



A YEAR WITH THE MYSTICS

VISIONARY WISDOM
FOR
DAILY LIVING

KATHRYN JEAN LOPEZ



CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA



A YEAR WITH THE MYSTICS

The Daily Readings

Entering into the light

We simply want to see as God sees. That's the work of eternity. Let's get started already.



God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

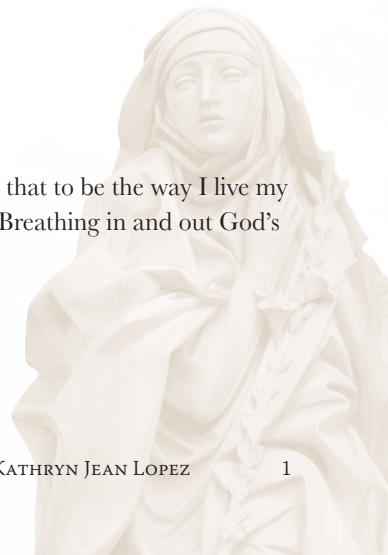
—1 John 1:5–10

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

Am I ready to walk entirely in the light? Do I want that to be the way I live my life, every day, every hour, every minute, every second? Breathing in and out God's Word, which is my life, which gives me life?

CLOSING PRAYER

Make me your light, Lord—all light, all yours.



Fathoming the depths of the profundity of God

Prayer is really an endless journey. Thanks be to God for so many companions along the way.



The holy virgin told her confessors, of whom, though unworthy, I was one, that at the beginning of her visions, that is to say when the Lord Jesus Christ first began to appear to her, he once came to her while she was praying and said, “Do you know, daughter, who you are, and who I am? If you know these two things, you will be blessed. You are she who is not; whereas I am he who is. Have this knowledge in your soul and the Enemy will never deceive you and you will escape all his wiles; you will never disobey my commandments and will acquire all grace, truth, and light.”

Small words, yet great in value. A succinct doctrine, yet in its way endless! Oh, immeasurable wisdom, wrapped in a few brief syllables, however shall I understand you, who will help me to break your seals? How shall I fathom the depths of your profundity? Perhaps this is that length and breadth, that height and depth, that the Apostle Paul longed to comprehend with all the saints of Ephesus [3:8]? Or perhaps it is one with the Charity of Christ, transcending all human wisdom?

—Blessed Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*

IN GOD'S PRESENCE, CONSIDER . . .

Do I know God? Do I know who I am in his light? Am I prepared to see?

CLOSING PRAYER

Prepare me, O Lord, for every blessed thing you have to show me. Anoint me with your holy wisdom so that I may love as you love.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

A TREATISE ON
ASCETICAL AND MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

By

The Very Reverend

ADOLPHE TANQUEREY, S.S., D.D.

(1854-1932)

Translated by

THE REV. HERMAN BRANDERIS, S.S., A.M.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Bibliography.

Introduction.

The Nature of Ascetical Theology	2
Its Sources	7
Its Method	12
Its Excellence and Necessity	18
Division of Mystical and Ascetical Theology	24

PART FIRST : Principles.

CHAPTER I. Origin of the Spiritual Life	29
ART. I. THE NATURAL LIFE OF MAN	29
ART. II. THE ELEVATION OF MAN TO THE SUPERNATURAL STATE	32
ART. III. THE FALL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES	35
ART. IV. THE REDEMPTION AND ITS EFFECTS	39
CHAPTER II. Nature of the Spiritual Life	44
ART. I. THE RÔLE OF GOD IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE	46
§ I. <i>The rôle of the Blessed Trinity</i>	46
How the Three Divine Persons dwell within us	47
Our duties towards the Blessed Trinity	52
How the Three Divine Persons give us a supernatural life : Sanctifying Grace, Virtues and Gifts, Actual Grace	55
§ II. <i>The rôle of Christ</i>	70
Christ, the Meritorious Cause	70
Christ, the Exemplary Cause	72
Christ, The Head of the Mystical Body	75
Devotion to Christ, the Incarnate Word	78
§ III. <i>The Part of the Blessed Virgin, the Angels, and the Saints</i>	80
The Part of the Blessed Virgin	80
Mary, Mother of God, and Our Mother	81
Mary, a Meritorious Cause of Grace	82
Mary, Universal Mediatrix of Grace	84
Devotion to the Blessed Virgin	86
The Part of the Saints	93
The Part of the Angels	96
ART. II. THE PART OF MAN IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE	99
§ I. <i>The fight against spiritual enemies</i>	101
Against Concupiscence	101
Against the World	109
Against the Devil	114

§ II. <i>The growth of the spiritual life by good works</i>	119
Nature of Merit	120
Conditions for increasing Merit	123
Sanctification of all our actions	129
§ III. <i>Growth of the spiritual life through the Sacraments.</i>	130
Sacramental Grace	131
Necessary dispositions for fruitful reception of the Sacraments.	133
Dispositions for the Sacrament of Penance	134
Dispositions to profit well by the Sacrament of the Eucharist.	138
CHAPTER III. The Perfection of the Christian Life	153
ART. I. FALSE NOTIONS CONCERNING PERFECTION	153
ART. II. TRUE NOTION OF PERFECTION	156
§ I. <i>The Essence of Perfection consists in Charity</i>	158
Proofs of the Thesis.	159
§ II. <i>Love on Earth Requires Sacrifice</i>	163
§ III. <i>The Part of Love and the Part of Sacrifice in the Christian Life</i>	166
§ IV. <i>Does Perfection consist in the Commandments or in the Counsels?</i>	169
§ V. <i>The different Degrees of Perfection</i>	171
Degrees of Perfection	171
The Limits of Perfection here on Earth	172
CHAPTER IV. The Duty of Tending to Perfection	176
ART. I. THE DUTY INCUMBENT UPON ALL CHRISTIANS IN GENERAL TO TEND TOWARD PERFECTION	176
§ I. <i>The Obligation Itself</i>	176
The Argument from Authority.	177
The Argument from Reason	179
§ II. <i>Motives that Make This Duty Easier</i>	181
ART. II. THE OBLIGATION INCUMBENT UPON RELIGIOUS OF TENDING TOWARD PERFECTION	183
§ I. <i>The Obligation Based on the Vows</i>	184
§ II. <i>The Obligation Based on the Constitutions and the Rules</i>	186
ART. III. THE OBLIGATION INCUMBENT UPON PRIESTS OF TENDING TO PERFECTION	188
§ I. <i>The Teaching of Our Lord and of St Paul</i>	189
§ II. <i>The Teaching of the Pontifical</i>	192
§ III. <i>The Nature of the Priestly functions demands Holiness of Life</i>	196
CHAPTER V. General Means of Perfection.	203
ART. I. INTERIOR MEANS OF PERFECTION	205
§ I. <i>The Desire for Perfection</i>	205
The Nature of this Desire	205
The Necessity and Efficacy of the Desire for Perfection	206
The Qualities Which the Desire for Perfection should possess	208

Means to Stimulate this Desire for Perfection	211
§ II. <i>The Knowledge of God and the Knowledge of Self</i>	213
The Knowledge of God	213
1° What we must know of God	213
2° Means of knowing God	217
Conclusion. Exercise of the Presence of God	219
The knowledge of Self	221
1° Necessity and Object of Self-knowledge	222
2° Means of knowing ourselves	222
3° General and Particular Examination of Conscience	225
§ III. <i>Conformity to God's Will</i>	232
Obedience to God's Will	233
Submission to God's Will	236
Degrees of Conformity to God's Will	239
Sanctifying power of Conformity to God's Will	240
§ IV. <i>Prayer</i>	243
Nature of Prayer	243
Various forms of Prayer	244
The most excellent Prayer, The Lord's Prayer	249
Efficacy of Prayer for Sanctification	251
How we can transform our actions into prayer	253
ART. II. EXTERIOR MEANS OF PERFECTION	257
§ I. <i>Spiritual Direction</i>	257
Necessity	257
Object	262
Duties of the Spiritual Director	264
Duties of the Penitent	267
§ II. <i>A Rule of Life</i>	270
Usefulness	270
Qualities	272
Observance	274
§ III. <i>Spiritual Readings and Conferences</i>	276
Usefulness of reading Holy Scripture and Spiritual Writers, — of Spiritual Conferences	276
Requisite dispositions for Spiritual Readings and Con- ferences	278
§ IV. <i>Sanctification of Social Relations</i>	280
General Principles	280
Family relations	282
Friendships	285
Social and Business relations	291
Works of Zeal	293
General Summary of Part First	295

PART SECOND : The three ways

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The Distinction of the three ways	297
The Right Use of this Distinction	301
The Study of the three ways	303

**BOOK ONE. The purification, of the soul, or,
the purgative way.**

Introduction

Those in the Purgative Way, or, Beginners	305
Work to be done in the Purgative Way	308
Division of this First Book	309

CHAPTER I. The prayer of beginners.

ART. I. NECESSITY AND CONDITIONS OF PRAYER	310
§ I. <i>Necessity of prayer</i>	310
§ II. <i>Conditions of prayer</i>	312
ART. II. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES FOR BEGINNERS	317
ART. III. THE MENTAL PRAYER OF BEGINNERS	319
§ I. <i>Notion of Mental Prayer and Meditation</i>	319
§ II. <i>Advantages and necessity</i>	321
§ III. <i>General Characteristics</i>	326
§ IV. <i>Chief Methods</i>	329
Points common to all Methods.	330
Method of St. Ignatius	331
Method of St. Sulpice	335

CHAPTER II. Penance. 340

ART. I. MOTIVES FOR HATING AND AVOIDING SIN	341
§ I. <i>Mortal sin</i>	342
§ II. <i>Venial Sin</i>	349
ART. II. MOTIVES AND MEANS OF ATONING FOR SIN	354
Motives for doing Penance	354
Sentiments of penance	358
Works of penance	359

CHAPTER III. Mortification.

ART. I. NATURE OF MORTIFICATION	362
ART. II. NEED FOR MORTIFICATION	364
ART. III. PRACTICE OF MORTIFICATION	371
§ I. <i>Mortification of the body</i>	373
§ II. <i>Mortification of the memory and imagination</i>	376
§ III. <i>Mortification of the Passions</i>	377
The psychology of the passions	378
Effects of the passions	379
The good use of passions	382
§ IV. <i>Mortification of our spiritual faculties</i>	387
The discipline of the mind	387
The training of the will.	389

CHAPTER IV. The struggle against capital sins and vices	392
ART. I. PRIDE AND KINDRED VICES	393
§ I. <i>Pride itself</i>	393
Various forms	394
Faults born of pride : Presumption, Ambition, Vanity.	396
Malice and evil effects of Pride	398
Remedies	401
§ II. <i>Envy and jealousy</i>	404
§ III. <i>Anger</i>	407
ART. II. SENSUALITY	411
§ I. <i>Gluttony</i>	411
§ II. <i>Lust</i>	414
§ III. <i>Sloth</i>	420
ART. III. AVARICE	423
CHAPTER V. Temptations	427
ART. I. TEMPTATIONS IN GENERAL	427
Providential purposes of temptations	427
The Psychology of temptations	429
The Right attitude towards temptations	432
ART. II. CHIEF TEMPTATIONS OF BEGINNERS	436
Illusions about consolations and dryness	436
Inconstancy	441
Over-eagerness.	442
Scruples	443
APPENDIX : <i>The Discernment of spirits</i>	450
Summary of the first book	452

**BOOK TWO : Progress in Christian virtues, or,
the illuminative way.**

Introduction.

Those in the illuminative way	454
Work to be done : to form Christ in us	456
Two classes of souls, the devout and the Fervent, in the illuminative way	459
Division of this second Book	460

CHAPTER I. Affective prayer.	461
ART. I. NATURE OF AFFECTIVE PRAYER	461
ART. II. ADVANTAGES OF AFFECTIVE PRAYER	464
ART. III. THE DANGERS OF AFFECTIVE PRAYER	465
ART. IV. METHODS OF AFFECTIVE PRAYER	467
CHAPTER II. The moral virtues	472
<i>Preliminary Notions</i>	472
Infused Virtues in general	472
Moral Virtues in particular	477

ART. I. PRUDENCE	479
§ I. <i>Nature</i>	479
§ II. <i>Necessity</i>	483
§ III. <i>Practice</i>	485
ART. II. JUSTICE	488
§ I. <i>Justice properly so-called</i>	488
§ II. <i>Religion</i>	492
§ III. <i>Obedience</i>	497
ART. III. FORTITUDE	506
§ I. <i>Nature and Degrees</i>	506
§ II. <i>Virtues allied to Fortitude : Magnanimity, Munificence, Patience, Constancy</i>	509
§ III. <i>Means to perfect this virtue</i>	515
ART. IV. TEMPERANCE.	517
§ I. <i>Chastity.</i>	518
Chastity in the married state	519
Celibacy	521
§ II. <i>Humility</i>	530
Nature of humility	530
Degrees.	532
Excellence	536
Practice.	538
§ III. <i>Meekness</i>	545
CHAPTER III. The theological virtues.	549
ART. I. FAITH	550
§ I. <i>Nature</i>	550
§ II. <i>Sanctifying power</i>	552
§ III. <i>Practice</i>	556
ART. II. HOPE	559
§ I. <i>Nature</i>	559
§ II. <i>Sanctifying power</i>	561
§ III. <i>Practice</i>	563
ART. III. CHARITY	567
Charity in general	567
§ I. <i>The love of God</i>	569
Precept and motive	569
Sanctifying power.	571
Growth in the love of God	574
§ II. <i>Charity towards the neighbor</i>	578
Nature	578
Sanctifying power.	579
Practice.	580
§ III. <i>The Sacred Heart, model and source of charity</i>	584
The Sacred Heart and the spiritual life	586
CHAPTER IV. Counter-attacks of the enemy	590
ART. I. THE RE-AWAKENING OF THE CAPITAL SINS.	590

ART. II. LUKEWARMNESS	592
APPENDIX : <i>The discernment of spirits in the illuminative way</i>	597
Summary of the second Book	598

BOOK THREE : The unitive way.

Introduction

The end to be attained	601
Characteristics of the unitive way	602
General notion of contemplation	604
Division of the third Book	606
CHAPTER I. The simple or active unitive way.	607
ART. I. THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST	609
§ I. <i>In general</i>	609
Nature and excellence	609
Cultivation and classification	612
§ II. <i>In particular</i>	616
The gift of counsel	616
The gift of piety	618
The gift of fortitude	621
The gift of fear	623
The gift of knowledge	624
The gift of understanding	627
The gift of wisdom	629
§ III. <i>The gifts of the Holy Ghost in prayer and contemplation.</i>	631
§ IV. <i>The fruits of the Holy Ghost and the beatitudes.</i>	635
ART. II. THE PRAYER OF SIMPLICITY.	637
§ I. <i>Nature of this prayer</i>	637
§ II. <i>Its advantages</i>	640
§ III. <i>How to make it.</i>	642
§ IV. <i>Is this prayer acquired or infused contemplation?</i>	646
CHAPTER II. Infused contemplation.	649
ART. I. INFUSED CONTEMPLATION IN GENERAL.	649
§ I. <i>Nature of this contemplation</i>	649
Definition	649
The action of God in contemplation	650
The share of the soul	653
§ II. <i>Advantages of contemplation</i>	658
§ III. <i>The call to contemplation</i>	661
To whom does God grant the gift of contemplation?	661
The signs of a call	663
ART. II. THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF CONTEMPLATION	666
§ I. <i>The Prayer of Quiet</i>	667
I. " <i>Arid</i> " quietude, or, the Night of the senses	667
Constituent elements.	668
Trials.	670

Advantages	671
What the soul should do	673
II. "Sweet" quietude	674
Passive recollection	675
Quietude properly so-called	677
The sleep of the faculties	681
§ II. <i>Prayer of full union</i>	682
§ III. <i>Ecstatic union (Spiritual espousals)</i>	684
I. "Sweet" ecstatic union; nature; degrees; effects	684
II. "Arid" union or the Night of the spirit	688
§ IV. <i>The transforming union or spiritual marriage</i>	691
APPENDIX : <i>False Mysticism or quietism</i>	696
§ I. <i>Questism of Molinos</i>	696
§ II. <i>The mitigated Quietism of Fénelon</i>	697
§ III. <i>Semi-quietistic tendencies</i>	698
CHAPTER III. Extraordinary mystical phenomena	700
ART. I. DIVINE PHENOMENA	700
<i>Private revelations</i>	700
Nature	700
Rules for discerning them	703
<i>Various psycho-physiological phenomena, especially stigmatization</i>	711
<i>Supernatural and morbid phenomena</i>	715
ART. II. DIABOLICAL PHENOMENA	718
Obsession	718
Possession	720
CHAPTER IV. Controverted questions	727
Sources of these controversies	727
Controversy regarding the nature of contemplation	728
Controversy regarding the call to contemplation	731
Where does contemplation begin?	736
CONCLUSION : <i>The spiritual Direction of contemplatives</i>	738
EPILOGUE : <i>The three ways and the liturgical cycle</i>	741
The prayer, <i>O Jesu vivens in Maria</i>	
APPENDICES	
I. <i>The spirituality of the New Testament</i>	1*
The spirituality of the Synoptics	1*
The spirituality of St. Paul	3*
The spirituality of St. John	6*
II. <i>The study of characters</i>	8*
Characters in relation to feeling	9*
Characters in relation to spiritual activities	12*
Characters in relation to external activities	13*



FIRST PART

Principles

PURPOSE AND DIVISION OF THE FIRST PART.

49. The aim of this first part is to call briefly to mind the principal dogmas upon which our spiritual life rests, to show the nature and perfection of this life, and the general means by which perfection is reached. Here we follow the *ontological* order, assigning to the second part the task of describing the *psychological* order normally followed by souls in the use they make of the various means of perfection.

DIVISION

- C. I. *Origin* of the supernatural life : the raising of man to the supernatural state, his fall, and redemption.
- C. II. *Nature* of the Christian life : God's part and the soul's part.
- C. III. *Perfection* of this life : the love of God and of the neighbor carried to the point of sacrifice.
- C. IV. Obligation for *laymen, religious* and *priests* to strive after this perfection.
- C. V. *General means*, interior and exterior, of attaining perfection.

50. The reason for such a division is easily perceived.

The *first* chapter, by taking us back to the source itself of the supernatural life, helps us to a better grasp of its *nature* and *its excellence*.

The *second* chapter reveals the *nature* of the *Christian* life in regenerated man ; the part God takes therein by *giving Himself* to us through His Son ; and by assisting us through the agency of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. It likewise explains the *rôle* man plays in *giving* himself to God by a constant and generous coöperation with grace.

The *third* chapter shows that perfection in this life essentially consists in the love of God and of the neighbor for God's sake. It shows further, however, that this love here on earth cannot be exercised without generous sacrifices.

In the *fourth*, the obligation of tending to perfection is determined and the extent to which the faithful, religious, and priests are respectively bound.

A *fifth* chapter is devoted to specifying the general means that help us to advance in perfection, means common indeed to all, yet susceptible of degrees. These degrees will be treated in the second part when speaking of the three ways.

CHAPTER I.

Origin of the spiritual life

51. This chapter is intended to give us a better knowledge of the excellence of the supernatural life in as much as it is a free gift; and of the nobility as well as the weakness of man, upon whom it has been bestowed. To help us understand it better we shall see :

- I. What the *natural* life of man is.
- II. Man's *elevation* to the supernatural state.
- III. His fall.
- IV. His *restoration* by a Divine Redeemer.

ART. I. THE NATURAL LIFE OF MAN

52. Here we must describe man's condition as it would have been in the purely natural state, such as it is described by Philosophers. It is important to recall to mind, though briefly, what right reason teaches us on this point, because our spiritual life, while preserving and perfecting our natural life, is grafted on it. ¹

53. 1° Man is a mysterious compound of *body* and *soul*. In him *spirit* and *matter* closely unite to form but one nature and one person. Man is, so to speak, the nexus, the point of contact between spiritual and bodily substances — an abstract of all the marvels of creation. He is a little world gathering in itself all other worlds, a *microcosm*, showing forth the wisdom of God who united in this fashion two things so far apart.

This little world is full of life : according to St. Gregory, one finds there three sorts of life, *vegetative*, *animal* and

¹ Besides Philosophical Treatises, cf. CH. DE SMEIJT, *Notre Vie surnaturelle*, 1912, Introduction p. 1-37; J. SCHRYVEERS, *Les Principes de la Vie spirituelle*, 1922, p. 31.

intellectual.¹ Like *plants* man takes food, *grows*, and *reproduces* himself. Like *animals*, he is aware of sensible objects, towards which he is drawn by sensitive appetite, emotions and passions, and like animals he moves spontaneously from within. Like *angels*, though in a different manner and in a lesser degree, he knows intellectually suprasensible being and truth, while his will is freely drawn towards rational good.

54. 2° These three kinds of life are not superimposed one on the other, but they blend and arrange themselves in due relation in order to converge towards the same end — the perfection of the whole man. It is both a rational and a biological law that in a composite being life cannot subsist and develop save on condition of harmonizing and bringing its various elements under the control of the highest of them. The former must be mastered before they can be made to minister. In man, then, the lower faculties, vegetative and sensitive, must needs be subject to reason and will. This condition is essential. Whenever it fails, life languishes or vanishes. Whenever this subordination ceases altogether, disintegration of the elements sets in; this means decay of the system and, finally, death.²

55. 3° Life is, therefore, a struggle. Our lower faculties tend lustily toward pleasure, whilst the higher ones are drawn towards moral good. Often conflict goes on between these; what pleases us, is not always morally good, and, to establish order, reason must fight hostile tendencies and actually conquer. This is the *fight of the spirit* against *the flesh*, of the *will* against *passion*. This struggle is at times hard and painful. Just as in the springtime of the year the sap rises up within plants, so at times violent impulses towards pleasure rise in the sensitive part of our soul.

56. These impulses, nevertheless, are not *irresistible*. The will helped by the intellect exercises over these movements of passion a fourfold control. 1) The power of *foresight* which consists in *foreseeing* and *forestalling* a great many dangerous fancies, impressions and emotions, by a constant and intelligent vigilance. 2) The power of *inhibition* and *moderation*, by means of which we either check or at least allay the violent passions which arise in the soul.

¹ He says (*Homil. 29 in Evangelia*) : « Homo habet vivere cum plantis, sentire cum animantibus, intelligere cum angelis ».

² A. EYMIEU, *Le Gouvernement de soi-même*, t. III, *La Loi de la Vie*, book III, p. 128.

Thus we are able to prevent our eyes from lighting upon dangerous objects, our imagination from dwelling upon unwholesome pictures; should a fit of anger stir, we are able to stem it. 3) The power of *stimulation*, which through the will stirs and gives *impetus* to the movements of the passions. 4) The power of *direction*, which allows us to direct those movements towards good and thereby to divert them from evil.

57. Besides this inward strife, there may be other conflicts *between the soul and its Maker*. Although it is evident that our plain duty is that of entire submission to Our Sovereign Master, yet for this subjection we must pay the price. A lust for freedom and independence ever inclines us to swerve from Divine Authority. The cause lurks in our pride, which cannot be trampled upon, except by the humble admission of our unworthiness and our littleness in the face of those absolute rights the Creator has upon a creature. Thus it is that even in this purely natural state we would still have a fight to wage against the threefold concupiscence.

58. 4° If far from yielding to these evil inclinations we would have done our duty, we could have justly expect a reward. For our immortal soul, this reward would have consisted, first, in a deeper and a greater knowledge of God and of truth — a knowledge, of course, analytical and discursive; then, in a love, also purer and more enduring. If, on the contrary we would have voluntarily violated the law in grave matter and remained unrepentant, we should have failed of our end, meriting as punishment the privation of God and such torments as would fit the gravity of our faults.

This would have been our condition had we been constituted in a merely natural state. This state has not, as a matter of fact, ever existed, for according to St. Thomas, man was raised to the supernatural state at the very moment of creation, or immediately after, as St. Bonaventure says.

God in His infinite goodness, was not satisfied with conferring upon man natural gifts. He willed to elevate him to a higher state by granting him still others of a preternatural and supernatural character.

ART. II. THE ELEVATION OF MAN
TO THE SUPERNATURAL STATE ¹

I. *Notion of the Supernatural*

59. Let us call to mind that Theology distinguishes between what is absolutely and what is relatively supernatural.

1° An *absolutely* supernatural gift is one which in its very essence (*quoad substantiam*) transcends nature altogether, so that it cannot be due to nor be merited by any creature whatsoever. It surpasses therefore not only all the active powers of nature, but even all its rights, all its exigencies.

Because it is given to a creature it is something *finite*; but since only what is divine can surpass the exigencies of all creation, it is also something *divine*. It is the communication of a divine thing, yet, it is shared in a finite way. We therefore keep clear of pantheism. Actually, there are only two instances of the *absolute-supernatural*: the *Incar-nation* and *Sanctifying Grace*.

A) In the first instance, God, in the person of the Word, united Himself to man in such wise that the human nature of Jesus belonged absolutely to the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity. Thus Jesus is, on account of His human nature, true man, whilst as regards His person He is very God. This is a *substantial* union. It does not blend the two natures in one, but whilst preserving their integrity, unites them in one and the same person — that of the Eternal Word. It constitutes, then, a personal or *hypostatic* union. This is the absolute supernatural at its highest.

B) The other *absolute* supernatural — a lesser degree — is exemplified in *sanctifying grace*.

Grace does not change the person of man. It does not make him God. It does indeed modify his nature and powers, but only accidentally. He becomes similar to God — God-like, *divinae consors naturae*, — capable of possessing God directly through the Beatific Vision, and of contemplating Him face to face even as He beholds Himself when grace will finally be transformed into glory. Evidently this privilege of knowing and loving God as the

¹ St. THOMAS, I, q. 93-102; J. BAINVEL, S. J., *Nature et surnaturel*; ABBÉ DE BROGLIE, *Confr. sur la vie surnaturelle*, t. II, p. 3-80; L. LABAUCHE, *God ana Man*, vol. II, P. II, c. I-II; R. GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, O. P., ch. II, art. II.

Father, Son and Holy Ghost know and love one another surpasses all the exigencies of even the most perfect creature, since it actually *makes* us share in God's intellectual life and in His nature.

60. 2° What is called 'the *relative* supernatural, is in itself something that would not be beyond the capacity or the exigencies of all creatures, but simply beyond the powers and actual needs of a certain particular nature, for example, infused knowledge, which is beyond the capacity of man but not of angels. If then it is granted to man, it is supernatural *relatively*, that is with regard to man, but not in itself, in its very substance, since it is natural to angels; hence it is called also *preternatural*.

God gave man the supernatural in these two forms. In fact, He bestowed upon our first parents *the gift of preternatural integrity*, which, whilst completing their nature, fitted it for *grace* itself. The sum total of these two endowments constitutes what is called *original justice*.

II. *Preternatural gifts conferred on Adam*

61. The *gift of integrity* perfect *nature* without raising it to the level of the divine. This is, indeed, a *gratuitous* gift, *preternatural*, above the wants and capacity of man, yet not absolutely *supernatural*. This gift comprises three great privileges, which without altering human nature in its essence, gave man a perfection to which he had no title. These are *infused knowledge*, *control of the passions* or the absence of concupiscence, and *immortality of the body*.

62. A) Infused science. Our nature does not require it, since it is the privilege of angels. Man left to his own resources can acquire knowledge only gradually and painfully and in subjection to certain psychological laws. In order to fit Adam for his rôle of first educator of the human race God granted him infused knowledge of all the truths he needed to know, and a facility for the acquisition of experimental knowledge. In this sense man approached the likeness of angels.

63. B) The control of the passions, that is, exemption from the sway of concupiscence which renders so difficult the practice of virtue. We have already remarked that, owing to his very constitution, there takes place in man a terrible struggle between the sincere desire for what is good, on one side, and a reckless lust for pleasure and sensible

goods on the other, to say nothing of a marked proneness to pride. This is really what we call the threefold concupiscence. To counteract this natural drawback God endowed our first parents with a certain *control of the passions* which, without rendering them impeccable, made easy for them the practise of virtue. That *tyranny of concupiscence* that so vigorously pushes on to evil did not exist in Adam; there was simply a certain tendency toward pleasure but in due subordination to reason. Because his will was subject to God, his lower faculties were in turn subservient to reason and his body to his soul. This was order — perfect rectitude.

64. C) The immortality of the body. By nature man is subject to sickness and to death. In order that his soul could attend unencumbered to higher duties, a special disposition of Providence preserved him from this double infirmity. These three privileges were designed to fit man better for the reception and the use of a gift still more precious, a gift absolutely supernatural — *sanctifying grace*.

III. *The supernatural privileges conferred on Adam*

65. A) By nature man is the *servant* of God, His property. — In His infinite goodness God willed to incorporate us into His family. He made man His heir-apparent when He reserved for him a place in His kingdom. For this bounty man will never be able to thank God adequately.

In order that this adoption might not remain a mere formality, He gave him a share in His divine life. This communication of God's life to man is, indeed, a created quality but none the less real. It enables man here on earth to enjoy the light of faith (a light greater by far than that of reason), and in heaven, to possess God by the Beatific Vision and with a love corresponding to the clearness of that vision.

66. B) This was habitual grace. It perfected and deified, so to speak, the very substance of Adam's soul. To it were added the *infused virtues* and the *gifts of the Holy Ghost*, which in turn deified his faculties. Lastly, *actual grace* came to set in motion all this supernatural organism enabling man to elicit supernatural acts, — God-like acts, meriting eternal life.

This grace is in substance the same as is granted to us by justification. We shall not explain it in detail now,

but later when in the second chapter we speak of regenerated man.

All these prerogatives, with the exception of infused knowledge, were given to Adam, not as a personal gift, but as a family possession — a patrimony to be handed down to his heirs should he abide faithful to God.

ART. III. THE FALL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ¹

I. *The fall*

67. In spite of these privileges man remained *free*, and in order to merit heaven he was put to a *test*. This test consisted in the fulfilment of the divine law. It consisted in particular in the carrying out of a *positive command* added to the natural law. Genesis expresses it in the form of a prohibition which forbade eating the fruit of the tree of *knowledge of good and evil*. Holy Writ narrates how the devil in the guise of a serpent came to tempt our first parents by raising a doubt in their minds as to the legitimacy of this ban. He tried to persuade them that if they ate the forbidden fruit, far from dying, they would become like gods, since they would know for themselves what was good and what evil, without need of recourse to the law of God: "*You shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.*" ² This was a temptation to pride, to revolt against God. Man fell and committed a formal act of *disobedience*, as St. Paul remarks, ³ but an act inspired by *pride* and soon followed by further delinquencies. It was a refusal to submit to God's authority, therefore, a grievous fault. The prohibition being an instrument to test the fidelity of the first man, this refusal amounted to a negation of God's wisdom and of His sovereign dominion. The violation was all the more grave since our first parents had full knowledge of God's liberality towards them, of His inalienable rights, of the importance of a precept carrying such a sanction, and since they were in no wise swept away by passion, having had ample time to weigh the frightful consequences of their act.

68. The question even suggests itself: how could they sin at all, since they were not under the sway of concupiscence. This we understand if we recall that no creature

¹ St. THOM., II^a II^æ q. 163-165; *de Malo*, q. 4; BAINVEL, *Nature et Supernaturel*, ch. VI-VII; A. DE BROGLIE, *op. cit.*, p. 133-134; L. LABAUCHE, *op. cit.*, Part. II, ch. I-V; AD. TANQUERAY, *Syn. theol. dogm.* t. II, n. 882-886 ed. 1926.

² *Gen.*, III, 5.

³ *Rom.*, V.

having a will of its own is impeccable. Free-will gives it the power of turning away from real good towards what is but apparent good. It implies the power of holding to the latter, preferring it to the former. This very choice is what constitutes sin. As St. Thomas says, impeccability can only be found where free will identifies itself with the moral law. This is God's privilege.

II. *The consequences of the fall*

69. Punishment followed quickly for our first parents and for their posterity.

A) The personal sanction visited upon them is described in Genesis. Here again God's goodness is to the fore. He could have on the spot punished them with death. His mercy halted Him. He merely left them shorn of those special privileges with which He had vested them, that is, stripped of the gifts of integrity and of habitual grace. He did not touch their nature or the prerogatives flowing therefrom. Doubtless, man's will is weakened compared with the strength it possessed when integrity was his. However, there is no conclusive evidence that it is actually feebler than it would have been in a purely natural state, at any rate it remains free in choosing good or evil. God even condescended to leave our first parents in possession of faith and hope and gave their forlorn souls the hopeful assurance of a redeemer, — their own offspring, who would one day vanquish the devil and reinstate fallen humanity. By His actual grace, at the same time, He invited them to repentance, and as soon as they repented, He granted them pardon of their sin.

70. B) But what will be the condition of their descendants? The answer is that mankind will be likewise deprived of *original justice*, that is to say, of *sanctifying grace* and the *gift of integrity*. Those endowments, free gifts in every sense, a patrimony, so to speak, were to be handed to his heirs should Adam prove faithful. This condition unfulfilled, man comes into the world deprived of original justice. When through penance our first parents regained grace, it was no longer as a heritage for their posterity, but solely as a personal possession, a grant to a private individual. To the new Adam, Christ Jesus, who would in time become the head of mankind, was reserved the expiation of our faults and the institution of a sacrament of *regeneration* to transmit to each of the baptized the grace forfeited in Paradise.

71. Thus it is that the children of Adam are born into this world without *original justice*, that is, without sanctifying grace and the gift of integrity. The lack of this grace is called *original sin*, sin only in the broad sense of the term, for it implies no guilty act on our part, but simply a fallen condition. It constitutes, considering the supernatural destiny to which we are called, a privation of a quality that should be ours, — a blemish, a moral taint that places us out of the pale of God's kingdom.

72. Moreover, on account of the forfeited *gift of integrity*, concupiscence rages in us and unless courageously withstood, it drags us into actual sin. With regard, then, to our primeval state we are as it were *withered* and *wounded*, subject to ignorance, prone to evil, weak against temptation.

Experience indeed shows that the force of concupiscence is not equally strong in all men. Each differs in temperament and character and therefore passions also vary in ardor and violence. Once the controlling check of original justice was lifted, explains St. Thomas, the passions regained full sway and prove more unruly in some, more subdued in others.

73. Must we go further and admit, with the Augustinian school, a positive, *intrinsic*, impairment of our *natural* energies and faculties? It is quite unnecessary. There is nothing to prove it. Should we admit, though, with some of the Thomists an *extrinsic* impairment of our powers? It consists, they say, in the fact that we have *more obstacles* to surmount, specially, the tyranny the devil wields over the vanquished, and the withdrawal of certain natural helps God would have granted us in a purely natural state. This is possible, nay, rather probable. But, in justice, we must add, that such hindrances find compensation in actual grace given us by God in virtue of the merits of His Son, and also in the protection accorded to us by His angels, particularly, our guardian angels.

74. **Conclusion.** This much we can safely say : owing to the Fall, man has lost the right balance he had as he came from the hands of God ; in comparison with his primeval state, he is now injured, *unbalanced*, as the actual plight of his faculties plainly shows.

A) This unbalanced condition becomes evident first of all with regard to our sensitive faculties. a) Our *exterior*

senses, our eyes, for instance, eagerly light on what our curiosity craves, our ears are ever ready to catch every novelty, our flesh is alive to every sensation of pleasure, heedless the while of the moral law. **b)** The same is true of our *interior senses*. With each flight of fancy our imagination represents to us all sorts of images more or less sensual. Our passions run headlong, oft times madly so, toward sensible or sensuous good, and utterly ignoring all moral good, endeavor to wrest compliance from the will. True indeed, such tendencies are not irresistible, for our lower faculties remain, in a measure, under the control of the will, yet, their submission, once they revolt, demands much strategy and effort.

75. B) The *intellectual* faculties, intellect and will, also have been injured by original sin.

There is no doubt that our intellect remains capable of knowing truth, and that with patient labor, even without the aid of revelation, it can obtain knowledge of certain fundamental truths in the natural order. The failures, however, in this regard, are most humiliating. The preoccupations of the present blind the mind to the realities of eternity. **a)** Instead of seeking God and the things that are God's, instead of rising spontaneously from the creature to the Creator, as it would have done in the primeval state, man's intellect gravitates earthward. The study of creatures frequently absorbs it and prevents its ascent to their Maker. 1) Its power of attention, drawn by curiosity, centres round its own whims to the neglect of the realities that lead man to his end. 2) It *falls most readily into error*. Innumerable prejudices to which we are victims and the passions that agitate our spirit drop a thick veil between our souls and the truth. Alas! only too often we lose our bearings upon the most vital questions, on which the course and direction of our moral life depend.

b) Our will, instead of paying homage to God, has, on the contrary, the most daring and pretentious aspirations to *independence*. It finds it bitter and painful to submit to God or to yield to His representatives on earth. When the issue is to conquer those difficulties that oppose themselves to the realization of good, its efforts are weak and inconstant. How frequently does it not allow sentiment and passion to carry it away! Saint Paul describes such weakness in striking terms: "For the good which I will, I do not: but the evil which I will not, that I do. For

I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man : but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ Our Lord." ¹ On the testimony of the Apostle the remedy for this wretched condition is the *grace of redemption*.

ART. IV. REDEMPTION AND ITS EFFECTS ²

76. Redemption is a wondrous work — God's masterpiece. By it, man disfigured by sin is *remade*. He is, in a sense, placed above his primordial state before the fall, so much so, that the Church in her liturgy does not hesitate to bless the fault that secured for us such a Redeemer as the God-man : " O happy fault, that merited such and so great a Redeemer! "

I. *The nature of Redemption*

77. God who from all eternity had foreseen man's fall, willed likewise from all eternity to provide a Redeemer for men, in the person of His Son. He determined to become man so that becoming the head of mankind He could in full measure expiate our sin and give us back, together with grace, all our rights to heaven. Thus He drew good out of evil and harmonized the rights of *justice* with those of His *goodness*.

He was not indeed bound to demand full justice. He could have pardoned man and contented Himself with the meagre and imperfect reparation that the latter could have proffered. But He regarded it more worthy of His glory and more salutary for man to enable him to offer full reparation for his fault.

78. A) Full justice required an *adequate* reparation, *in proportion to the offense*, and offered by a *lawful representative* of mankind. God brought this about by the Incarnation and the Redemption.

a) The Son of God takes flesh and thus becomes the chief of humanity, the head of a mystical body whose members

¹ *Rom.*, VII, 19-25.

² ST. THOM., III, q. 46-49; HUGON, O. P., *Le Mystère de la Rédemption*; BAINVEL, *op. cit.*, ch. VIII; J. RIVIÈRE, *The Atonement*; AD. TANQUEREY, *Synopsis theol. dogmat.*, t. II, n. 1124-1216; L. LABAUCHE, *God and Man*, vol. I. P. III.

we are. By this very fact, the Son can of right act and make atonement in our name.

b) This atonement is a satisfaction not only *equal* to the offense, but above it by far. If the moral value of any action proceeds first and foremost from the worth, the dignity of the person performing it, this reparation made by the God-Man has a *moral worth* that is *infinite*. A single act of the Son of God would have sufficed to make adequate reparation for all the sins of the human race. Now, as a matter of fact, Jesus, moved by the purest love, did make such acts of reparation without number. He filled the measure and crowned it with the greatest, the most sublime and heroic of actions, — the total immolation of self on Calvary. He has, indeed, made abundant and superabundant satisfactions : “ *Where sin abounded, grace did more abound.* ” ¹

c) The atonement is the same in kind as the offense. Adam’s sin was *disobedience* and *pride*. Jesus makes reparation by *humble* obedience, inspired by *love*, — an obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. “ *becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.* ” ² Again, just as a woman was instrumental in Adam’s fall, so a woman intervenes in man’s redemption with her power of intercession and her merits. Although in a secondary rôle Mary, the Immaculate Virgin Mother of the Saviour, coöperates with Him in the work of reparation. ” ³

Thus God’s *justice* is fully satisfied, and His *goodness* even more.

79. B) Holy Scripture, in fact, attributes the work of our redemption to the infinite mercy of God and His exceeding great love for us. In the words of St. Paul: “ *God, who is rich in mercy for his exceeding charity wherewith He loved us,..... hath quickened us together in Christ.* ” ⁴ The three divine persons vie one with the other in this work, each moved by a love which, in truth, would seem to be excessive.

a) The Father has an only-begotten Son, equal to Him, whom He loves like another self, and by whom He is loved with the same infinite love. It is this very Son whom He gives and sacrifices for us that we may rise again to life

¹ Rom., V, 5.

² Philip., II, 1.

³ Here it is question of the merit called *de congruo*, which we shall explain later on.

⁴ Ephes., II, 4.

from the death of sin : “ *For God so loved the world, as to give His Only-Begotten Son : that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.* ”¹ Could His generous love give more? In giving us His Son, has He not given us all other things? “ *He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him for us all, how hath He not also, with Him given us all things.* ”²

80. b) The Son joyously and generously accepted the mission entrusted to Him. From the first instant of His Incarnation, He offered Himself to the Father as the victim that replaced all the sacrifices of the Old Law. His entire life was a long sacrifice completed by His immolation on Calvary — a sacrifice born of the love He bore us : “ *Christ also hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness.* ”³

81. c) In order to finish His work He sent us the Holy Ghost. This Divine Spirit, who is none other than the substantial love of the Father and the Son, was not satisfied with instilling grace into our souls together with the infused virtues, especially divine charity, but gave Himself to us in order that we might not only enjoy His presence and possess His gifts, but even His very person : “ *The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.* ”⁴

Redemption is therefore, the masterpiece of divine love : this fact enables us to forecast its effects.

II. *The Effects of Redemption*

82. Jesus did not stop short once He had offered reparation to God for our offense and reconciled us to Him. He merited for us all the graces lost to us by sin, and many more.

First of all, He gave us back all the *supernatural goods* we had lost by sin :

a) *Habitual grace* with all the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; then, to adapt Himself better to our human nature He instituted the *Sacraments*, sensible signs that confer grace upon us in every important circumstance of our life and thus furnish us with greater security and greater confidence. b) He secured for us *actual graces* in a full measure, and according to the word of St. Paul,

¹ *John*, III, 16. — ² *Rom.*, VIII, 32. — ³ *Ephes.*, V, 2. — ⁴ *Rom.*, V, 5.

we are justified in judging them even more abundant than those we should have received in the state of innocence :
 “ *Where sin abounded, grace did more abound.* ” ¹

83. c) It is true that the *gift of integrity* was not given back to us immediately, but it is given us *gradually*. The grace of regeneration leaves us still exposed to the attacks of the threefold concupiscence and subject to the burden of life’s sufferings, but it gives us the needed strength to surmount them, rendering us more humble, more vigilant, more active in warding off and conquering temptation. Thus it grounds us in virtue and gives us the opportunity of increasing our merit. The example of Jesus, who so courageously carried His cross and ours, gives us new energy and sustains our efforts in the fight. The *actual graces*, which He has merited for us, and which He bestows with a lavishness truly divine make effort and victory easier. In proportion as we struggle under the leadership and protection of the Master, concupiscence weakens, our power of resistance grows, and a time comes when privileged souls are so grounded in virtue, that ever free as they remain to do evil, they never commit any fully deliberate venial sin. The final victory will come only with our entrance into heaven, but it will be all the more glorious having been bought at a greater price. Can we not also repeat :
O happy fault!

84. d) To such interior helps our Lord has joined *external* ones, particularly that of the *Visible Church*, founded and designed by Him to enlighten our minds by her teaching, to stay our wills by the warrant of her laws and judgments, to sanctify our souls by sacraments, sacramentals and indulgences. In her we have an immense treasure-house of help for which we must thank God :
O felix culpa! O happy fault!

85. e) Lastly, it is not certain that the Word of God would have taken flesh had the fall of our first parents not occurred. Now the Incarnation is such a priceless boon that it alone would suffice to explain and justify the cry of the Church : *O happy fault!*

Instead of having for the head of the race a man richly endowed, indeed, but liable to error and to sin, we have one who is none other than the Eternal Son of God. The head of mankind is the Word, clothed in our nature, true man as

¹ *Rom.*, V, 20.

well as true God. He is the *ideal mediator*, a mediator for worship as well as for redemption, who adores His Father not merely in His own name but in the name of the entire human race, nay more, in the name of the angels, for it is through Him that the heavenly hosts praise and glorify their Creator: "through Whom the angels praise."¹ He is the *perfect priest* who, while having free access to God on account of His divine nature, stoops down to His fellow-men, His brethren, to deal them kindness and indulgence the while He knows their weakness: "*Who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err: because He Himself also is encompassed with infirmity.*"²

With Him and through Him we can render to God the infinite homage to which He is entitled. With Him and through Him we can obtain all the graces we need both for ourselves and for others. When we adore, it is He that adores in us and through us; when we ask for help, it is He that supports our requests; and for this reason, whatsoever we shall ask of the Father in His name shall be graciously given us.

We must, therefore, rejoice in the possession of such a Redeemer, such a Mediator, and have a trust in Him that knows no limits.

CONCLUSION

86. This brief historical survey brings out most strikingly the supreme *worth* of the supernatural life and the *grandeur* and *weakness* of man on whom it is bestowed.

1° This life is, indeed, excellent since:

a) It is born of a *loving thought of God*, who has loved us from all eternity and has willed to unite us to Himself in the sweetest and closest intimacy: "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore I have drawn thee to myself.*"³

b) It is a *real participation*, even if finite, *in the nature and in the life of God*, enabling us to know and to love God even as the Father, Son and Holy Ghost know and love one another: "partakers of the divine nature." (See n. 106)

c) It has such worth in God's eyes that, to give it to us, the Father sacrifices His Only-Begotten Son, the Son makes a complete immolation of self, and the Holy Ghost comes to impart this life to our souls.

Indeed, it is the pearl of great price: "By whom he hath

¹ Preface of the Mass. — ² *Hebr.*, V, 2. — ³ *Jer.*, XXXI, 3.

given us most great and precious promises,"¹ which we must hold dearer than all else and keep and cherish with jealous care: *its worth is that of God Himself!*

87. 2^o Still, we carry this treasure in earthen vessels. If our first parents, endowed with the gift of integrity and enriched with all sorts of privileges, had the misfortune of forfeiting it both for themselves and their posterity, should we entertain no fear? We, who in spite of our spiritual regeneration, carry within us the threefold concupiscence?

No doubt, there are within us *generous* and *noble* impulses born of what is good in our nature. There are, besides, the supernatural forces which come to us through Christ's merits and through our incorporation into Him. However, we remain *weak* and *inconstant*, unless we lean upon Him who is our strength as well as our head. The secret of our power does not rest with us, but with God and Christ Jesus our Lord. The history of our First Parents and their lamentable fall shows us that the great evil in the world, the only evil, is *sin*. It shows us that we must be ever on our guard to repel at once and with all our might every attack that the enemy may make against us, be it from without or from within. We are nevertheless well protected and fully armed against his onslaughts, as our second chapter, dealing with the nature of the Christian life, will prove.

CHAPTER II

The Nature of the Christian Life

88. The supernatural life which, by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, is a participation in God's life, is often called *the life of God in us or the life of Jesus in us*. Such expressions are correct provided one takes care to explain them, so as to avoid anything savoring of pantheism. We have not a life *identical* with that of God or our Lord; we only have a life *similar* to theirs, a finite participation, yet most real.

We may define it thus: *a share in the divine life given us by the Holy Ghost who dwells in us, because of the merits of Jesus Christ; a life which we must protect against all destructive tendencies.*

¹ II Petr., I, 4.

89. We see, then, that as regards our supernatural life God plays the principal rôle, we a secondary one. It is the Triune God that comes Himself to confer it upon us, for He alone can make us share in His own life. He communicates it to us in virtue of the merits of Christ (n. 78), who is the meritorious, exemplary and vital cause of our sanctification. It is perfectly true that *God lives in us*, that *Jesus lives in us*; yet, our spiritual life is *not identical* with that of God or of our Lord. It is distinct from but similar to the one and the other. *Our rôle* consists in making use of the divine gifts in order to live with God and for God, in order to live in union with Jesus and to imitate Him. But we cannot live this supernatural life without a continual struggle against the threefold concupiscence which still remains in us (n. 83). And moreover, since God has endowed us with a supernatural organism, it is our duty to make that life increase in us by meritorious acts and the fervent reception of the sacraments.

This is the meaning of the definition we have given, and this whole chapter is but its explanation and development. From it we shall draw practical conclusions concerning devotion to the Most Holy Trinity, devotion to and union with the Incarnate Word, and even concerning devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, since all these devotions flow from their relations with the Word of God-made-Flesh.

Although the action of God and that of the soul have parallel developments in the Christian life, we shall for the sake of clearness treat of them in two successive articles, one on the *rôle of God* and the other on the *rôle of man*.

THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
ST. TERESA OF AVILA

THE LIFE OF ST. TERESA OF JESUS
WRITTEN BY HERSELF

Including
THE RELATIONS
OR MANIFESTATIONS OF HER SPIRITUAL STATE WHICH
ST. TERESA SUBMITTED TO HER CONFESSOR

Translated from the Spanish by
David Lewis

Compared with the Original Autograph Text and
Re-Edited with Additional Notes and Introduction by the
Very Rev. Fr. Benedict Zimmerman, O.C.D.
PRIOR OF ST. LUKE'S WINCANTON

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
Introduction, by Rev. B. Zimmerman	ix
Annals of the Saint's Life	xxxvii
Prologue	i
I. Childhood and early Impressions—The Blessing of pious Parents —Desire of Martyrdom—Death of the Saint's Mother	2
II. Early Impressions—Dangerous Books and Companions—The Saint is placed in a Convent	6
III. The Blessing of being with good people—How certain Illusions were removed	12
IV. Our Lord helps her to become a Nun—Her many Infirmities	16
V. Illness and Patience of the Saint—The Story of a Priest whom she rescued from a Life of Sin	24
VI. The great Debt she owed to our Lord for His Mercy to her—She takes St. Joseph for her Patron	33
VII. Lukewarmness—The Loss of Grace—Inconvenience of Laxity in Religious Houses	41
VIII. The Saint ceases not to pray—Prayer the way to recover what is lost—All exhorted to pray—The great Advantage of Prayer, even to those who may have ceased from it	57
IX. The means whereby our Lord quickened her Soul, gave her Light in her Darkness, and made her strong in Goodness	65
X. The Graces she received in Prayer—What we can do ourselves —The great Importance of understanding what our Lord is doing for us—She desires her Confessors to keep her Writings secret, because of the special Graces of our Lord to her, which they had commanded her to describe	70
XI. Why men do not attain quickly to the perfect Love of God—Of Four Degrees of Prayer—Of the First Degree—The Doc- trine profitable for Beginners, and for those who have no sensible Sweetness	77
XII. What we can ourselves do—The Evil of desiring to attain to supernatural States before our Lord calls us	89
XIII. Of certain Temptations of Satan—Instructions relating thereto	94
XIV. The Second State of Prayer—Its supernatural Character	107
XV. Instructions for those who have attained to the Prayer of Quiet —Many advance so far, but few go farther	115
XVI. The Third State of Prayer—Deep Matters—What the Soul can do that has reached it—Effects of the great Graces of our Lord	126
XVII. The Third State of Prayer—The Effects thereof—The Hin- drance caused by the Imagination and the Memory	132

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVIII. The Fourth State of Prayer—The great Dignity of the Soul raised to it by our Lord—Attainable on Earth, not by our Merit, but by the Goodness of our Lord . . .	139
XIX. The Effects of this Fourth State of Prayer—Earnest Exhortations to those who have attained to it not to go back, nor to cease from Prayer, even if they fall—The great Calamity of going back . . .	148
XX. The Difference between Union and Rapture—What Rapture is—The Blessing it is to the Soul—The Effects of it . . .	159
XXI. Conclusion of the Subject—Pain of the Awakening—Light against Delusions . . .	176
XXII. The Security of Contemplatives lies in their not ascending to high Things if our Lord does not raise them—The Sacred Humanity must be the Road to the highest Contemplation—A Delusion in which the Saint was once entangled . . .	184
XXIII. The Saint resumes the History of her Life—Aiming at Perfection—Means whereby it may be gained—Instructions for Confessors . . .	197
XXIV. Progress under Obedience—Her Inability to resist the Graces of God—God multiplies His Graces . . .	208
XXV. Divine Locutions—Delusions on that Subject . . .	213
XXVI. How the Fears of the Saint vanished—How she was assured that her Prayer was the Work of the Holy Spirit . . .	227
XXVII. The Saint prays to be directed by a different Way—Intellectual Visions . . .	232
XXVIII. Visions of the Sacred Humanity, and of the glorified Bodies—Imaginary Visions—Great Fruits thereof when they come from God . . .	245
XXIX. Of Visions—The Graces of our Lord bestowed on the Saint—The Answers our Lord gave her for those who tried her . . .	258
XXX. St. Peter of Alcantara comforts the Saint—Great Temptations and Interior Trials . . .	268
XXXI. Of certain outward Temptations and Appearances of Satan—Of the Sufferings thereby occasioned—Counsels for Those who go on unto Perfection . . .	283
XXXII. Our Lord shows St. Teresa the Place which she had by her Sins deserved in Hell—The Torments there—How the Monastery of St. Joseph was founded . . .	298
XXXIII. The Foundation of the Monastery hindered—Our Lord consoles the Saint . . .	310
XXXIV. The Saint leaves her Monastery of the Incarnation for a time, at the command of her superior—Consoles an afflicted Widow . . .	321
XXXV. The Foundation of the House of St. Joseph—The observation of holy Poverty therein—How the Saint left Toledo . . .	334
XXXVI. The Foundation of the Monastery of St. Joseph—Persecution and Temptations—Great interior Trial of the Saint, and her Deliverance . . .	344
XXXVII. The Effects of the divine Graces in her Soul—The inestimable Greatness of one Degree of Glory . . .	364
XXXVIII. Certain heavenly Secrets, Visions, and Revelations—The Effects of them in her Soul . . .	372

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXXIX. Other Graces bestowed on the Saint—The Promises of our Lord to her—Divine Locutions and Visions	390
XL. Visions, Revelations, and Locutions	406

THE RELATIONS.

RELATION	PAGE
I. Sent to St. Peter of Alcantara in 1560 from the Monastery of the Incarnation, Avila	423
II. To one of her Confessors, from the House of Doña Luisa de la Cerda, in 1562	436
III. Of various Graces granted to the Saint from the year 1568 to 1571 inclusive	443
IV. Of the Graces the Saint received in Salamanca, at the end of Lent, 1571	452
V. Observations on certain Points of Spirituality	456
VI. The Vow of Obedience to Father Gratian which the Saint made in 1575	462
VII. Made for Rodrigo Alvarez, S. J., in February or March 1576	466
VIII. Addressed to the Same, March or April 1576	478
IX. Of certain spiritual Graces she received in Toledo and Avila in the years 1576 and 1577	488
X. Of a Revelation to the Saint at Avila, 1579, and of Directions concerning the Government of the Order	499
XI. Written from Palencia in May 1581, and addressed to Don Alonzo Velasquez, Bishop of Osma, who had been, when Canon of Toledo, one of the Saint's Confessors	500
Index	505

THE LIFE
OF THE
HOLY MOTHER TERESA OF JESUS.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

I H S

PROLOGUE.

As I have been commanded and left at liberty to describe at length my way of prayer, and the workings of the grace of our Lord within me, I could wish that I had been allowed at the same time to speak distinctly and in detail of my grievous sins and wicked life. But it has not been so willed; on the contrary, I am laid herein under great restraint; and therefore, for the love of our Lord, I beg of every one who shall read this story of my life¹ to keep in mind how wicked it has been; and how, among the Saints who were converted to God, I have never found one in whom I can have any comfort. For I see that they, after our Lord had called them, never fell into sin again; I not only became worse, but, as it seems to me, deliberately withstood the graces of His Majesty, because I saw that I was thereby bound to serve Him more earnestly, knowing, at the same time, that of myself I could not pay the least portion of my debt.

¹ The Saint, in a letter written Nov. 19, 1581, to Don Pedro de Castro, then Canon of Avila, speaking of this book, calls it the book "Of the Compassions of God"—*Y ansi intitulé ese libro De las Misericordias de Dios.* "Vitam igitur suam internam et supernaturalem magis pandit quam narrat actiones suas mere humanas" (*Bollandists*, n. 2).

May He be blessed for ever Who waited for me so long ! I implore Him with my whole heart to send me His grace, so that in all clearness and truth I may give this account of myself which my confessors command me to give ; and even our Lord Himself, I know it, has also willed it should be given for some time past, but I had not the courage to attempt it. And I pray it may be to His praise and glory, and a help to my confessors ; who, knowing me better, may succour my weakness, so that I may render to our Lord some portion of the service I owe Him. May all creatures praise Him for ever ! Amen.

I H S

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY IMPRESSIONS. THE BLESSING OF PIOUS PARENTS. DESIRE OF MARTYRDOM. DEATH OF THE SAINT'S MOTHER.

In which she tells how the Lord began to dispose this soul from childhood for virtue, and how she was helped by having virtuous parents.

I. I HAD a father and mother who were devout and feared God. Our Lord also helped me with His grace. All this would have been enough to make me good, if I had not been so wicked. My father was very much given to the reading of good books ; and so he had them in Spanish, that his children might read them. These books, with my mother's carefulness to make us say our prayers, and to bring us up devout to our Lady and to certain Saints, began to make me think seriously when I was, I believe, six or seven years old. It helped me, too, that I never saw my father and mother respect anything but goodness. They were

very good themselves. My father was a man of great charity towards the poor, and compassion for the sick, and also for servants ; so much so, that he never could be persuaded to keep slaves, for he pitied them so much : and a slave belonging to one of his brothers being once in his house, was treated by him with as much tenderness as his own children. He used to say that he could not endure the pain of seeing that she was not free. He was a man of great truthfulness ; nobody ever heard him swear or speak ill of any one ; his life was most pure.

2. My mother also was a woman of great goodness, and her life was spent in great infirmities. She was singularly pure in all her ways. Though possessing great beauty, yet was it never known that she gave reason to suspect that she made any account whatever of it ; for, though she was only three-and-thirty years of age when she died, her apparel was already that of a woman advanced in years. She was very calm, and had great sense. The sufferings she went through during her life were grievous, her death most Christian.¹

3. We were three sisters and nine brothers.² All,

¹ See ch. xxxvii. 1, where the Saint says that she saw them in a vision both in Heaven.

² Don Alonso Sanchez de Cepeda, father of the Saint, married first Doña Catalina del Peso y Henao, and had three children—one daughter, Maria de Cepeda, and two sons. After the death of Catalina, he married Doña Beatriz Davila y Ahumada, by whom he had nine children—seven boys and two girls. The third of these, and the eldest of the daughters, was the Saint, Doña Teresa Sanchez Cepeda Davila y Ahumada. In the Monastery of the Incarnation, where she was a professed nun for twenty-six years, she was known as Doña Teresa ; but in the year 1563, when she left her monastery for the new foundation of St. Joseph, of the Reform of the Carmelites, she took for the first time the name of Teresa of Jesus. The saint was born March 28, 1515, and baptized on the 4th of April, in the Church of San Juan ; on which day Mass was said for the first time in the new Monastery of the Incarnation, where the Saint made her profession. Her godfather was Vela Nuñez, and her godmother Doña Maria del Aguila. The Bollandists and Father Bouix say that she was baptized on the very day of her birth. But the testimony of Doña Maria de Pinel, a nun in the Monastery of the Incarnation, is clear : and Don Vicente de la Fuente, quoting it, vol. vi. p. 4, says that this delay of baptism was nothing singular in those days, provided there was no danger of death.

by the mercy of God, resembled their parents in goodness except myself, though I was the most cherished of my father. And, before I began to offend God, I think he had some reason,—for I am filled with sorrow whenever I think of the good desires with which our Lord inspired me, and what a wretched use I made of them. Besides, my brothers never in any way hindered me in the service of God.

4. One of my brothers was nearly of my own age³; and he it was whom I most loved, though I was very fond of them all, and they of me. He and I used to read Lives of Saints together. When I read of martyrdom undergone by the Saints for the love of God, it struck me that the vision of God was very cheaply purchased; and I had a great desire to die a martyr's death—not out of any love of Him of which I was conscious, but that I might most quickly attain to the fruition of those great joys of which I read that they were reserved in Heaven; and I used to discuss with my brother how we could become martyrs. We settled to go together to the country of the Moors,⁴ begging our way for the love of God, that we might be there beheaded⁵; and our Lord, I believe, had given us courage enough, even at so tender an age, if we could have found the means to proceed; but our greatest difficulty seemed to be our father and mother.

³ Rodrigo de Cepeda, four years older than the Saint, entered the army, and, serving in South America, died in the wilderness of Chaco. St. Teresa always considered him a martyr, because he died in defence of the Catholic faith (*Ribera*, lib. i. cap. iii.). Before he sailed for the Indies, he made his will, and left all his property to the Saint, his sister (*Reforma de los Descalços*, vol. i. lib. i. cap. iii. § 4).

⁴ The Bollandists incline to believe that St. Teresa may not have intended to quit Spain, because all the Moors were not at that time driven out of the country. The Bull of the Saint's canonization, and the Lectons of the Breviary, say that she left her father's house, *ut in Africam trajiceret*.

⁵ The two children set out on their strange journey—one of them seven, the other eleven, years old—through the Adaja Gate; but when they had crossed the bridge, they were met by one of their uncles, Don Francisco Alvarez de Cepeda, who brought them back to their mother, who had already sent through Avila in quest of them. Rodrigo, like Adam, excused himself, and laid the blame on the woman (*Ribera*, lib. i. cap. iv.).

5. It astonished us greatly to find it said in what we were reading that pain and bliss were everlasting. We happened very often to talk about this ; and we had a pleasure in repeating frequently, " For ever, ever, ever." Through the constant uttering of these words, our Lord was pleased that I should receive an abiding impression of the way of truth when I was yet a child.

6. As soon as I saw it was impossible to go to any place where people would put me to death for the sake of God, my brother and I set about becoming hermits ; and in an orchard belonging to the house we contrived, as well as we could, to build hermitages, by piling up small stones one on the other, which fell down immediately ; and so it came to pass that we found no means of accomplishing our wish. Even now I have a feeling of devotion when I consider how God gave me in my early youth what I lost by my own fault. I gave alms as I could—and I could but little. I contrived to be alone, for the sake of saying my prayers⁶—and they were many—especially the Rosary, to which my mother had a great devotion, and had made us also in this like herself. I used to delight exceedingly, when playing with other children, in the building of monasteries, as if we were nuns ; and I think I wished to be a nun, though not so much as I did to be a martyr or a hermit.

7. I remember that, when my mother died,⁷ I was about twelve years old—a little less. When I began to understand my loss, I went in my affliction to an image of our Lady,⁸ and with many tears implored her

⁶ She was also marvellously touched by the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, of whom there was a picture in her room (*Ribera*, lib. i. cap. iv.). She speaks of this repeatedly. (See ch. xxx. 24 ; *Foundations*, xxxi. 42 ; *Int. Castle*, M. vi. ch. xi. 5 ; *Way of Perfection*, xix. 4.)

⁷ The last will and testament of Doña Beatriz de Ahumada was made Nov. 24, 1528 : and she must have died soon after ; the Saint was nearly fourteen years old at that time.

⁸ Our Lady of Charity, in the church of the hospital where the poor and pilgrims were received ; this statue is now in the cathedral of Avila.

to be my mother. I did this in my simplicity, and I believe that it was of service to me; for I have by experience found the royal Virgin help me whenever I recommended myself to her; and at last she has brought me back to herself. It distresses me now, when I think of, and reflect on, that which kept me from being earnest in the good desires with which I began.

8. O my Lord, since Thou art determined to save me—may it be the pleasure of Thy Majesty to effect it!—and to bestow upon me so many graces, why has it not been Thy pleasure also—not for my advantage, but for Thy greater honour—that this habitation, wherein Thou hast continually to dwell, should not have contracted so much defilement? It distresses me even to say this, O my Lord, because I know the fault is all my own, seeing that Thou hast left nothing undone to make me, even from my youth, wholly Thine. When I would complain of my parents, I cannot do it; for I saw nothing in them but all good, and carefulness for my welfare. Then, growing up, I began to discover the natural gifts which our Lord had given me—they were said to be many; and, when I should have given Him thanks for them, I made use of every one of them, as I shall now explain, to offend Him.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY IMPRESSIONS. DANGEROUS BOOKS AND COMPANIONS. THE SAINT IS PLACED IN A CONVENT.

How she lost these virtues and how important it is to deal from childhood with virtuous persons.

1. WHAT I shall now speak of was, I believe, the beginning of great harm to me. I often think how