,^[47] wearying and fatiguing their faculties and their heads; and when they have not found this pleasure they become greatly discouraged, thinking that they have accomplished nothing. Through these efforts they

lose true devotion and spirituality, which consist in perseverance, together with patience and humility and mistrust of themselves, that they may please God alone. For this reason, when they have once failed to find pleasure in this or some other exercise, they have great disinclination and repugnance to return to it, and at times they abandon it. They are, in fact, as we have said, like children, who are not influenced by reason, and who act, not from rational motives, but from inclination.[48] Such persons expend all their effort in seeking spiritual pleasure and consolation; they never tire therefore, of reading books; and they begin, now one meditation, now another, in their pursuit of this pleasure which they desire to experience in the things of God. But God, very justly, wisely and lovingly, denies it to them, for otherwise this spiritual gluttony and inordinate appetite would breed innumerable evils. It is, therefore, very fitting that they should enter into the dark night, whereof we shall speak,[49] that they may be purged from this childishness.

7. These persons who are thus inclined to such pleasures have another very great imperfection, which is that they are very weak and remiss in journeying upon the hard[50] road of the Cross; for the soul that is given to sweetness naturally has its face set against all self-denial, which is devoid of sweetness.[51]

8. These persons have many other imperfections which arise hence, of which in time the Lord heals them by means of temptations, aridities and other trials, all of which are part of the dark night. All these I will not treat further here, lest I become too lengthy; I will only say that spiritual temperance and sobriety lead to another and a very different temper, which is that of mortification, fear and submission in all things. It thus becomes clear that the perfection and worth of things consist not in the multitude and the pleasantness of one's actions, but in being able to deny oneself in them; this such persons must endeavor to compass, in so far as they may, until God is pleased to purify them indeed, by bringing them[52] into the dark night, to arrive at which I am hastening on with my account of these imperfections.

CHAPTER VII

Of imperfections with respect to spiritual envy and sloth.

WITH respect likewise to the other two vices, which are spiritual envy and sloth, these beginners fail not to have many imperfections. For, with respect to envy, many of them are wont to experience movements of displeasure at the spiritual good of others, which cause them a certain sensible grief at being outstripped upon this road, so that they would prefer not to hear Others praised; for they become displeased at others' virtues and sometimes they cannot refrain from contradicting what is said in praise of them, depreciating it as far as they can; and their annoyance thereat grows[53] because the same is not said of them, for they would fain be preferred in everything. All this is clean contrary to charity, which, as Saint Paul says, rejoices in goodness.[54] And, if charity has any envy, it is a holy envy, comprising grief at not having the virtues of others, yet also joy because others have them, and delight when others outstrip us in the service of God, wherein we ourselves are so remiss.

2. With respect also to spiritual sloth, beginners are apt to be irked by the things that are most spiritual, from which they flee because these things are incompatible with sensible pleasure. For, as they are so much accustomed to sweetness in spiritual things, they are wearied by things in which they find no sweetness. If once they failed to find in prayer the satisfaction which their taste required (and after all it is well that God should take it from them to prove them), they would prefer not to return to it: sometimes they leave it; at other times they continue it unwillingly. And thus because of this sloth they abandon the way of perfection (which is the way of the negation of their will and pleasure for God's sake) for the pleasure and sweetness of their own will, which they aim at satisfying in this way rather than the will of God.

3. And many of these would have God will that which they themselves will, and are fretful at having to will that which He wills, and find it repugnant to accommodate their will to that of God. Hence it happens to them that oftentimes they think that wherein they find not their own will and pleasure is not the will of God; and that, on the other hand, when they themselves find satisfaction, God is satisfied. Thus they measure God by themselves and not themselves by God, acting quite contrarily to that which He Himself taught in the Gospel, saying: That he who should lose his will for His sake, the same should gain it; and he who should desire to gain it, the same should lose it.[55]

4. These persons likewise find it irksome when they are commanded to do that wherein they take no pleasure. Because they aim at spiritual sweetness and consolation, they are too weak to have the fortitude and bear the trials of perfection.[56] They resemble those who are softly nurtured and who run fretfully away from everything that is hard, and take offense at the Cross, wherein consist the delights of the spirit. The more spiritual a thing is, the more irksome they find it, for, as they seek to go about spiritual matters with complete freedom and according to the inclination of their will, it causes them great sorrow and repugnance to enter upon the narrow way, which, says Christ, is the way of life.[57]

5. Let it suffice here to have described these imperfections, among the many to be found in the lives of those that are in this first state of beginners, so that it may be seen how greatly they need God to set them in the state of proficients. This He does by bringing them into the dark night whereof we now speak; wherein He weans them from the breasts of these sweetnesses and pleasures, gives them pure aridities and inward darkness, takes from them all these irrelevances and puerilities, and by very different means causes them to win the virtues. For, however assiduously the beginner practices the mortification in himself of all these actions and passions of his, he can never completely succeed--very far from it--until God shall work it in him passively by means of the purgation of the said night. Of this I would fain speak in some way that may be profitable; may God, then, be pleased to give me His Divine light, because this is very needful in a night that is so dark and a matter that is so difficult to describe and to expound.

THE NIGHT OF THE SENSES

The Passive Purgation of the Senses

(Tanquerey 1923)

The transition to the illuminative life follows upon certain sensible consolations which generally reward the courageous effort of mortification. As the soul lingers in the enjoyment of these consolations, God withdraws them, and then the soul finds itself in that more or less prolonged aridity of the senses which is known as the passive purgation of the senses.

This purgation persists unceasingly in generous souls and leads them, by way of initial infused contemplation, to the full illuminative life. In other souls that are less generous, souls that shun the cross, the purgation is often interrupted; and these souls will enjoy only an attenuated form of the illuminative life, and will receive the gift of infused contemplation only at long intervals.

The illuminative life brings with it the obscure infused contemplation of the mysteries of faith, a contemplation which had already been initiated in the passive night of the senses.

It appears under 2 normal forms: the one definitely contemplative, as in the many saints of the Carmel; the other active, as in a St. Vincent de Paul, a contemplation which, by the light of the gifts of wisdom and counsel, constantly sees in the poor and abandoned the suffering members of Christ.

Sometimes this full illuminative life involves not only the infused contemplation of mysteries, but also certain extraordinary graces (vision, revelations, interior speech), such as those described by St. Teresa in her own life.

To return to the passive (God effects this purification) purgation of the senses:

Great purity of heart is required for contemplation. Even advanced souls are subject to many imperfections, and experience in a milder form, the reawakening of the 7 capital sins. in order to purify them God sends them various trials which are called passive trials because it is God Himself who causes them, and the soul has but to accept them patiently.

God establishes the soul in the dark night of sense (St. John) that He may purify, prepare and subdue its lower nature and unite it to the Spirit, by depriving it of light and causing it to cease from meditation.

This is a complex state of soul and a baffling mixture of darkness and light, of aridity and intense though hidden love of God, or real weakness and latent energy. Difficult to analyze without falling into apparent contradictions.

CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF THIS ORDEAL

The first and foremost element of this ordeal is infused contemplation, which God begins to communicate to the soul in a secret, obscure manner as yet unknown to the soul but which produces there a painful and agonizing impression. This is the commencement of contemplation, dim and dry to the senses, which is in general, secret and unknown to him who is admitted into it...it makes the soul long for solitude and quiet, without the power of reflecting distinctly, on anything, or even desiring to do so .

This kind of contemplation produces in the soul a great aridity, not only in the sense faculties which are deprived of consolations, but also in the higher faculties which can no longer meditate in a discursive way as they did before.

This is a painful situation: accustomed to the light, these faculties find themselves plunged into darkness; formerly they knew how to reflect and to cause numerous affections to pour forth from their hearts; but now they have lost that facility and prayer becomes most painful.

And the same thing happens with the practice of virtue. The efforts to grow in virtue, once gladly made, now appear arduous and forbidding.

There are 3 signs which St. John gives in order to distinguish this purification from that caused by negligence or lukewarmness.

The first: no comfort is found in the things of God- nor in Created things. Lukewarm will find selves inclined to earthly pleasures. Still, since this could be caused by melancholy or illness, a second sign is necessary.

The second: The memory dwells ordinarily upon God with a painful anxiety and carefulness. The soul thinks it is not serving God but going backwards because it is no longer conscious of any sweetness in the things of God. Lukewarmness does not have this concern. Illness also does not have this affect which is really the result of infused contemplation.

The third: an inability to meditate and make reflections. They are unable to excite the imagination as before, for God begins to communicate Himself now no longer through the channels of sense, but in pure spirit. This inability is not always continuous, and generally only applies to spiritual things, not business, etc.

To this aridity is added a painful and persistent longing for a more intimate union with God. At first the desire is not felt, but the more it grows, the more the soul feels itself touched and inflamed with the love of God, without knowing or understanding how or whence that love comes, except that at times this burning so inflames it that it longs earnestly after God.

Secret contemplation keeps the soul in this state of anxiety until, in the course of time, having purged the sensual nature of man in some degree, it shall have kindled within it this divine love.

In the meantime, like a sick man in the hands of his physician, all it has to do in the dark night and dry purgation of the desire is to suffer, healing its many imperfections, and practicing many virtues that it may become meet for divine love.

The soul is turned towards God and no longer desires creatures; but this turning to God is as yet vague and confused; it is like homesickness for God; the soul longs to be united to Him and to possess Him. If it has not so far experienced quietude in its sweet form, the attraction is indistinct, the longing undefined, the uneasiness indefinable; but if it has already experienced the mystic union, the desire to return to it is clear and well-defined.

TRIALS WHICH ATTEND THE NIGHT OF THE SENSES

Spiritual writers generally give a terrifying account of these trials because they describe what transpires in the souls of the Saints. Some souls are called to bear heavy crosses, while others are not so severely tried. It is well to know this in order to be able to reassure timid souls who might fear to enter upon this path. It must be remembered that God proportions His graces to the severity of the trials.

Besides that persistent dryness of which we have spoken the soul also undergoes terrible temptations:

-against faith: feeling nothing, it imagines that it believes nothing

-against hope: deprived of consolations, it believes itself abandoned, and is tempted to weariness and discouragement.

-against chastity: to some is sent the tool of Satan, the spirit of impurity to buffet them with horrible and violent temptations of the flesh, to trouble their minds with filthy thoughts, and their imaginations with representations of sin most vividly depicted; at times an affliction more grievous than death.

-against patience; amidst all this weariness, the soul is tempted to complain of other or of self; blasphemies present themselves to the imagination in such a vivid manner that the tongue seems to utter them;

-against peace of soul: obsessed by a thousand scruples perplexities, the soul becomes so enmeshed in its own ideas that it can follow no advice nor yield to any reasoning; this is a source of most intense pain.

one-likewise suffers from the actions of others:

-at times from the repeated and varied persecutions of unbelievers; sometimes also from superiors or friends who, not being able to understand such a condition are unfavorably impressed by one's failures and persistent aridities.

-at other times from the spiritual director who either mistakes this state of soul for lukewarmness, or is unable to relieve such distress.

Evils from without come sometimes to add to this suffering from within:

- one becomes a prey to strange ailments which baffle physicians.

- one cannot succeed as one did before, on account of the helplessness in which one finds oneself, or because one is absorbed in these interior sufferings; one feels stupid and others become aware of the fact.

-at times one undergoes temporal losses which bring about a precarious situation. In a word, it seems as if heaven and earth had joined against this soul.

In many cases these, trials are natural and do not go beyond what God sends fervent souls in order to procure their perfection. But in other instances, these trials are really mystic: they are recognized by their suddenness, by their keenness, and by the good effects they produce in the soul.

See St. John of the Cross

ADVANTAGES OF THIS PURIFICATION

To be introduced into passive contemplation, even though it is dark and painful, is already a great benefit.

Other advantages:

The experiential knowledge of self and one's miseries. The soul counts itself for nothing, having no satisfaction in itself, because it sees of itself that it cannot do anything, and that it is nothing.

God esteems more highly this diminished satisfaction with self and the affliction the soul feels because it thinks it is not serving God, than He did all its former delights and all its good works, however great they may have been.

The soul learns to commune with God with more respect and reverence. In its prosperous days, the soul was less observant of reverence, for the favors it received, rendered it somewhat too bold with God.

The knowledge of God becomes purer and truer, and the love for Him more independent of feeling. The soul no longer seeks for consolations; it wants but to please God. It is not presumptuous and self-satisfied, as perhaps it may have been. Herein consists that holy fear wherein virtues grow.

The soul is also cured of the capital sins in their more refined form. The soul now practices humility not only toward God but toward its neighbor: Now seeing itself so parched and miserable, it does not enter into its thoughts, even for a moment, to consider itself better than others... on the contrary it acknowledges that others are better. Out of this grows the love of our neighbor, for it now esteems them, and no longer judges them as it used to.

Now it practices spiritual sobriety: since it can no longer feed upon sensible consolations, it gradually detaches itself from them, as well as from all created things, in order to concern itself solely with eternal goods, this is the beginning of spiritual peace which before was disturbed by consolations and attachments to creatures. in the midst of this peace, the soul exercises itself in fortitude, patience and longanimity, by persevering in practices which offer neither consolation nor attraction.

With regard to spiritual vices, such as envy, anger, sloth, the soul rids itself of them and acquires the contrary virtues: having become docile and humble under the influence of aridities and temptations, it becomes more tolerant with itself and with others; charity displaces envy, because humility causes the soul to admire the qualities of others; and the better it sees its own faults the more it feels constrained to labor and exert itself in order to correct them.

Lastly, God seasons these aridities with a certain amount of spiritual consolation. When the soul least expects it, He gives it vivid intellectual lights and a pure love. These favors are far superior to anything previously experienced, and more sanctifying, although at the beginning they do not appear so, because this divine influence remains hidden.

To sum up, these aridities make the soul advance in the pure love of God; it no longer acts under the influence of consolations, and its only wish is to please God. No more the presumption and vain complacency of former days of sensible fervor; no longer those impetuous actions, those over-ardent and natural aspirations. Spiritual peace has already begun to reign in the heart.

THE COURSE TO FOLLOW IN THIS TRIAL

The spiritual director must show such souls great kindness and devotedness. He must enlighten and comfort them by telling them frankly that this is a purifying ordeal, and that they come out of it better, purer, humbler, better grounded in virtue, and more pleasing to God.

The chief disposition which must be instilled into them is holy abandonment to God. They must kiss the hand that strikes them and join Jesus in His Agony: Father not My will but Yours be done."

In spite of dryness they must persevere in prayer, in union with Our Lord, Who being in agony, prayed the longer. Lk 22:43.

But there must be no return to discursive meditation once they have ascertained their inability to pray in that manner; they must keep their souls at rest, even though it may appear they are doing nothing, and they must be content with a peaceful and loving gaze on God.

"For if a man while sitting for his portrait cannot be still, but moves about, the painter will never depict his face, and even the work already done will be spoiled. In the same way, when the soul interiorly rests, every action and passion or anxious consideration at that time will distract and disturb it." St. John and so when God want to imprint His likeness upon their souls and suspends the activity of their faculties, they have but to abide in peace, and through this peace the spirit of love will flare up and burn more brightly within them. This state of repose is by no means one of inaction. It is rather a different kind of occupation which excludes sloth and languor. They must therefore expel distractions, and if in order to do so they must return to considerations, let them not hesitate, provided they can accomplish this without violent efforts.

As to the virtues, it is evident that they must continue to cultivate them, particularly those that are proper to their state: humility, self-denial, patience, charity towards other, love of God through conformity to His holy will and trustful prayer. They must practice all these virtues in a spirit of holy abandonment into the hand of God, and if they go about this courageously, this state of soul will prove a gold mine which will yield great profits.

The duration of this trial varies according to the designs of God, the degree of union to which He destines the soul, and the number imperfections from which must still be purified. Spiritual writers tell us that this may extend from 2-25 years. But there are intervals of respite during which the soul is at peace, enjoys God, and builds up strength for future combats.

St. Francis of Assisi - 2

St. Theresa of Avila - 18

Blessed Claire of Montefalco - 15 St. Catherine of Bologna - 5

St. Magdalen of Pazzi - 5 at first, 16 subsequently

These figures embrace no doubt the duration of the 2 nights which are generally divided by a notable interval of sweet consolations.

ILLUMINATIVE WAY

Life of the Proficient

Can look at proficients in terms of their knowledge and love of God. With their self-knowledge there is developed in them a quasi-experimental knowledge of God. They know Him, no longer merely in the mirror of the things of sense or of parables, but in the mirror of the mysteries of salvation, with which they become more and more familiar, and which the Rosary, the school of contemplation, sets daily before their eyes.

The greatness of God is contemplated now, no longer merely in the mirror of the starry heavens, in the sea or the mountains, no longer merely in the parables of the Good Shepherd or the Prodigal Son, but in the incomparably more perfect mirror of the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption.

The soul rises in a spiral movement, from the mystery of the Incarnation or the Infancy of Jesus, to those of His Passion, His Resurrection, His Ascension and His Glory; and in these mysteries it contemplates the radiance of the sovereign Goodness of God.

The proficient also contemplates the goodness of God in the things of nature and in the parables of the Gospel; but this is not the exercise proper to his condition, now that he has become familiar with the mysteries of salvation. But he has not yet attained, unless it be rarely and transitorily, to that circular movement whereby the perfect contemplate the divine goodness in itself.

In this contemplation which is more or less frequent, the proficients receive an abundance of light-in proportion to their fidelity and generosity, through the gift of understanding, which enables them to penetrate more and more deeply into these mysteries, and to appreciate their beauty, at once so simple and so sublime.

In the preceding period or stage, God had won over their sensibility; now He thoroughly subjugates their intelligence to Himself, raising it above the excessive preoccupations and complications of merely human knowledge. He simplifies their knowledge by spiritualizing it.

Accordingly, and as a normal consequence, these proficients being thus enlightened concerning the mysteries of the Life of Christ, love God, not only by avoiding mortal sin and deliberate venial sin, but by imitating the virtues of our Lord: His humility, gentleness, and patience especially; and by observing not only the commandments that are laid upon them and all, but also the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, or at any rate keeping the spirit of these counsels and avoiding any imperfections.

As happened in the preceding period, this generosity is rewarded, but no longer by merely sensible consolations, but by a greater abundance of light in contemplation and in the work of the apostolate; by intense desires for the glory of God-and the salvation of souls, and by a greater facility in prayer.

Not infrequently, we find in proficients the Prayer of Quiet, in which the will is momentarily held captive by the love of God.

This period is also marked by a great facility in doing works for God, such as teaching, directing, organizing, and the rest. This is love God not only with the whole heart, but with the whole soul, with the whole of one's activities; but not yet with the whole strength, nor with the whole of one's mind, because God has not yet achieved complete dominion in that higher region of the soul which we call the spirit.

What generally happens at this stage?

Let us first look at the prayer of those in the illuminative way:

THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF INFUSED CONTEMPLATION

Quietude

(Arid, Sweet)

Full Union

Ecstatic Union

(Sweet, Crucifying)

Transforming Union or Spiritual Marriage

The various degrees of contemplation are marked by a greater and greater hold of God on the soul.

When He takes possession of the subtle point of the soul, (the will), letting the lower faculties and the senses free to exercise their natural activity, we have the Prayer of Quiet. This prayer has 3 distinct phases: Passive recollection which is a preparation for it; quietude itself; and the sleep of the faculties, which completes it and prepares the soul for the full union of the faculties.

When God seizes all the interior faculties, leaving merely the exterior senses to their own activity, we have the Full Union.

If God takes possession at the same time of the interior faculties and of the exterior senses, we have Ecstatic Union (Spiritual Espousals). This union presents itself in 2 forms, the sweet and the bitter. In its sweet form it has 3 phases: simple ecstasy, rapture, and the flight of the spirit.

Lastly, once God extends His hold over all the internal and external faculties, and this no longer in a transitory manner, but in a stable and permanent fashion, we have Transforming Union or Spiritual Marriage.

THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF CONTEMPLATION

Infused contemplation is not the same in all persons. God, Who is pleased to vary His gifts and adapt them to the different temperaments and characters, does not confine His action within set forms; and so, when reading the mystics one finds very different forms of contemplation. However, there seems to be a certain unity running through all this multiplicity which has enabled spiritual writers to classify the principal stages traversed.

We will look mainly at what St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross have to say:

The various degrees of infused contemplation are marked by a greater and greater hold of God on the soul. When He takes possession of the subtle point of the soul, letting the lower faculties and the senses free to exercise their ' natural activity, we have the Prayer of Quiet.

When He seizes all the interior faculties, leaving merely the exterior senses to their own activity, we have the Full Union.

If He takes possession at the same time of their interior faculties and of the exterior senses, we have Ecstatic union (spiritual espousals).

Lastly, once He extends His hold over all the internal and external faculties, and this no longer in a transitory manner, but in a stable and permanent fashion, we have the spiritual marriage.

These are the four degrees of contemplation according to St. Teresa. St. John of the Cross adds to these the passive nights or trials; but the first night is but a species of quietude, arid and crucifying; the second night comprises the sum-total of trials which precede the spiritual marriage, and which are found in the full union and in the ecstatic union and full union (reverse).

THE PRAYER OF QUIET

This prayer generally begins in its arid form and terminates in its sweet form.

We have already discussed the passive night of the senses where infused contemplation, or the prayer of quiet is first experienced in its arid or crucifying form. Now let us look at Sweet Quietude.

Sweet Quietude

St. Teresa call this prayer by different names. It is the fourth Mansion of the Interior Castle. At times she calls it the prayer of Divine Delight, because it is here that for the first time the presence of God is felt by a kind of spiritual delight. She also calls it the Prayer of Quiet.

This prayer has 3 distinct phases: Passive recollection which is a preparation for it; quietude itself; the sleep of the faculties, which completes it and prepares the soul for the full union of the faculties.

Passive Recollection

This kind of recollection is called passive in order to distinguish it from active recollection, which is acquired by own efforts, aided by grace. Passive recollection is not obtained by means of the understanding laboring to consider God within itself, nor by the imagination representing Him with itself, but by a direct action of divine grace upon our faculties.

St. Teresa calls it the first supernatural prayer she experienced. "it is an inward recollection felt in the soul, seeming to it as though it possessed other senses analogous to the exterior ones. One wants to withdraw from the din of the latter; and one longs to close the eyes and neither hear nor see anything, nor be aware of anything but that which it does then, which is to converse all alone with God. In this state, the senses and faculties are not suspended; they remain in the soul's possession.

Passive recollection may therefore be defined as a gentle and affectionate absorption of the mind and the heart in God, produced by a special grace of the Holy Spirit.

This favor is ordinarily a prelude to the prayer of quiet; but it may be but transitory, as on certain occasions such as ordination, profession, or moments of great fervor, etc.

Course to Follow During This Prayer

"We should, without any violence or noise, keep the understanding from discoursing, but not suspend it, nor the imagination either; it is good for the soul to remember that it is in the presence of God, and who this God is. If what the understanding feels in itself absorbs it, well and good; but let it not try to understand what this is; for such a gift is bestowed on the will. Let the soul enjoy it without the interference of its own efforts, limiting itself to the utterance of some few words of love."

Quietude Properly So Called

In this prayer, the higher faculties of the soul, the intellect and the will, are seized by God and made to enjoy a very gentle repose and a very keen joy at His presence; but the understanding, the memory and the imagination remain free, and are at times a source of distractions.

"This is something supernatural which we cannot acquire by all our diligence, because it is a settling of the soul in peace; or rather, to speak more correctly, Our Lord leads her into peace, just as He did holy Simeon, for all the faculties are calmed. The soul understands, in a manner different from understanding by the exterior senses, that she is now placed near her God, and that in a very short time, she will become one with Him by union. This does not happen because she sees Him with the eyes of body or soul ... but she knows herself near the King, and the soul is so impressed with reverence that she dare not ask anything.

Here the will is a captive, and if she feel any pain in this state, it is to see that she is to return to her former liberty ... Nothing troubles those who are in this state and it seems nothing can do so. In a word, while this continues, they are so inebriated and absorbed with the delight and satisfaction contained here, that they remember not that there is nothing more to desire; and they exclaim with St. Peter: "Lord, let us make here three tabernacles."

Since the will alone is made captive, the other two faculties may wander. "The will must not heed them, but abide in the enjoyment of this pleasure and quiet; for it seeks to recollect them, it will also wander. it is especially the imagination that strays at these times and can make a lot of noise.

The spiritual joy produced in this state is quite different from that experienced in active prayer. The divine delights come directly from God and His action, while joys of active prayer come from our own activity aided by grace. St. Teresa says it is like the difference between filling up a cistern with water brought in from a distance through pipes and with much noise, and filling up a cistern, or a cistern being fed by a spring rising from its depths and filled noiselessly.

"The joys of, contemplation are far superior to those of active prayer: "When this heavenly water begins to rise from the source ... our whole interior seems to be enlarging and dilating, and producing certain delights which cannot be expressed. Neither can the soul understand what this is which is here given to her. A certain fragrance is infused ... St. Teresa states that such joys resemble those of heaven and that the soul loses all craving for the things of earth: "She sees clearly that even one moment of these pleasures cannot be purchased here below; and that no riches nor dominions, nor honors, nor delights are capable of giving such happiness even for one instant, because this joy is real, and we feel it satisfies us..."

The principal cause of this joy is the Presence of God felt.

"God, for His greatness' sake, is pleased that this soul should now understand that His Divine Majesty is so close to her, that there is no need of sending any messenger to her; that she but needs to speak, herself, to Him, though not by word of mouth, since, being so near to her He understands her even by the sole motion of her lips." of course the Saint goes on to say that God is ever with us; but it is question here os a special presence: "The Divine Sovereign, Our Master, wishes we should here understand that

He knows' us, and that we should feel the effects of His presence; that He particularly wishes to begin to work in our soul by giving her a great interior and exterior satisfaction."

This dilation of the heart produces excellent virtuous dispositions, particularly a fear of offending God (which replaces fear of hell) love of penance and of crosses, humility and contempt for worldly joys.

Definition

From this we can conclude that quietude is a supernatural state of prayer, not wholly passive, which is produced in the superior part of the soul and causes the latter to feel and relish God present within it.

It is a supernatural state of prayer, that is to say, infused. It is not wholly passive since only the will is seized (with the intellect), while the power of reasoning and imagination remain free to roam.

Origin and Growth of Quietude

Generally speaking, this form of prayer is granted to souls that are already accustomed to meditation for a notable period of time, and have passed through the night of the senses (except in the case of innocent souls and children who have no need of a special purification.

At first it is granted at intervals, and in a rather faint and unconscious manner; it is of short duration, lasting for instance for the space of a Hail Mary. Later on it becomes more frequent and more prolonged, extending over a half-hour. But since it does not always come suddenly nor stop abruptly, it may from its first inception to its final cessation, endure for a full hour or even longer. Moreover, when it is active, and accompanied by spiritual inebriation, it may continue through an entire day or even two, without in way interfering with the ordinary occupations.

As long as the purification of the soul is not completed, quietude may occur alternately in its sweet or in arid form.

A time comes when quietude becomes habitual: then one enters into it from the moment one begins to pray. At times one is even seized by it unawares, even in the midst of the most common place occupations. It also tends to become stronger and more conscious, and if the soul corresponds with grace, it develops into the full union and ecstasy. But if the soul is not faithful, it may fail and fall back into discursive meditation, or even suffer the loss of grace.

Forms or Varieties of Quietude

There are 3 principal forms: silent, praying and active quietude.

In silent quietude, the soul contemplates God in the midst of a loving stillness, admiration so to speak stifling every utterance. The will immersed in God, and burning with love for Him rests joyfully in Him through a union that is calm, tranquil and sweet.

At times the soul, unable to contain its love, pours itself forth in ardent prayer. This is praying quietude: now it gives vent to sweet colloquies, now it abandons itself to the effusions of its tenderness and calls upon all creatures to praise God.

In this state, St. Teresa composed stanzas to describe her love and her suffering. Sometimes God responds to such outburst of love with affectionate caresses, which produce a species of spiritual inebriation. According to St. Francis de Sales, this heavenly intoxication renders us more alive to spiritual things by alienating the corporal senses; it renders us participators of the angelic, and even of the divine, nature; it transports us out of ourselves to elevate us above ourselves.

There are cases in which quietude becomes active. When the quietude is profound and prolonged, since the will alone is held captive, the other faculties are free to attend to things relating to God's service; and this they do with far greater energy. While the soul is engaged in exterior works, it continues to love God ardently: this is the union of action and contemplation, of the service of Martha and the love of Mary.

The Sleep of the Faculties

This third phase of quietude is a still higher form of prayer which prepares for the full union of the interior faculties with God. St. Teresa describes this in the 17th chapter of her autobiography:

"Now I often have this kind of union whereof I am speaking; and Almighty God is very often pleased to bestow this favor upon me in such a manner, that He makes my will and also my understanding recollected; and then it no longer discourses, but is occupied in the enjoyment of God, as one who is looking on, and who sees so much, that he know not which way to look ... The memory remains free and so also seems to be the imagination, and when it sees itself alone one cannot conceive what a war it makes upon the will and the understanding, and how it endeavors to put everything into confusion ... As to the means of overcoming such wanderings: "Consider the memory no better than a mad man and leave it alone with its madness for only God can check its extravagances. "

This is a prayer of quiet in which the understanding and the will are seized by God, but in which the imagination still continues to wander. It is a preparation for the full union.

Course to Follow During the Prayer of Quiet

The general disposition to be fostered in this state is that of humble abandonment into the hands of God from the very beginning to the end and through all the phases of this prayer.

One must not make efforts to put oneself into this state since only God can grant this contemplation.

As soon as one is aware of the Divine action, one must adapt oneself to it as perfectly as possible, giving up reflection and following the motions of grace with great docility.

In being called to the loving silence, no violent efforts or words should be made that would extinguish this state.

If we are inclined to make acts, if our affections burst forth as from a spring, let us pray gently, but with an ardent desire to be heard. St. Francis de Sales says we must avoid violent, immoderate outbursts which weary the heart and the nerves, as well as those disturbing reflections by which we try to discover whether the tranquility we enjoy is indeed tranquil.

If the understanding and the imagination wander, let us not be disturbed. Do not go in pursuit of them. Let the will remain in the enjoyment of the favor that has been granted, (just as bees would never produce honey if they went in pursuit of one another.

THE PRAYER OF FULL UNION

This prayer which corresponds to the Fifth Mansion, is called simple union or full union of the interior faculties because in it, the soul is united to God not only through the will, but also through all the interior faculties. It is therefore more perfect than the Prayer of Quiet.

Nature of the Prayer of Union

Its characteristics are two: the suspension of all the faculties, and the absolute certitude that God is present in the soul. St. Teresa describes this:

...God makes this soul quite stupid, in order the better to imprint upon her true wisdom; hence she neither sees nor hears nor understands, nor perceives all the time she is in this state, which is always short; and, indeed, it seems to her shorter than it is."

In other words, not only the will, but the understanding, the imaginations, and the memory are suspended in their functions. St. Teresa goes on:

"God so fixes Himself in the interior of the soul that when she comes to herself, she cannot but believe she was in God and that God was in her. This truth is so deeply rooted in her, that though many years may pass before God bestows the like favor upon her, she never forgets it or doubts it."

From these 2 characteristics, 3 others flow:

The absence of distractions since the whole soul is entirely absorbed in God.

The absence of fatigue: personal effort is reduced to very little; to abandon oneself to the good pleasure of God suffices. The Manna of Heaven falls upon the soul, which has but to enjoy it; and so this prayer, no matter how long it may endure, causes no injury to health.

An extraordinary abundance of joy. In this degree, one feels nothing, one but enjoys, though yet without understanding what is enjoyed. One knows though that a certain good is possessed in which all blessings are present. All the senses are occupied with this joy in such a manner that they cannot apply themselves to anything else either interiorly or exteriorly..." St. Teresa says that a simple moment of such pure delights suffices to compensate for all earthly sufferings.

This prayer is then defined as: a most intimate union of the soul with God, accompanied by the suspension of all the interior faculties, and of the certitude of God's presence within the soul.

Effects of the Prayer of Union

The principal effect of the Prayer of Union is a marvelous transformation of the soul, which, according to St. Teresa can be compared to the metamorphosis of the silk-worm.

The transformation that takes place in the soul can especially be seen in relation to the Cross. This soul, which before feared the Cross, now feels full of generosity, and is ready to make the most painful sacrifices for God's sake.

Here the soul comes to an ardent zeal for the glory of God, the desire to make Him known and loved by all. There is also detachment now from creatures whereby the soul goes so far now as to even desire to quit this world where God is so often offended. Perfect submission to God's will now becomes present, wherein the soul offers no more resistance to grace than soft wax to the seal impressed upon it. Also here is great charity toward the neighbor, manifested in deeds and rejoicing at the praises conferred upon others.

This union is the prelude to another still more perfect one. It is like the first meeting with the betrothed, soon to be followed, if grace is corresponded with, by the spiritual espousal and the mystical marriage.

St. Teresa urges those in this state to make progress in the way of detachment and love. Any halt here would result in laxity and backsliding.

THE ECSTATIC UNION (SPIRITUAL ESPOUSAL)

This union presents itself in 2 forms, the sweet and the bitter.

Sweet Ecstatic Union

The word ecstasy refers simply to the suspension of the activity of the exterior senses. Ecstatic union is therefore more perfect than the two preceding ones, since it comprises over and above the elements peculiar to the former (suspension of the interior faculties), the suspension of the activity of the exterior senses.

Nature of the Ecstatic Union

There are two elements which constitute this union: the absorption of the soul in God and the suspension of the activity of the senses. It is because the soul is wholly absorbed in God that the outward senses appear to be riveted on Him or on the object which He presents to them.

Two principal causes give rise to this absorption in God: St. Francis de Sales:

"Our admiration is excited when we discover a truth with which we were not previously acquainted, and did not expect to know. When beauty and goodness are joined to this truth, the admiration produced by the discovery is extremely pleasing ... Thus, when it pleases God to enlighten the understanding of the devout soul, and to raise her to an extraordinary degree of contemplation, she sees the divine mysteries more clearly and perfectly than before, and discovers in them new beauties and attractions which fill her with admiration ... when the subject of admiration is pleasing, the mind is closely attached thereto, not only on account of its great beauty, but also because of the fact that this great beauty has been newly discovered; it cannot be satiated with contemplating what it had never seen before, and finds so lovely."

"To admiration is joined love: "God touches the will by the attractions of His sweetness, and the will, inflamed with love, quickly forgets its terrestrial inclinations to bound towards God and to be totally absorbed in Him, as a needle which has been touched with a loadstone seems to forget its natural insensibility to turn to the pole. The predominant features of this kind of rapture are not knowledge, sublime visions, admiration and speculative science, but affection, sensible consolation and enjoyment. (Must be noted here that sensible consolation here is different from that experienced in beginning of the spiritual life. It is rather an overflow of the spiritual into the senses, which have been purified to be able to receive some the consolations of the spirit.)

Moreover, admiration grows through love, and love through admiration:

"The understanding is sometimes replenished with admiration at the view of the happiness enjoyed by the will in its ecstasy; and the will often receives a new degree of pleasure from witnessing the admiration of the understanding, so that these two powers mutually communicate their rapture."

It is not surprising that a soul thus given to contemplation and the love of God, is as it were out of itself, ravished- and borne towards Him. If one who lets himself be carried away by the passion of human love goes so far as to abandon all in order to yield himself to the object of his love, - is there any cause to wonder if divine love, impressed

upon a soul by God Himself, so absorbs it that it comes to forget all else in order to behold and to love Him alone?

The suspension of the senses is the outcome of this absorption in God. It takes place gradually and does not reach the same degree in all.

As regards the senses:

-At first a more or less pronounced state of insensibility sets in together with a slowing down of the physical life, of breathing, and as a consequence, of natural body heat: "One feels that natural warmth wanes, and that the body gradually cools, but with a gentleness and delight that are unspeakable."

- A sort of immobility ensues which causes the body to preserve the attitude in which it was when seized by the ecstasy; the eyes remain fixed on some invisible object.

-This condition, which should naturally weaken the body, rather imparts to it new energies. True, at the moment of returning consciousness one feels a certain sense of fatigue, but this is followed by a ----- of vigor.

-At times the suspension of the senses is complete; at others it remains incomplete and permits a narration of the revelations received, as with St. Catherine of Siena

The interior senses are still more completely suspended than in the mystic union of which we have already spoken. Free will remains and therefore the soul in ecstasy can merit. It freely accepts the favors bestowed.

-The duration of the ecstasy varies greatly. Complete ecstasy generally lasts but a few minutes, at time a half- hour. But since it is preceded and followed by moments of incomplete ecstasy, it may extend over several days if all its fluctuations are taken into account.

-One comes out of the ecstasy by a reawakening, spontaneous or provoked: in the first instance one experiences a kind. of anguish, as if one were returning from another world, and then it is but gradually that the soul regains its control over the body.

In the second case, the reawakening is provoked by the command of a superior. if this command is vocal, it is always obeyed. if it is mental, it is not always answered.

THE THREE PHASES OF ECSTATIC UNION

There are 3 principal phases in ecstasy: simple ecstasy, rapture, and the flight of the spirit.

Simple ecstasy is a sort of fainting spell which comes on gently and produces a sense of hurt at once painful and delightful. The Spouse of the soul makes it feel His presence,

but only for a time. Now the soul wants to have the joy of this Divine presence continually and therefore suffers when deprived of it. Nevertheless, this enjoyment is always more delightful now than it was in the prayer of quiet.

Rapture takes hold of the soul with an impetuosity and a violence that are irresistible. It is as if one were carried on the wings of a powerful eagle, but whither one knows not. In spite of the pleasure experienced, natural weakness at first causes a sense of fear. "But this fear is mixed with an ardent and fresh love for Him Who show such tender love to a worm that is nothing but corruption."

It is in the state of rapture that the spiritual espousal is concluded; and this is a precaution of the part of God; for were one to preserve the use of one's senses, one would perhaps die at seeing oneself so near to that Supreme Majesty.

Once the rapture is over, the will remains as it were inebriated, and can no longer occupy itself save with God; disgusted with the things of earth, it has an insatiable desire to do penance, so much so that it complains in the absence of suffering.

Rapture is followed by the flight of the Spirit, which is so impetuous that it seems to sever the soul from the body, and resistance appears impossible.

St. Theresa: "It seems to the soul, that she has been altogether in another region quite different from this world in which we live, and there another light is shown to her very different from this here below; and though she should employ all her life long in trying to form an idea of this and other wonders, yet it would be impossible to understand them. She is in an instant taught so many things together, that should she spend many years in arranging them in her thoughts, and imagination, she could not remember the one-thousandth of them."

Principal Effects of Ecstatic Union

The one effect which includes all others, is a great holiness of life, even to the point of heroism. So true is this, that where such holiness does not exist, the ecstasy itself is open to suspicion.

The principal virtues produced by the ecstatic union are: . perfect detachment from creatures. It so clearly sees the nothingness of things here below that it does not wish to have any will of its own; it would even wish to forego the possession of free-will were that possible.

An immense sorrow for sins wherein it is pained greatly not at the fear of hell but at offense to God.

A frequent and tender vision of Our Lord's Sacred Humanity. and of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

A wonderful companionship indeed: Jesus and Mary. Imaginative and intellectual visions become more numerous and complete the work of detaching the soul from creatures and of burying it in humility.

A marvelous patience to withstand courageously the new passive trials which Almighty God sends, and which are called the purification of love.

Burning with the desire to see God, the soul feels as if it were pierced through and through by a fiery dart, and cries out in anguish at seeing itself separated from the sole object of its love. This is the beginning of a veritable martyrdom, a martyrdom of soul and body, accompanied by an ardent desire to die so as never to be separated from the well-Beloved, a martyrdom relieved at times by inebriating delights.

DANGERS AND IMPERFECTIONS FOUND IN THE ILLUMINATIVE WAY

LUKEWARMNESS

During this time, faults and imperfections still have to be reacted against, else we risk the danger of falling into lukewarmness.

Lukewarmness is a spiritual malady that may attack beginners or even perfect souls, but which manifests itself especially in the course of the illuminative way. It presupposes in fact that a soul has already reached a certain degree of fervor, and that it gradually allows itself to become lax.

Lukewarmness consists in a sort of spiritual languor which saps the energies of the will, inspires one with a horror for effort and thus leads to the decline of the Christian life. It is a kind of sluggishness, a species of torpor, though not death as yet, which leads insensibly to it, through a gradual weakening of our moral forces. It is like consumption, a slow-working disease.

Causes

A defective spiritual nourishment, and the entry into the soul of some noxious germ.

To live and grow, our soul needs wholesome spiritual food. Now the soul is nourished by the various spiritual exercises, that is meditation, devout reading, prayer, examinations of conscience, the fulfilment of the duties of state, exercise in the practice of the virtues—all of which keep it in communion with God, the Source of spiritual life.

If these exercises are performed with negligence, with voluntary distractions, without efforts to react against routine or sluggishness, the soul is deprived of many graces, is poorly nourished, and becomes weak and incapable of practicing the virtues of the Christian life in face of even little difficulties.

Must note in passing that this condition is altogether different from that dryness of affliction of soul permitted by God to try us. In these, instead of welcoming distractions, one experiences pain and humiliation at having them, and one earnestly seeks to avoid them. The lukewarm, on the contrary, lets himself be carried along by useless thoughts, takes pleasure in them, hardly makes any effort to be rid of them, and soon distractions well-nigh overrun his prayers.

Then seeing how little profit he derives from his exercises of piety, he begins to shorten them, and in time suppresses them entirely. Thus, his examination of conscience, becoming wearisome, irksome, a mere matter of routine, ends by being omitted; he is no longer aware of his faults, of his defects, and he allows them to gain the upper hand. He no longer strives to grow in virtue, and soon his vices, his inordinate inclinations, tend to revive.

The outcome of this spiritual apathy is the gradual weakening of the soul—a species of spiritual anemia—which paves the way for the entrance of some destructive germ, that is to say, one of the three concupiscences, or perhaps all of them at once.

The avenues of the soul being poorly guarded, the exterior and interior senses readily lay themselves open to the unwholesome suggestions of curiosity and sensuality, and frequent temptations arise only to be half-repulsed. At times the heart yields itself to the current of disturbing affections; one commits imprudences and courts danger; venial sins are multiplied and hardly regretted; one glides down a perilous grade, skirts the abyss, and is extremely fortunate to avoid a fall.

Pride renews its onslaughts. one begins to indulge in self-complacency, to delight in exterior qualities, in outward successes. The better to exalt self, one makes comparisons with others still more lax than oneself, and despises as narrow and small-minded those who are more faithful to duty. This pride brings in its wake envy, jealousy, impatience, anger and harshness in relations with others.

Avarice is rekindled in the heart. one feels the need of money to secure more pleasures, to make a greater impression, and to provide more of it one has recourse to questionable means, which border on injustice.

Hence, innumerable venial sins are committed for which one scarcely feels any compunction since the light of judgment and delicacy of conscience have been gradually weakened. Horror for sin diminishes, God's graces become more rare and the profit derived from them smaller. There is a weakening of the spiritual organism which prepares the way for shameful surrenders.

There are many degrees in lukewarmness, but it is enough to distinguish incipient from extreme lukewarmness. in the first instance, one as yet preserves horror for mortal sin, though committing imprudences that may lead to them. one easily commits deliberate sin (venial), such as correspond to one's predominant fault.

By dint of allowing oneself to drift into such culpable negligences, one ceases to harbor the old instinctive horror for mortal sin. On the other hand, the love of pleasure so increases that one comes to regret the fact that such or such a pleasure is forbidden under the pain of grave sin. One repels temptations but feebly, and a moment comes when one asks, not without reason, whether or not one is still in a state of grace.

Lukewarmness is such that it causes a gradual weakening of soul's energies, a blinding of the conscience which leads to a lax conscience, and a gradual weakening of the will.

It is difficult to repair since it occurs almost insensibly. One lets oneself slide, so to speak into the abyss, without any great shock. Then one easily practices self-deception as to the gravity of its faults.

In this manner, a false conscience is formed and the regular confessor may be deceived because only trivial matters are revealed. This may even begin a long series of sacrileges. When a ball falls from on high, it rebounds. When it rolls down to the bottom, it stays there.

Remedies

Our Lord Himself pointed out the remedies: "I counsel these to buy of Me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich (the gold of charity and fervor of spirit) and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear (purity of conscience); and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see (frankness toward oneself and one's confessor). Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous therefore, and do penance. Behold, I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup, with him, and he with me." Rev. 3: 18-20

We must never despair therefore. Jesus is, ever ready to help.

To be converted, one must have recourse to a wise confessor and frequently and frankly open one's soul to him, following his counsels with energy and constancy.

One will also, under his guidance, return to the practice of exercises of piety, the practice of the virtues, and fulfillment of one's duties of state. Through these means, one will regain fervor and enter back on the way of atonement and penance.

THE NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT

The Passive Purgation of the Spirit

The first night (of the senses) purified the soul to make it ready for the joys of quietude, of union and of ecstasy. But before entering into the still purer and more lasting, joys of the spiritual marriage, there is need of a more profound and radical purification which generally takes place in the course of the ecstatic union.

Review

If God intends to lead the soul on, He does not put it in this dark night of spirit immediately after its' going out from the aridities and trials of the first purgation and night of sense. Instead, after having emerged from the state of beginners, it usually spends many years exercising itself in the state of proficients. In this new state, as one liberated from a cramped prison cell, the soul goes about the things of God with much more freedom and satisfaction of spirit and with more abundant interior delight than it did in the beginning before entering the night of sense. Its imagination and faculties are no longer bound to discursive meditation and spiritual solicitude, as was their custom. The soul readily finds in its spirit, without the work of meditation, a very serene, loving contemplation and spiritual delight.

Nonetheless, since the purgation of the soul is not complete, certain needs, aridities, darknesses, and conflicts are felt. These are sometimes far more intense than those of the past and are like omens or messengers of the coming night of the spirit.

But they are not lasting, as they will be in the night that is to come. For after enduring the short period or periods of time, or even days, in this night and tempest, the soul immediately -returns to its customary serenity. This is a dark contemplation and spiritual purgation which assails the soul at intervals. But this is never as intense as is that frightful night of contemplation in which God purposely places the soul whom He intends to bring to the divine union.

The delight and interior gratification which these proficients enjoy abundantly and readily, is communicated more copiously to them that-- previously and consequently overflows into the senses more than was usual before the sensory purgation. Since the sensory part of the soul is now purer, it can, after its own mode, experience the delights of the spirit more easily.

But since the sensory part of the soul is weak and incapable of vigorous spiritual communications, these proficients, because of such communications experienced in the sensitive part, suffer many infirmities, injuries, and weakness of stomach, and as a result, fatigue of spirit. As the Wise Man says: "The corruptible body is a load upon the soul." Wis 9:15

Consequently, the communications imparted to proficients cannot be as strong, or intense or spiritual as that which is required for the divine union, because they are still weak and corrupt.

Thus we have raptures and transports and the dislocation of bones, which always occur when the communications are not purely spiritual (communicated to the spirit alone) as are those of the perfect, who are already purified in the night of the spirit. For in the perfect, these raptures and bodily torments cease, enjoy freedom of spirit without a detriment to or transport of their senses.

To point out why these proficient must enter this night of spirit, we shall note some of their imperfections and some of the dangers they confront.

Imperfections of Proficients

The imperfections of proficient are of two kinds: habitual and actual.

The habitual are the imperfect affections and habits still remaining like roots in the spirit. The first purgation was like trimming branches. This purgation is like pulling up roots. The purgation of the senses is only the gate to and beginning of the contemplation which leads to the purgation of spirit.

Proficients also have the natural dullness everyone contracts through sin, and a distracted and inattentive spirit. The spirit must be illumined and clarified and recollected by the means of the hardships and conflicts of this night. All those who have not passed beyond the state of proficient possess these habitual imperfections which cannot, as we said, coexist with the perfect state of Divine Love.

Not all proficient fall into actual imperfections in the same way. Some encounter greater difficulties and dangers than those we've mentioned, for their experience of these goods in the senses is so exterior and easily come by. Since they receive such abundance of spiritual communications and apprehensions in the sensory and spiritual parts of their souls and frequently behold imaginative and spiritual visions (for all of this plus other delightful feelings are the lot of those who are in this state, and a soul is often tricked through them by its own fantasy as well as by the devil), and since the devil is so pleased to suggest to souls and impress upon them apprehensions and feelings, these proficient are easily charmed and beguiled, if they are not careful to renounce these things and energetically defend themselves through faith.

This is the stage in which the devil induces many into believing vain visions and false prophecies. He strives to make them presume that God and the saints speak with them; and frequently they believe their own fantasy. It is here that the devil customarily fills them with pride and presumption.

Drawn by vanity and arrogance, they will allow themselves to be seen in exterior acts of apparent holiness, such as raptures and other exhibitions. They become audacious with God and lose holy fear which is the key to and guardian of all virtues. Illusions and deceptions so multiply in some of them and they become so inveterate in them, that it is very doubtful whether they will return to the pure road of virtue and authentic spirituality. They fall into these miseries by being too secure in their surrender to these apprehensions and spiritual feelings; and this, just when they were beginning to make progress.

No proficient however strenuous his efforts, will avoid many of these natural affections and imperfect habits; and these must be purified before he passes on to the divine union.

Furthermore, to reach this union, the soul must enter the second night of the spirit. In this night both the sensory and spiritual parts are despoiled of all these apprehensions and delights, and the soul is made to walk in dark and pure faith, which is the proper and adequate means to divine union, as God says through Osee: "I will espouse you to Me through faith." Os 2:20

This dark night is an inflow of God into the soul, which purges it of its habitual ignorances and imperfections, natural and spiritual. Through this contemplation, God teaches the soul secretly and instructs it in the perfection of love without its doing anything not understanding how this happens.

This dark contemplation is painful to the soul in its beginnings. Since this divine infused contemplation has many extremely good properties and the still unpurged soul that receives it has many miseries, and because two contraries cannot co-exist, the soul necessarily undergoes affliction and suffering. Because of the purgation of its imperfections caused by this contemplation, the soul becomes a battlefield in which these two contraries combat one another.

In regard to the first cause of one's affliction: because the light and wisdom of this contemplation is very bright and pure, and the soul in which it shines is dark and impure, a person will be deeply afflicted in receiving it within himself. When eyes are sickly, impure and weak, they suffer pain if a bright light shines on them.

The soul, because of its impurity, suffers immensely at the time this divine light truly assails it. When this pure light strikes in order to expel all impurity, a person feels so unclean and wretched that it seems God is against him and that he is against God.

Because it seems that God has rejected it, the soul suffers such pain and grief that when God tried Job in this way it proved one of the worst of Job's trials: Why have You se me against You, and I am heave and burdensome to myself. Job 7:20

Clearly beholding its impurity by means of this pure light, although in darkness, the soul understands distinctly that it is worthy neither of God nor of any creature. And what most grieves it is that it thinks it will never be worthy, and that there are no more blessings for it. This divine and dark light causes deep immersion of the mind in the knowledge and feeling of one's own miseries and evils; it brings all these miseries into relief so that the soul sees clearly that of itself it will never possess anything else. We can understand David in this sense:

"You have corrected man because of his iniquity and have undone and consumed his soul, as a spider is eviscerated in its work." Ps 38:12

A person suffers affliction also because of his natural, moral and spiritual weakness. Since this divine contemplation assails him somewhat forcibly in order to subdue and strengthen the soul, he suffer so much in his weakness that he almost dies, particularly at times when the light is more powerful. Both the sense and the spirit, as though under

an immense load, undergo such agony and pain that the soul would consider death a relief. Job, having experienced this declared:

"I do not desire that He commune with me with much strength, that he might not overwhelm me with the weight of His greatness." Job 23:6

Under the stress of this oppression and weight, a man feels' so much a stranger to being favored that he thinks, and so it is, that even that which previously upheld him has ended along with everything else, and that there is no one who will take pity on him. It is in this sense that Job cried out: "Have pity on me,- at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord has touched me." (Job 19:21)

How amazing and pitiful it is that the soul be so utterly weak and impure that the hand of God, though light and gentle, should feel so heavy and contrary. For the hand of God does not press down or weigh upon the soul, but only touches it, and this mercifully, for God's aim is to grant it favors and not chastise it.

OTHER AFFLICTIONS SUFFERED IN THIS NIGHT

Two extremes here, the divine and human which are joined. Since the divine extreme strikes in order to renew the soul and divinize it, it so disentangles and dissolves the spiritual substance, absorbing it in a profound darkness, that the soul at the sight of its miseries feels that it is melting away and being undone by a cruel spiritual death; it feels as if it were swallowed by a beast and being digested in the dark belly, and it suffers an anguish comparable to Jonah's when in the belly of the whale. Jonah 2:1-3

It is fitting that the soul be in this sepulcher of dark death in order that it attain the spiritual resurrection for which it hopes.

David describes this suffering and affliction-although it is truly beyond all description-when he says: "The sighs of death encircled me, the sorrows of hell surrounded me, in my tribulation I cried out." Ps 17:5-7

In this night, the intellect is purged of its light, the will is purged of its affections and the memory is purged or annihilated of its discursive knowledge.

The soul experiences its own poverty to a painful degree and also feels forsaken and despised by creatures, particularly by his friends, whom God seems to withdraw from him: David says: "You have taken away all my friends and made me hateful in their sight." Ps 87:9.

God purges both the sensory and spiritual substance of the soul and its interior and exterior faculties, in order to bring it into emptiness, poverty and abandonment. The sensory part is purified by aridity, the faculties by the void of their apprehensions, and the spirit by the thick, darkness.

God humbles the soul greatly in order to exalt it greatly afterwards. And if He did not ordain that these feelings when quickened in the soul, by soon put to sleep again, a person would die in a few days. only at intervals is one aware of these feelings in all their intensity. And sometimes the experience is so vivid, that it seems to the soul that it sees hell and perdition open before it.

These are the ones who go - down into hell alive Ps. 54:16. Since their purgation on earth is similar to that of purgatory the soul that endures it here, either does not enter purgatory, or does so only for a short time. It gains more in one hour here on earth by this purgation, than it would by many there .

So numerous and burdensome are the pains of this night, and so many the Scriptural passages that could be cited, that much cannot be included in this description. One ought to have deep compassion for the soul whom God puts into this tempestuous and frightful night. For they believe their evil will never end.

Added to this, because of the solitude and desolation this night causes, the soul can find neither comfort nor support in any doctrine or spiritual director. He believes that his spiritual director, even though he may point out what is happening and try to comfort him, does not understand him nor see and feel what he sees and feels. There seems no remedy for him in his affliction.

He also is grieved and troubled because, owing to the fact that his faculties and affections are impeded by this dark night, he cannot beseech God nor raise his mind or affection to Him.

Indeed, this is not the time to speak with God, but the time to put one's mouth in the dust, as Jeremiah says, that perhaps there might come some actual hope, Lam 3:29 It is the time to suffer this purgation patiently. Since it is God Himself working in the soul, the soul can do nothing. Consequently, a person can neither pray vocally, nor be attentive to spiritual matters, nor still less attend to temporal affairs and business. Furthermore, he frequently experiences such absorption -and profound forgetfulness of memory, that long periods pass without his knowing what he did or thought, about, nor is he able to concentrate on the task at hand.

This night is a painful disturbance involving many fears imaginings, and struggles within a man. Due to the apprehension and feelings of his miseries he suspects that he is lost and that his blessings are gone forever. .

A man suffers all these afflictive purgations of spirit, that he may be reborn in the life of the spirit by means of this divine inflow ...

This war or combat is exceeding profound because the peace awaiting the soul must be exceeding profound; and the spiritual suffering is intimate and penetrating because the love to be possessed by the soul will also be intimate and refined.

Although a person suffering this purgation knows that he loves God and that he would give a thousand lives for Him (he would indeed, for souls undergoing these trials love God very earnestly), he finds no relief. This knowledge causes him even more affliction ... for even though He loves God so that nothing else gives him concern, he is unable to believe that God loves him.

Obviously, this crisis, like the preceding one, is not without its dangers. It calls for great courage and vigilance for a faith reaching to heroism and a hope against hope - that transforms itself into perfect abandonment. He who passes through this crisis, loves God not only with all his heart and soul but with all his strength, with all his mind, an adored in spirit and truth.

UNITIVE WAY

Happy Results of the Purification of the Spirit

St. John of the Cross:

This blessed night, though it darkens the mind, does so only to give it light in everything; and though it humbles it and makes it miserable, it does so only to raise it up and set it free; and though it impoverishes it and empties it of all its natural self and liking, it does so only to enable it to reach forward divinely to the possession and fruition of all things. To explain these effects, the Saint makes use of the comparison of a piece of green wood thrown into the fireplace...

There are 4 principal effects:

-an ardent love for God. From the very outset of this night, this love existed in the superior part of the soul, though unknown to itself; a time comes however when God makes the soul aware of its love and then it is ready to dare all things in order to please Him.

-a piercing light: at first this light revealed to the soul only its miseries and thus inflicted pain; but once imperfections have been eliminated through sorrow, it reveals the riches to be gained and thus becomes a source of consolation.

-a great sense of security; for this light preserves the soul from pride, the great obstacle to salvation. It shows it that it is God Himself Who leads it, and that the suffering he sends is more profitable than joy would be. Lastly this light places in the will the firm determination to do nothing that might offend God, to neglect nothing that redounds to His glory.

-a marvelous strength to climb the ten stepping stones of divine love which St. John of the Cross is pleased to describe, and upon which the soul must meditate in order to conceive an idea of the wondrous ascents which lead up to the transforming union.

From John of the Cross (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1973)

The first step makes the soul sick (in an advantageous way) for the Beloved. "I conjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, if you encounter my Beloved, to tell Him that I am lovesick." Song 5:8

The second step causes a person to look for God unceasingly. I shall rise up and seek Him whom my soul loves." Song3:1-2

The third step prompts the soul to the performance of works and gives it fervor that it might not fail. "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, because in His commandments he longs to work." Ps. 111:1 He feels great sorrow about the little he does for God ...

On the fourth step, a habitual yet unwearisome suffering is engendered on account of the Beloved. All its care is directed to how it might give God some service and render Him some pleasure. Consolation and satisfaction are not sought.

The fifth step of this ladder of love imparts desire and longing for God to such an extent that any delay no matter how slight is long and tiresome to the soul. "My soul longs and faints for the swelling places of the Lord." Ps. 83:2

The sixth step makes the soul run swiftly toward God and experience many touches in Him. And it runs without fainting by reason of its hope. The love that has invigorated it makes it fly swiftly: "The saints who hope in God shall renew their strength. They shall take wings like the eagle and shall fly and not faint.." Is 40:31 "As the heart desires running waters, so does my soul desire Thee my God." Ps 41:2

The seventh step gives the soul an ardent boldness. At this stage love neither profits by the judgment to wait nor makes use of the counsel to retreat, neither can it be curbed through shame. For the favor God now gives it imparts an ardent daring. Hence the Apostle says: "Charity believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things." ICor. 13:7 Moses.-spoke from this step when he besought God to forgive the people or else strike his name from the book of life. Ex-32:31-32. The soul here obtains from God what it asks of Him with pleasure. Thus David declares: "Delight in God and He will grant you the petitions of your heart." Ps 36:4 But on these steps it must always preserve humility.

The eighth step of love impels the soul to lay hold of the Beloved without letting Him go: "I found Him Whom my heart and soul loves. I held Him and did not let Him go." Song 3:4

The ninth causes the soul to burn gently. it is the step of the perfect who burn gently in God. The Holy Spirit produces this gentle and delightful ardor by reason of the perfect soul's union with God. St. Gregory accordingly says of the Apostles that when the Holy Spirit came upon them visibly, they burned interiorly and gently with love.

We cannot speak of the goods and riches of God a man enjoys here because were we to write many books about them, the greater part would remain unsaid.

This step is succeeded by the tenth step, which is no longer of this life.

The tenth and last step of this secret ladder of love assimilates the soul to God completely because of the clear vision of God which a person possesses as soon as he reaches it. After reaching the ninth step in this life, the soul departs from the body. Since these souls, few that they are, are already extremely purged through love, they do not enter purgatory. As we mentioned, this vision is the cause of the soul's complete likeness to God. St. John says: We know we shall be like Him." I Jn 3:2 not because the soul will have as much capacity as God-impossible-but because all that it is will become like God. Thus it will be called, and shall be, God through participation.

On this last step of clear vision at the top of the ladder, where God rests , nothing is any longer hidden from the soul because of its total assimilation. Accordingly our Saviour exclaimed: "On that day you will not ask Me anything. in 16:23

THE TRANSFORMING UNION OR SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

(Tanquerey 1923)

After so many purification, the soul at last reaches that calm and abiding union called the transforming union which seems to be the final goal or the immediate preparation for the Beatific Vision.

Nature of Transforming Union

Its chief characteristics are intimacy, serenity, and indissolubility.

Intimacy: Because this union is still more intimate than the others, it is called spiritual marriage. Between persons united in marriage, there-are no longer any secrets; there is a blending of two lives. It is precisely such a union that exists between the soul and God. in order to explain ' it, St. Teresa uses the comparison of rain water descending from heaven into a river or spring. The water becomes. so mixed that one cannot tell which is river-water and which is rain-water.

Serenity: In this state there are no more ecstasies or raptures, or at least very few; these have now disappeared and quiet rest are enjoyed as in the peace and rest between married persons.

Indissolubility: The other unions are but transitory. The present one by its very nature is permanent, just as the bond of Christian marriage. St. John and St. Teresa disagree here on whether this is impeccable.

St. John believes that no soul ever attains to this state without being confirmed in grace. St. Teresa, which is more in keeping with the theology and the grace of final perseverance says that the soul is secure so long as she does nothing to offend His Majesty.

The description given by St. Teresa of Transforming Union includes two apparitions, One of Our Lord and the other of the Blessed Trinity.

It is Jesus Who introduces the soul into this last mansion by a twofold vision: one imaginative and the other intellectual.

Appearing to her after Holy Communion in great majesty beauty and splendor He said to her: that now was the time should consider His affairs as hers, and that He would take care of hers ... From henceforth you shall guard my honor not only because I am your Creator, your Kind and

Your God, but yet because you are My true Spouse. My honor is your honor and your honor Mine..."

Then follows the intellectual vision: "That which God here communicates to the soul in an instant is so great a secret, and so sublime a grace, and what she feels such an excessive delight, that I know nothing to compare it to, except that Our Lord is pleased at that moment to manifest to her the glory which is in heaven; and this He does in a more sublime way than by any vision or spiritual delight. More than this cannot be understood except that the soul becomes one with God.

The Vision of the Blessed Trinity

Once the soul has been introduced into this mansion, the Three Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity manifest themselves to it in an intellectual vision, and they come directly upon it as in a cloud of extraordinary brightness. The Three Divine Persons manifest themselves as distinct, and by a wonderful communication of knowledge, the soul sees with absolute certitude that all Three Persons are but one substance, one power, one knowledge, one God.

"Hence, what we behold with faith, the soul here (as one may say) understands by sight, though this sight is not with the eyes of the body, because it is not an imaginative vision. All the Three Person here communicate themselves to her, and speak to her, and make her understand those words mentioned in the Gospel where Our Lord said that He and the Father and the Holy Spirit would come and dwell with the soul that love Him and keeps His commandments! O My Lord! What a different thing is the hearing and believing of these words from understanding in this way how true they are! Such a soul is everyday more astonished, because these words never seem to depart from her; but she clearly sees that They are in the deepest recesses of the soul, and she perceives this Divine company within herself.

EFFECTS OF THE TRANSFORMING UNION

A union so profound and so intimate cannot but produce wondrous sanctifying effects. The soul is so transformed that it forgets self and thinks only of God and His glory.

There is a holy abandonment in to the hands of God in which the soul is indifferent (supremely) to all that is not God. In the ecstatic union the soul desired death in order to be united to God. Now it is indifferent to life or death so long as God be glorified.

There is an insatiable thirst for suffering, but devoid of anxiety and in perfect conformity with the will of God: "if He wishes them to suffer they are content; if not, they do not torment themselves about it, as they used to do at other times. These souls likewise feel a great interior joy when they are persecuted, for then they enjoy more peace than I have ever before spoken of; and they do not feel the least hatred against their persecutors; nay, they conceive for them a particular affection."

The absence of desire and of interior sufferings. The desires of these souls do not now run after consolations. They feel in themselves a desire of being always alone, or employed in things relating to the good of some soul. They have no aridities, nor internal troubles, but always have a memory and tenderness for Our Lord, so that they would gladly do nothing but praise Him.

The absence of raptures. The raptures cease in the manner we have mentioned, and there are no more ecstasies or flights of the spirit; if they come at all it is very seldom, and never in public. Hence peace and perfect serenity. In this Temple of God, for this mansion is His, He and the soul sweetly enjoy each other in the most profound silence.

An ardent yet discreet zeal for the sanctification of souls. It is not enough to abide in the enjoyment of this sweet repose; the soul must act, labor, suffer, become the slave of God and of the neighbor," strive to advance in the virtues, especially humility, for not to advance is to go back. Perfection consists of Mary doing the work of Martha at one and the same time. One can work for the welfare of souls without leaving the cloister ... Always such works, whatever they be, are inspired by love. This is what the Lord pays attention to.

Other Effects

(Dubay 1989)

Coaction with God. In a manner that transcends divine physical premotion on the natural level (that is, God's moving anything that moves, as its prime mover), the indwelling Lord is now so one with the soul that all of its actions are divine.. St. John of the Cross: "In this state, the soul cannot make acts because the Holy Spirit makes them all and moves it toward them. As a result all the acts of the soul are divine." It is characteristic of this spiritual marriage that "God works in and communicates Himself to

her through Himself alone ... It is fitting that God Himself be the guide and means of reaching Himself."

In the transforming union one is so closely bonded to God that all of this person's first inclinations are directed to the Lord Who originates them. In memory, intellect, will and desire there is no movement contrary to the divine will and goodness. From the first instant and without intellectual advertence, one's spontaneous movements are toward patience in adversity, thanksgiving and praise in prosperity, temperance in delightful occupations, love and chastity in human relations, toward God in everything.

One does not even "experience the first motions of sin." Without advertence, and from their first movements, the "intellect, will, and memory go out immediately toward God, and the affections, senses, desires, appetites, hope joy and all the energy from the first instant incline toward God..."

Cessation of Imperfections. The characteristics of the transforming union appear very much like the state of original innocence. This ought not to be surprising. It is a radical healing, a transformation, a new creation. There is a more or less complete diminution of human flaws and infirmities. The emotions or passions are well under the guidance of reason, and thus lose their excessive and disordered tendencies. In place of inner turbulence and overwrought feeling there ensues a calm and abiding serenity even in trying circumstances. Distractions, daydreaming, idle thoughts, and useless cares disappear. Small attachments and selfish clings to this food or that drink, this activity or one's own preferences, disappear. The person is consequently "freed from and protected against all temporal disturbances and changes."

Remarkable delight. The soul here "enjoys all peace, tastes all sweetness, and delights in all delight insofar as this earthly state allows ... So little of this is describable that we would never succeed in fully explaining what takes place in the soul that has reached this happy state ... This sweetness takes such an inward hold on her that nothing painful can reach her...The delight of this union absorbs the soul within herself and gives her such refreshment that it makes her insensible to the disturbances and troubles mentioned."

"In this state of life so perfect, the soul always walks in festivity, inwardly and outwardly, and it frequently bears on its spiritual tongue a new song of great jubilation in God, a song always new, enfolded in gladness and love ... It feels in this state that God is so solicitous in regaling it with precious, delicate, and enhancing words, and in extolling it be various-- favors, that He has no one else in the world to favor nor anything else to do, that everything is for the soul alone."

Heroic Virtue. The saint does not delay or procrastinate in reacting in a humble manner or in loving an annoying neighbor. The correct response comes readily and easily, as if by second nature. Indeed, heroic virtue is like a second nature, for it is part of the new creation produced by the indwelling Trinity. one is living a new life. What needs to be done is done joyously. Here one may compare the stoic way in which pagan heroes

underwent torture and death, and the gladness with which the Christian martyrs faced their persecutors and the excruciating agonies they suffered. This promptness, ease and joy is found in all situations, not just isolated incidents. This is the kind of sanctity the Church looks for and requires in her canonization processes. It is the result of reaching the summit of union.

Innocence of Evil. There is a characteristic of innocence here that renders the person unable to recognize evil. Everything is pure to the pure of heart. One enjoys a pristine goodness akin to Adam and Eve before the fall. "The soul in this state resembles Adam in the state of innocence who did not recognize evil." She is so innocent she does not understand evil, nor does she judge anything in a bad light. This is not necessarily continuous. outside of absorption in God, one may still be able to recognize evil.

Symphony of Creation. Infused knowledge perfects habitual natural knowledge, for the latter is joined to the superior wisdom of God. From the natural point of view we come to know God from the vestiges of himself that He has left in the splendors of the visible universe. On a still more exalted level we know Him in loveliness of the saints. But it remains a knowledge of the infinite through the finite. In the transforming union, quite the opposite occurs: we know, and appreciate creation through the Creator.

"Here lies the remarkable delight of this awakening: the soul knows creatures through God and not God through creatures. Seeing this harmony in the divine light brings the person to a new fascination beyond anything attainable on the mere natural level. So superior are these infused insights into creation to what was previously known that John considers the latter to be "pure ignorance" when compared with the former, "for where God is unknown, nothing is known."

Continuity. John makes two points that must be taken together, lest they be separately misunderstood. on the one hand he says that an actual and intensely perceived oneness with God cannot be continuous in this life: "A permanent actual union of the faculties in this life is impossible such a union can only be transient." on the other hand there is a kind of continuity in the divine experience, a "habitual embrace" a "habitual satisfaction and peace." The soul "enjoys in this state an habitual sweetness and tranquillity which is never lost or lacking to her."

The abiding awareness of the Lord present was well known to biblical men and women. The psalmist takes it for granted that we grow to a point where our "eyes are always on the Lord."

Note: Demonic influences are immobilized at this summit of the spiritual life: "When she is united with Him transformation they fear her as much as they do Him, and they have not even the courage to look at her. The devil has an extraordinary fear of the perfect soul."

Finally, "the death of person who have reached this state is far--different in this cause and mode than the death of others, even though it is similar in natural circumstances. If

the death of other people is caused by sickness or old age, the death of these. person's is not so induced, in spite of their being sick or old; their soul is not wrested from them unless by some impetus and encounter of love, far more sublime than previous ones ... The death of such persons is very gentle and very sweet, sweeter and more gentle than was their whole spiritual life on earth...Accordingly David affirmed that the death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord."

THE THREE WAYS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

(from Garrigou-LaGrange, 1977 #2, p. 75)

Transition - First Conversion or Justification

Purgative Life of Beginners

Generous: fervent souls

Attenuated: tepid or retarded souls

Transition - Passive Purgation of the Senses (more or less successfully endured)

Illuminative Life of Proficients

Plenary - [Extraordinary, with visions, revelations, etc.]

[Ordinary: purely contemplative form. Active form.]

[Attenuated: Transitory acts of infused contemplation.]

Transition - Passive Purgation of the Spirit (more or less successfully endured)

Unitive Life of the Perfect

Plenary - [Extraordinary, e.g. with vision of the Blessed Trinity]

[Ordinary: purely contemplative form. Apostolic form.]

[Attenuated: Intermittent Union]

Bibliography

This paper was originally put together for private use. 95% of the text has either been taken directly or paraphrased from The Spiritual Life by Very Rev. Adolphe Tanquerey, S.S. D. D. Fr. Tanquerey taught at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland. After a search on the Internet this book could not be found.

We believe it is out of print. We recommend that the below source materials be consulted for their original creativity. January 22, 2000

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Works of St. Teresa of Avila

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