

THE IMITATION OF THE
SACRED HEART
OF JESUS

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OF JESUS

by

Rev. Peter J. Arnoudt, S.J.

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Testimony

OF THOSE THAT HAVE OFFICIALLY GIVEN
THEIR OPINION OF THIS WORK

*Opinion of the Very Rev. Father Roothaan,
General of the Society of Jesus.*

(From a letter of his Paternity to the Author.)

Rev. Father in Christ. P. C.

Some time since I received the manuscript (bearing date 1846) of a work written by your Reverence, and entitled, THE IMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS. I was highly delighted with the subject of the Book, and the zeal of your Reverence to promote a devotion so useful and so much recommended. . . . I hope that this work of your Reverence will be printed for the good of the faithful.

Opinions of the Censors in America.

1. "I have examined the little work entitled, THE IMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS. It pleases me very much, and appears well fitted to enkindle in the hearts of the Faithful a love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to supply abundant matter for meditation, and point out the path to every kind of virtue and perfection. Nor do I judge that anything hinders it from being published, much less do I think that there is in it aught contrary to Faith or good morals."—*First Cens. Prof. of Mor. Theol.*

2. "I have read the work entitled, THE IMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, in four books. And first, the Author's subject—which may furnish abundant fruit to the person that reads it, or meditates thereon—pleases me. Again, the manner in which the author follows up his subject, is complete. Thirdly, the style itself shows a natural simplicity, which is agreeable. Nor do I see what more can be desired in this little work. Neither did I discover anything which may offend against Faith, or sound and pure morals."—*Second Cens. Prof. Dogm. Theol.*

3. "I have read the book entitled, THE IMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, and find it very well adapted to awaken the desire of perfection, and, at the same time, such as to direct the reader how to walk without stumbling in the way of perfection."—*Third Cens. D. D.*

4. "Let this work be printed; it will lead souls to sanctity."—*Fourth Cens. Sup.*

Translator's Preface

The Book, which is here presented to the English-speaking public, is one of those works which possess a merit of their own. The general favor with which it has been received throughout Europe, and the high commendations bestowed upon it, leave no room for doubt that it will be equally welcomed in America, where it was originally composed. The circumstances under which it was begun are incidentally alluded to by the author, in the Epilogue.

If care, study and meditation are indispensable in the production of a solid work, the author has added to these even more than the advice of the Roman bard: "*nonumque prematur in annum,*" since it was finished so long ago as 1846. No wonder, then, if it is a Book of rare merit, and worthy of keeping company with the immortal FOLLOWING OF CHRIST, of the venerable à *Kempis*. This work it resembles in teaching the highest practical truths, but it differs from the same, in that it is more regular in plan; more complete, actual, definite.

To appreciate the IMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, it should not merely be read once and again: it should be used as a constant and cherished guide to point out to us how, in every circumstance of life, we may learn to avail ourselves of God's favors and dispensations, to lay up treasures in Heaven.

To understand this we need only refer to the general design of the work. It takes a person at the beginning, lays down before him the groundwork of the interior, the spiritual life; and proceeds methodically to lead him, step by step, through its mysterious pathways, until it brings him to the very summit of Christian perfection. Nor is

this done by simply inculcating abstract theories and sublime teachings: Our Lord is, throughout, introduced, placing before us the living example of His Heart, and applying, practically and in detail, His own lessons.

The very soul, so to speak, of the work is the love of the Heart of Jesus. Other virtues form, as it were, the body. Certain leading principles, like so many veins pervading all, complete the whole. These leading principles are the mainspring of the spiritual life. The chief among them may be said to be: a great purity of heart and horror of sin—avoiding, however, a false delicacy, or scrupulousness of conscience—an unfeigned esteem of genuine virtue, a generous spirit of self-denial, an ardent affection for prayer, a perfect resignation to the divine Will, a true idea and appreciation of the Church and her mission upon earth, and, consequently, a sincere, a childlike devotion to her; in fine, a real zeal for the salvation of others and for all the interests of Jesus, with whom the soul has, in some manner, become identified. But, in order to realize all this, the reader should give proper attention to the Directory, placed before each of the four Books. This is an essential portion of the work, and exceedingly well adapted to enable us to reap from it the intended spiritual profit.

Whence it appears that the work possesses no ordinary solidity; and, in truth, for directors of souls, for religious, yea, for every Christian—who desires to make progress in virtue and perfection—it should become an inseparable companion.

As regards its English dress, the translator would state, that it has been his principal aim to give, as far as possible, the exact meaning of the author, preferring this to elegance of style and diction—as more useful and appropriate. If he contribute, in any wise, to increase among Christians the knowledge, the honor, the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, he will deem his labors amply rewarded.

Prologue

1. The most ancient special devotion of Christians is doubtless that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Son of God. The holy Sacraments and the other objects of devotion did not yet exist, when the Blessed Virgin Mary found her delight in worshiping the most Sweet Heart of her Jesus; already did Holy Joseph clasp that Heart to his bosom; even then were the Shepherds and the Magi, Simeon and Anna, the Apostles and the disciples attracted to It and by It: they longed to show to It the affection and love of their hearts. But after Jesus had called upon all men to learn, "that He is meek and humble of Heart;" after He had drawn from the treasury of His heart that best of all gifts, the Sacrament of the Most Blessed Eucharist; lastly, after He had willed that, upon the Cross, His Heart should be opened, and continue open, as a place of refuge for all; then was devotion to His divine Heart wonderfully increased. The Apostles now spread it throughout the world as a special worship. Thenceforth, the Fathers of the Church themselves practiced it most tenderly, and commended it most carefully to others. The Saints of every after age became devoted disciples of the Heart of Jesus. But when came the fullness of time, at which He had decreed to pour forth all the riches of His Heart, the goodness and kindness of the Saviour were made manifest, and Himself revealed His wish that, thereafter, this devotion should be a most especial one; since He declared and promised that He would lavish the abundance of His graces upon all who should consecrate themselves to the worship of His Heart.

2. The object of this worship is the Heart Itself of

Jesus. And since in Jesus Christ there are two natures, the divine and the human, and only one person, the divine Person; the Heart of Jesus Christ is the Heart of the divine Person, the Heart of the Word Incarnate. And because the divine Person is to be honored with the highest worship; the worship to be paid to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which can neither be separated nor taken away from the divine Person, is likewise supreme. This is a Catholic truth, which has prevailed over all contrary errors.

3. The end of this devotion is threefold. The first, to make Jesus a return for that boundless love, of which His Heart is the symbol, that made Him do so much and suffer so immeasurably for our sake; and induced Him to bestow upon us that sweetest and most precious of all gifts, the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The second, that, through the fervor of our piety, we may, as far as we can, make amends for all the insults which have been, or are even now offered to His most Sacred Heart, which He exhibits to us as the throne of His affections. The third, that imitating what we worship, we may be inspired with the same affections, the same sentiments that animated His Heart during His life of toil and suffering, and still animate It in His blissful and Sacramental life.

4. From its antiquity, object, and manifold end, it is plain that this devotion is most excellent, most profitable, most solid, and most consoling. But since to imitate what we worship is the abridgment of religion, and since the other ends are contained and reduced to practice in a true Imitation; therefore, in order to insist on this Imitation, and, as far as it is allowed, to direct the same, this little volume is presented to all.

5. This work, which contains a summary of Ascetic Theology, and embraces the doctrine, as well as the practice, of the spiritual and interior life, will supply ample matter for daily meditation, throughout the whole year. In this manner the reader will be enabled to repeat it every year, to examine it more closely, and to impress it more deeply on his mind and heart. He can, if it so pleases,

start from the beginning and continue to the end of the work; or he may, whilst going on from the beginning, occasionally break off this order, either when some necessity or advantage invites him to some portion specially adapted to his present feelings; or when, on the days on which he approaches Holy Communion, his devotion suggests the last Book as better suited to his actual circumstances.

6. For very weighty reasons, things are not proposed here in general and in common, as is usually done in books for meditation, but everything is laid down specially and in particular, both in regard to the evil to be avoided, and the good to be practiced. First, that the reader may not be left in uncertainty or beating the air, aiming and grasping at whatever presents itself by the way, and yet gain, or secure nothing. Secondly, that having assiduously before his eyes something determinate, he may direct his strength and efforts, as well in time of prayer and meditation as during self-examination and the performance of good works, to this, that he subdue what is to be subdued, that he acquire what is to be acquired. Lastly, that by destroying separately those things which are the causes, or, as it were, the roots of other evils, he may the more easily and the more efficaciously demolish the rest; and that, by learning and acquiring separately those capital virtues of which, in the lowliness and charity of His Heart, Jesus has given us the example, he may the more readily and the more certainly obtain all other virtues.

7. What regards the manner of writing, although it is most true, that the testimony of Christ must not be announced in loftiness of speech or wisdom, since the kingdom of God consists not in speech but in virtue; yet, it seemed proper to attend carefully to two things: first, that the style should everywhere be suited to the subject; secondly, that the diction should be sufficiently pure.

8. Finally, it must be observed, that the character of this little work is such, as to require, not that it should be read in public to others, but that everyone, who desires

to use it, may read it privately to himself alone. For its form, its reasoning demand that, in order to relish it, you should, in some manner, converse alone with Jesus, face to face, heart to heart.

Directory for the First Book

1. Whoever desires to gather for himself the whole fruit of this work, must rightly understand the aim of each Book, properly apply the means proposed, and diligently strive to surmount the obstacles to the attainment of this aim. Wherefore, in regard to these things, we shall briefly and clearly lay down before every Book that which may serve to direct you with safety.

2. The aim of the first Book is, to teach you how to free the heart, first, from the stains of sin, afterwards from the love of a corrupt world, and lastly, from the inordinate affection for self. And this may be understood in three ways, and reached through as many degrees.

And first, it is required that you free your soul from every mortal sin, and from the love of the world and every ill-regulated affection for yourself, so far as actually to prefer God, your Creator and Saviour, before all things; and consequently, to be unwilling, for anything whatsoever, to offend mortally the Divine Majesty.

Secondly, that you cleanse your heart from every deliberate venial sin, and from the love of the world and the ill-regulated affection for self, so that not even to obtain all things created, nor even to preserve life itself, you would commit any deliberate venial sin.

Thirdly, that you purify yourself from those imperfections which a great fidelity to divine grace may enable you to avoid; and that you so dispose yourself to abhor the world, and to detest every inordinate affection for self.

Whence it follows that all, they that begin, they that are advanced, yea the perfect themselves, may profitably

make use of this book and go over it again and again. For, "Believe me," says St. Bernard, "things cut off sprout forth again, what is driven off returns, what is put out is again enkindled, and what lies slumbering is again awakened. It is therefore but little to have pruned once, the pruning-knife should be applied, yea, if possible, always; if you are in earnest, you will always find something which needs pruning."

Here it must carefully be observed, that a perfect cleansing of the heart is a matter of the utmost importance, whereon almost everything in the spiritual life depends. The chief reason why there are so few who find the path of virtue easy and pleasant; so few who continue to advance readily and perseveringly; so few who attain to the divine union; so few, in fine, who even in this life enjoy the good things which the Lord has here promised to the clean of heart—is because so few do perfectly cleanse their interior. Many there are who labor much and make little progress: they are often obliged to begin anew; they scarcely, or almost never, taste the sweetness of virtue; they carry the cross, but do not experience its unction. And, although they may at last be saved, yet for all eternity, they deprive God of a great glory, and themselves of an immense bliss, which they could easily have merited, had they cleansed themselves perfectly. Wherefore, there is hardly anything which the demon strives more to hinder than a complete cleansing of the heart. He suffers us quietly enough to practice virtues, and even to apply ourselves to perfection, provided we neglect purity of heart. For he knows, that in this way we will fall into delusions, and never acquire genuine and solid virtues, much less true perfection. Now, this is the common illusion, against which souls, that are not yet well purified, should especially be on their guard: They desire namely, after a superficial cleansing of the heart, forthwith to deal on terms of intimacy in the interior life with Jesus, to be entertained with Him amid the flowers of virtues, and to taste the most delicious fruits: or, which is still more dangerous, neglecting perfect purity of heart, they

aspire to the enjoyment of internal union with Jesus, so full of love and sweetness. There are other illusions, to which souls that enter upon the spiritual life are exposed; for example: they practice external mortification even to excess; they wish—with a mind in some manner interiorly stubborn, and through a certain violence—to be freed from something that is irksome to them, or to acquire that for which they long; they keep up fear, even unto down-heartedness. But these things, although dangerous, are not so common nor baneful, as that whereby a person is induced to overlook interior purity.

3. To this, therefore, you must direct all your endeavors. First, having well understood that you are called to true bliss everlasting, learn, as perfectly as possible, all the malice and all the evil of sin, and feel, in some manner, in your soul all the deformity caused in you by sin; secondly, acquire as perfect a knowledge as possible of the vanity and wickedness of the world, and comprehend most intimately the lamentable fate of those that suffer themselves, of their own accord, to be forever utterly destroyed by the world; thirdly, have a true knowledge of your own self—what you have made yourself through your offenses, how miserable you are of yourself, and to what you tend of yourself.

To attain to all this, it is not enough to read the Book in a hasty manner, but you should meditate with attention and diligence on what is said, and reduce it to practice. For, in this work things are not so much unfolded as pointed out: first, in order that you may reflect thereon, and endeavor to develop and apply the same to yourself; secondly, that you may stir up the affections of your heart, and ask of the Lord whatever you may need, according to the state of your soul; lastly, that you may secure an inward relish and gather more abundant fruit. For, by thus meditating, by pious desires, by earnest prayer, you shall understand the matter more clearly, and apply it with more profit; and, in return, the Lord, according to the generosity of His Heart, will reward your endeavors, and bless them with His grace. All which is to be under-

stood as referring not to the first Book only, but to the others likewise.

4. There are two methods of using this first Book: each of which is perfectly safe and easy, as is proved by the experience of very many, even uneducated persons, who are wont to spend whole hours in meditation, without weariness and with much fruit.

The first method is mainly suitable for beginners, who, not yet accustomed to mental prayer, cannot keep up a continuous reasoning; nothing, however, hinders others from employing this same method, particularly when they do not feel themselves properly disposed to make deeper reflections.

First, therefore, recite a preparatory prayer, which may always be the same, and as follows: "Gather unto Thee, Lord Jesus, all my senses; cleanse my heart from all evil and unbecoming thoughts; enlighten my understanding, inflame my heart, that, during this prayer, I may employ attentively and devoutly the senses of my body and the powers of my soul, for Thy glory and my salvation; and that, through Thy most Sacred Heart, I may deserve to be heard in the sight of Thy Divine Majesty. Amen. Lord Jesus, in unison with that divine intention of Thy Heart, whereby Thou didst pay to God the tribute of Thy praise, I offer to Thee this prayer." After which, place yourself before the Lord, in some appropriate mystery, or as dwelling in the holy Tabernacle. Finally, beg fervently of Him the fruit of the prayer which you are about to make. These three things constitute the beginning or introduction of the meditation, in whichever manner it is made.

Next, if you make use of the first method of prayer, first, read slowly and attentively one or more verses, according as you may find it necessary or useful; secondly, consider how true that is which you have just now read; how true all the Saints deemed it, as well as all they that were anxious to deliver their souls from everlasting perdition, and to save them for eternity; how true you yourself will think it at the moment of death; thirdly, examine yourself, endeavoring to discover what has hith-

erto been, in practice, your conduct concerning it; if good, return thanks to the Lord, and ascribe to Him all the glory, and do not neglect to beg for grace to be enabled to persevere in well-doing, yea, to act even better and more perfectly; if, on the contrary, evil, grieve, excite an act of contrition, ask pardon; fourthly, form a good resolution of correcting yourself, or making progress for the better: select means adapted to this purpose, and ask for grace to execute your resolve. This being done, if the allotted time for meditation is not elapsed, pass over to other verses, following the same order.

But if you make use of the second method of meditation, after the aforesaid introduction, 1) exercise your memory, either by reading or recalling to mind the matter of the meditation; 2) exercise the understanding, first, by reasoning on the subject of the meditation, proceeding through causes and effects; secondly, by investigating what practical applications can be drawn therefrom; thirdly, what reasons or incitements urge you to this; fourthly, how you have acted till now; fifthly, what is to be done for the future; sixthly, what obstacles should be removed; seventhly, what means must be chosen; 3) exercise the will, first, by stirring up pious and appropriate affections and making internal acts; secondly, by forming good specific resolutions, adapted to the present state of your soul; thirdly, by earnestly imploring grace for yourself and for others.

Lastly, 1) a colloquy is made with Jesus by an outpouring of heart; 2) the concluding prayer is recited after this manner: "Lord Jesus Christ, who didst deign, by a new favor to Thy Church, to disclose the unspeakable riches of Thy Heart, grant, I beseech Thee, that I may be able to correspond to the love of this most Sacred Heart, make atonement by worthy homage for the insults offered by thankless men to Thy most afflicted Heart, and be inspired in all things with the sentiments of the same Heart; who livest and reignest with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God world without end. Amen"; 3) finish by recommending yourself to the Most

Blessed Virgin Mary, to your Guardian Angel and your holy Patrons. These three things form the end or close of every kind of meditation.

Since experience proves that the examples of the Saints exercise a wonderful and saving influence, on the hearts of sinners us well as of the just, they are frequently brought forward. But, to meditate on these with more fruit, you should consider some particular Saint or Saints, whom you choose for Patron, or to whom you entertain a special devotion. For different persons are edified and moved by different examples: thus a religious is wont to know better, and to study more, the lives of the Saints of his Order; and they that live in the world and strive to serve God, feel more devotion to those Saints whose example seems better adapted to themselves. When, therefore, the Saints are said to have done something after the example of the Heart of Jesus, or to have been distinguished in some specialty, you ought to select in your mind some particular Saint, and see what he did, and how he acted; implore his intercession with God, and recommend yourself to him. And if no Saint occurs to you at the time, you can always recall the example of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, and beg her intercession and protection.

5. Then, in order to guard against, or overcome the obstacles which the enemy of your everlasting happiness throws in your way, and which are wont to relate to conscience; you should, first, rightly understand what is meant by conscience. Now, conscience is the dictate presented through reason, which inwardly warns, or shows us, in particular cases, what to be done or omitted, and this either under pain of sin, because it is a matter of precept; or, on account of an increase of merit, or the greater good-pleasure of God, because it is only a matter of counsel. It is called a dictate presented through reason; because it is a practical conclusion deduced from principles, known to reason, either by the light of nature, or of grace or faith. For example: My conscience tells me, that today (Sunday) I am obliged to hear Mass. This is deduced from

these implied premises: On Sundays there is an obligation of hearing Mass: but today is a Sunday; therefore, today there is an obligation of hearing Mass. But it must be remarked that an inference of this kind is secretly drawn, and presented to man, even in spite of himself: as is made manifest in those who are unwilling to listen to the voice of conscience, lest they be deterred from things wherein they unlawfully indulge, or lest they be disturbed in them. For it is altogether against their will that they hear, that conscience forbids something and condemns them. Hence it appears that conscience, when really such, is independent of man and superior to him.

He that is too prone to timidity or scrupulousness, should here carefully observe and learn, that conscience is not an agitation of the nerves, nor a representation of the fancy, nor a vague fear, nor, finally, the possibility of a case. On the other hand, he that is too inclined to laxity or to rashness, should observe, that a desire of the will, the propensity or aversion of nature, that some passion, or, lastly, some subtle artifice, is not conscience. But let them both remember, that conscience is the dictate presented through reason, or the voice of the Spirit of God, who speaks to us inwardly by reason, as an interior organ, and makes known to us, in particular cases, His Will that commands, or His good-pleasure that counsels.

Conscience is true or right. A right conscience is that one, which shows things as they are in reality; as commanded or obliging, what is commanded; as dangerous, what is dangerous; as counseled or better, what belongs to counsel or perfection. This conscience, if we follow it in such a manner that, from a holy fear of God—whereby like good children we dread to offend God—we avoid sins which destroy His friendship, or His paternal good-will towards us, is called a fair conscience. But, if we are so faithful that, at its bidding, we guard against every voluntary defect, and are obedient to the same in all things, it is called a delicate conscience.

Again, conscience may be false or erroneous. Such is that one which shows things falsely or differently from

what they are in truth. This happens, for the most part, through the fault of man, who viciates the instrument of which the Spirit of God makes use, so that it does not transmit the divine voice. Ignorance, the habit of sin, every inordinate passion, spoils it more or less. Or, to speak more plainly, ignorance, the habit of sin, every inordinate passion, have, each by itself, the effect of causing something false or trifling, to be assumed as one of the principles from which a practical inference, or conscience, is deduced. Whence it happens, that such a conscience is the voice, not of the Spirit of God; but of another spirit, that uses passion, or any of those other causes, to speak to man's interior.

If conscience errs by our voluntary fault, it is styled vincibly erroneous, and makes us guilty of the errors. Now, it is vincibly erroneous, through our voluntary fault, if, when we put an act, or the cause of an act, a knowledge or a doubt of an error occurs to the mind, and the obligation of avoiding the error is noticed, and when, over and above, ordinary diligence to know the truth is neglected. But, if conscience errs without such a fault on our part, it is called invincibly erroneous, and does not make us guilty in the sight of God.

To erroneous conscience belong likewise, both the scrupulous and the lax conscience, being the opposite extremes. A scrupulous conscience is that which believes it sees, and even when corrected, persists in believing, that it sees, sin where there is no sin; it errs for the most part, because a soul gives in to the imagination, to the obstinacy of her own judgment, or some passion which fetters the heart; whence, being inwardly agitated and perplexed, she sees objects differently from what they really are, or confounds one thing with another, precepts with counsels, things probable with possible, sin and its danger with the appearance or semblance of sin and danger.

A lax conscience, on the other hand, is the conscience of a soul that persuades herself that she does not see—and, even when warned, continues to persuade herself that she does not see—sin, or the danger of sin, where

it really exists. An individual falls into this error because he has a mind which labors under culpable ignorance, or a sin to which he is habitually addicted; or because he indulges a passion by which he covets or abhors something inordinately. Whence it happens, that he who has such a conscience is blamable; because he can guard against errors by removing their cause; which he must certainly do when he sufficiently perceives the obligation of removing the same.

We should guard, with the greatest care, as well against a scrupulous, as against a lax, conscience. Both are not only dangerous, but destructive: the one, as well as the other, hinders perfection, and renders it impossible: and, what is more to be dreaded, both are wont to expose salvation itself to the danger of perdition. Wherefore, let every one be careful to have a right conscience.

But, to commit a formal sin, or a sin by which God is offended and man becomes guilty, it is necessary, first, that the act, whether internal or external, by which sin is committed, either through commission or omission, be evil or unlawful, or is considered as evil or unlawful by conscience; secondly, that his mind, when he does the act, or puts the cause of the act, advert to the moral evil of the act, or see that the act is unlawful; thirdly, that the will, whilst he possesses the internal liberty of choosing between consent and dissent, knowing that the act is evil or unlawful, freely consent thereto. For, if he does an internal or external act, the moral evil of which he does not notice, either when he does the act, or puts the cause of the act; he indeed wills or can will the act, but not as morally evil, while he does not see that the same is unlawful. For nothing is willed that is not known. Wherefore, by willing, or doing, such an act, he commits only a material sin, which is nothing else than an error of a conscience, invincibly erroneous, whereby God is not offended and man not rendered guilty.

To commit a mortal sin, it is required, as not only the theologians, but the Saints also teach, first, that the internal or external act be grievously evil, or deemed griev-

ously evil by conscience; secondly, that, when he does the act or puts the cause of the act, the mind do fully advert to the grievous evil of the act; thirdly, that the will, knowingly and freely, give its consent. If one of these three things be wanting, the sin, which would otherwise be mortal, is venial.

No one commits a formal sin in spite of his will: for man cannot sin, formally, except by his own free will. He can, however, if he so wills, through an abuse of his free will, think evil or that which is unlawful; propose or imagine it to himself, give his consent thereto, and commit sin. Moreover, the demon can, with the Divine permission, and really does, cause in him thoughts and imaginations, evil ones too, that he may entice him to give the consent of the will; but he can never force him to consent. Finally, God Himself, His good and blessed Spirits are wont to suggest thoughts, and to propose objects, but always to induce man to good: they assist his will to do good, but they never force him.

Whence it appears, that in man there is a triple kind of thoughts and emotions; the first, springing from the free will of man himself; the second, thrown in from without by the demon, the evil spirit; the third, also suggested from without, but by the good Spirit. Now then, "By their reasonings we shall know them: and the suggestion itself will make known which spirit it is that speaks" (St. Bern.)—The following rules, which the Saints lay down for the discernment of Spirits, will help you to understand this matter:

I. To them that easily sin mortally, the evil spirit is commonly wont to suggest, or propose the seeming delights of the flesh, sensual pleasures; that thereby he may hold them more securely in his service, and plunge them deeper into sins and vices.

Toward such persons the good Spirit pursues the opposite course: he continually stings and disturbs their conscience; that he may render them conscious of the unhappy state of their soul, may deter them from sin, and convert them.

II. By deceitful counsel and cunning, the evil spirit endeavors to lead man to an inordinate love and greediness for riches, or the superfluity of possessions, that, afterwards, he may cause him to fall more easily into sin.

But the good Spirit whispers, that the heart should be kept free from the inordinate love and eagerness for earthly possessions, lest it be entangled by them.

III. The evil spirit allures, presses, persists, in order to induce man to aspire to vain honors.

The good Spirit places before him, and teaches, generous humility, the true and safe glory of man.

IV. To them that perceive the needfulness of their devoting themselves to their everlasting salvation, and who begin seriously to think of securing the same, the evil spirit is wont to suggest a certain shame or human respect, that he may check these good beginnings.

The good Spirit encourages and stimulates them, that, spurning all human considerations, they may bravely go forward.

V. To those who are sincerely careful to cleanse themselves from faults and vices, and who advance more and more in the desire of serving God, the evil spirit suggests molestations, scruples, sadness, false reasonings, and other annoyances of this kind, that thereby he may hinder their progress.

The good Spirit, on the contrary, is wont to supply strength and courage to those that act rightly or endeavor to do well, to enlighten their mind, to pour in consolation, to give peace and tranquillity, that they may ever the more readily and cheerfully by means of good works, continue to make further progress.

VI. With all his might does the evil spirit strive that the soul, which he desires to deceive and to lead to ruin, do keep secret his wily suggestions. He exerts himself, as much as he is able, that his attempts be not made known to a spiritual director; since he knows that, in this event, he fails in them.

But the good Spirit loves light and order, because he acts fairly, and his works are good.

VII. The evil spirit is accustomed to conduct himself like a commander in war. For as this one examines the arrangements, and reconnoitres the strength of the citadel which he desires to take, and assails it on the weakest side; so the evil spirit explores our disposition and all our virtues, both theological and moral, and at whatever point he finds us weaker, there he is wont to attack and try to take us by storm.

VIII. The evil spirit, the tempter, is wont to lose, altogether, his courage and strength, whenever he sees his spiritual antagonist, struggling with a bold front and unterrified heart against temptations but, on the contrary, if he perceives that he trembles, and, as it were, loses courage, there is no wild beast on earth more fierce or headstrong against man than this same enemy, in order to accomplish the desire of his wicked and perverse mind.

—ST. IGNATIUS, ST. THOMAS, ST. TERESA