

according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the father and the son, who with the father and the son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

11.3 CHRISTIANITY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

It is difficult to decide exactly what time period is named by the Middle Ages. Generally it refers to that time between the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Renaissance. The term is also culture bound since it refers primarily to a period in the development of Western European culture. However, it is generally agreed that during this time period Christianity spread throughout the European continent, both East and West, moving steadily North as Islam captured more and more territory formerly held by Christian rulers in the South and the East.

As the fortunes of the Roman Empire declined in the West, so did the quality of city life and civil order. However, the bishop of the church in Rome became increasingly powerful, and, as the quality of city life began an upward curve, the pope in Rome became the peer of emperors and the bishops of the church were at the side of princes. The Latin Christian church with headquarters in Rome became the largest landowner in Europe and a power no one could afford to ignore.

The Middle Ages saw the building of the great cathedrals of Europe and a flowering in art, architecture, and religious culture never before seen in western Europe. Crusades were launched to liberate land from the Islamic control, and the great universities of Europe were founded. Monastic life flourished, and more countries were steadily converted.

11.3.1 A Tale of Two Cities

Aurelius Augustinus (354–430), North African bishop of Hippo, is the most influential Christian theologian of late antiquity. He lived during the decline and fall of the Roman Empire and before the



Nicene Creed

READING QUESTIONS

1. What qualities does the Nicene Creed attribute to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Spirit)?
2. Why do you think more is said about the Son than about the Father and the Holy Ghost?
3. What do you think the phrase “being of one substance with the father” means?

I believe in one God the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, begotten of his father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again

From *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1855).

beginning of the Middle Ages. However, it is appropriate to open our discussion of Christianity during the Middle Ages with a selection of his writings because his way of thinking about Christianity, called Augustinianism, became a major influence in Christianity, especially in the West, throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. It has been said that every major renewal of the Christian church has begun with the rediscovery of Augustine's ideas.

In 410 Alaric, a barbarian from the North, sacked Rome, the eternal city of power and glory. Only some thirty years before, the Roman emperor had made the worship of the many gods of the Romans a crime. If you were a faithful Roman of the day and had been forbidden to worship your gods and if the city that symbolized the power and glory of your culture was then invaded and burned by barbarians, what might you think? You would probably think what many non-Christian citizens of the Roman Empire thought, namely, that the abandonment of the traditional gods had caused the sacking of the sacred city of Rome. Resentment against Christianity quite naturally developed, and some Romans laid the blame for this horrible calamity at the Christian doorstep.

Augustine wrote *The City of God* in response to this situation. In this book he provides a Christian interpretation of the whole of history. After arguing against the polytheistic interpretation of historical events, he describes the Christian version of the origin of humans and the division of humans into two cities or societies (heavenly and earthly). Wicked and evil people belong to the City of Man, the earthly society ruled by the devil, whereas good, faithful Christian people belong to the City of God, the heavenly society ruled by God. Augustine writes, "Two loves have built two cities, self-love in contempt of God has built the earthly city; love of God in contempt of oneself has built the heavenly city."

According to Augustine, the struggle between these two cities is the heart and soul of history and human experience. The struggle takes place on a social level among nations and on an individual level since these two cities are also in each of us as the tension between selfishness (wrongly ordered love) and unselfish love of God (rightly ordered love).

No one knows for sure who belongs to which city until the end of the world. Then, at the Last Judgment, God will separate the two societies. The citizens of the City of Man will go to hell for eternal punishment, and the citizens of the City of God will go to heaven where they will enjoy eternal happiness.

Ironically, the sharp distinction Augustine draws between the divine and human cities, while intended to refute the pagan claims that Christianity is to blame for the fall of Rome, is heavily dependent on pagan philosophy. The Greek philosopher Plato (427–347 B.C.E.) wrote a book called the *Republic*, in which he too characterizes the ideally just society. Although Plato's and Augustine's views are different in many respects, Augustine borrows from Plato a distinction between an eternal, unchanging reality and the fleeting material world of change.

Augustine's story of human history and destiny became so influential and so deeply embedded in Western minds that most of you probably have heard it, even if you have never heard of Augustine of Hippo. So, as you read the selection that follows, the ideas may have a familiar ring.



AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The City of God (Book 14)

READING QUESTIONS

1. What are the supreme good and evil, and how is the supreme good to be obtained?
2. Why are belief and faith necessary?
3. Why are the natural goods of body and mind and even the learned goods of virtue inadequate?
4. What is the "peace of Babylon," and in what sense are the people of God strangers on this earth?
5. What is justice in this life, and how does the peace of the life hereafter contrast with the life of those who experience supreme evil?
6. How does Augustine's postulation of the two cities refute his opponents' claim that Rome's disintegration results from the people's abandonment of the traditional gods?

CHAPTER FOUR

If, therefore, we are asked what the City of God replies when asked about these various points and, first, its opinion about the final good and evil, it will reply that

From *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings*, translation and introduction by Mary T. Clark. © 1984 by Mary T. Clark. Used by permission of Paulist Press, Inc. Pp. 440–443, 475–478. Notes omitted.

the supreme good is eternal life and that the supreme evil is eternal death and to obtain the one and escape the other we must live rightly. Thus it is written: "The just man lives by faith" (Hb 2:4). Since we do not yet see our good so it is appropriate for us to seek it by believing; neither have we in ourselves power to live rightly unless He who has given us faith to believe that we must ask help from him shall help us when we believe and pray. But those who have thought that the final good and final evil are to be had in the present life, whether placing the supreme good in the body or in the soul or in both, or, more explicitly, either in pleasure or in virtue or in both, in repose or in virtue or in both, in primary natural goods or in virtue or in both, all these have sought with a marvelous vanity to be happy in this life and to achieve happiness by their own efforts. Truth ridiculed these people through the words of the Prophet: "The Lord knows the thoughts of men" (Ps 94:11) or as the Apostle Paul testified: "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain" (1 Cor 3:9).

For what torrent of eloquence suffices to explain the miseries of this life? Cicero lamented them as best he could in the *Consolation* on the death of his daughter, but how inadequate was his best! For when, where, how in this life can the so-called primary natural goods be so possessed as not to be threatened by unforeseen accidents? Why, what pain is there, the contrary of pleasure, what disquiet is there, the contrary of repose, that cannot befall the body of the wise man? Certainly amputation or weakening destroys its integrity; deformity destroys its beauty; weakness, its health; lassitude, its vigor; sleepiness or sluggishness, its activity—and which of these may not attack the flesh of the wise man? Comely fitting positions and movements of the body are also numbered among the primary natural goods; but suppose some disease makes the limbs quake and tremble? Suppose a man's spine is so curved that his hands reach the ground, making of him a quadruped, so to speak? Will this not ruin all beauty and grace of bodily stance or of movement?

What of the so-called primary natural goods of the mind itself, the sense and intellect, the first of the two for perception and the other for the comprehension of truth? But what kind of perception remains where a man becomes deaf and blind, to say nothing of other defects? And where do reason and intelligence withdraw, where do they sleep when a man is crazed by some disease? When the insane say or do many absurd things that are mostly alien to their own aims and characters—and are even contrary to their good aims and characters, when we consider or see the actions and words of these insane people we can scarcely refrain from tears, or perhaps we cannot. What shall I say of those afflicted by de-

monic possession? Where is their own intelligence hidden or buried while the evil spirit is using their souls and bodies according to his own will? And who can be confident that this evil will not befall the wise man in this life? Then as to the perception of truth, what kind can we hope for in this flesh and how much when, as we read in the truthful book of wisdom: "The corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly frame lies heavy on a mind that ponders many things" (Wis 9:15)? And eagerness or an impulse to act, if either is the correct meaning for what the Greeks called *hormē*, is also considered to be among the primary natural goods. Yet, is not impulse itself accountable for those miserable movements and actions of the insane which horrify us, when sensation is deceived and reason deranged?

Finally, as to virtue itself, which is not among the primary natural goods, since it is added later through instruction, although it claims the highest place among human goods, what does it do here but make perpetual war with vices, not external but internal, not alien but plainly our own, a war waged especially by the virtue called *sōphrosynē* in Greek and temperance in Latin which checks the lusts of the flesh lest they win the mind's consent and drag it into every kind of crime?

For we must not suppose that there is no vice in us when, as the Apostle says, "The flesh lusts against the spirit" (Gal 5:17); for there is a virtue contrary to this vice, when, as the same Apostle says: "The spirit lusts against the flesh. For these two," he says, "are opposed one to the other, so that you do not what you would" (Gal 5:17). But what do we will to do when we wish to be made perfect by the Supreme Good unless that the flesh should not lust against the spirit, and that there should be in us no vice for the spirit to lust against? And since we cannot achieve this in the present life, no matter how much we desire it, let us with God's help achieve at least this, to restrain the soul from succumbing and yielding to the flesh lusting against it and to deny our consent to the commitment of sin. Far be it from us, therefore, to believe that as long as we are engaged in this internal war that we have already attained the happiness which we seek to reach by victory. And who is there so wise that he has no battle at all to wage against his vices?

What is to be said of that virtue called prudence? Is it not totally vigilant in discerning good from evil, so that in seeking the one and avoiding the other no error or mistake may occur about good and evil? Thus it is itself a witness to the existence of evil and of evils in us. For prudence itself teaches that it is evil to consent to sin and good to refuse this consent. Yet that evil to which prudence teaches us not to consent and temperance enables us not to consent is neither by prudence nor by

temperance removed from this life. What is to be said of justice, whose task is to assign to each man his due, whence there exists in man a certain just order of nature so that the soul is subject to God, and flesh to the soul, and consequently both soul and flesh to God? Does justice not thereby demonstrate that she is still laboring at her task rather than reposing at the end of her labors? For the soul is so much the less subjected to God the less it keeps mindful of God; and flesh is so much the less subjected to the spirit as it lusts more strongly against the spirit. Hence as long as we are beset by this weakness, this plague, this sickness, how shall we dare to say that we are saved, and if not saved, how dare we say that we are already blessed with final happiness? Then truly that virtue called fortitude, though present with however great wisdom, testifies very clearly to human evils which it is compelled to endure with patience. . . .

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

For however laudable may seem to be the rule of the soul over the body and the reason over the vices, if the soul and the reason do not serve God as God has commanded that He should be served, then in no way do they rightly rule the body and vices. For what kind of mistress over the body and the vices can that mind be which is ignorant of the true God, and which instead of being subject to his authority is prostituted to the corrupting power of the most vicious demons? Hence the very virtues which it thinks it possesses, through which it rules the body and vices in order to obtain or keep what it desires, if it does not subordinate them to God, are themselves vices rather than virtues. For although some suppose that virtues are true and honorable when they are referred to themselves and not sought on account of something else, even then they are puffed up and proud and so must be judged as vices, not virtues. For just as it is not that which comes from the flesh but that which is above the flesh which makes the flesh live, so it is not that which comes from man but that which is above man that makes him live a blessed life; and this is true not only of man but of every heavenly domination and power.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Therefore, as the life of the flesh is the soul, so the blessed life of man is God, of whom the sacred Scriptures of the Hebrews declare: "Blessed is the people

whose God is the Lord" (Ps 144:15). Wretched, therefore, is the people that is alienated from that God. Yet even this people has a peace of its own not to be rejected; but in the end it will not possess it because it does not make good use of it before the end. But it is to our interest that it enjoy this peace meanwhile in this life; for as long as the two cities are commingled, we also enjoy the peace of Babylon; and the people of God is by faith so freed from it as to live as a stranger in the midst of it. On this account the Apostle also admonished the Church to pray for its kings and other nobility, adding these words: "That we may live a quiet and tranquil life with all piety and love" (1 Tm 2:2). And the Prophet Jeremiah, in predicting the captivity to befall the ancient people of God, and in commanding them by divine inspiration to go obediently to Babylon, serving God by their very patience, admonished them to pray for Babylon, saying: "Because in her peace is your peace" (Jer 29:7), that is, of course, the temporal peace of the present which is common to good and wicked alike.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

But the peace that is ours we already have with God by faith, and we shall forever have it with Him by sight. But peace in this life, whether common to all or our special possession, is such that it should be called a solace of our misery rather than an enjoyment of blessedness. Also, our very justice, although it is true in relation to the true final good to which it is subordinated, is nevertheless in this life only of such a kind as to consist rather in the remission of sins than in the perfecting of virtues. Witness the prayer of the entire City of God that is exiled on earth. Through all its members it cries out to God: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Mt 6:12). Nor is this prayer efficacious for those whose faith is dead without works (Jas 2:17), but only for those whose faith brings forth works through love (Gal 5:6). For because the reason, though subjected to God, in this mortal condition and in the corruptible body, which weighs down the soul (Wis 9:15), does not perfectly rule the vices, such a prayer is necessary for just men. For although the reason exercises command over the vices, certainly this is not without struggle. And even if we fight the good fight and rule as master, after such foes have been defeated and subdued, still in this realm of weakness something creeps in so that sin is found if not in some swift action, certainly in some momentary utterance or some fleeting thought. And therefore there is

no complete peace as long as the vices are being ruled, because the battle against resisting vices is precarious while those conquered do not allow for a triumph of carefree ease but one held down under a command that is full of anxiety. Among all these temptations, therefore, of which it has been briefly asserted in the divine oracles: "Is man's life on earth anything but temptation?" (Jb 7:1), who will assume that his life is such that he need not say to God: "Forgive us our debts," unless it be a proud man, not truly great, but puffed up and bloated, who is justly resisted by Him who gives grace abundantly to the humble? On this account it is written: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Jas 4:6; 1 Pt 5:5). And so in this life, accordingly, justice for the individual means that God rules and man obeys, the soul rules over the body and reason rules over the vices even when rebellious, whether by subduing or withstanding them, and that from God Himself we seek grace to do our duty and forgiveness for our sins, and that we offer our service of thanksgiving for the blessings received. But in that final peace to which this justice should be subordinated and for the sake of having it this justice should be maintained, since our nature will be healed of its sickness by immortality and incorruption and will have no vices and since nothing either in ourselves or in another will be at war with any one of us, the reason will not need to rule the vices, since they will no longer exist; but God will rule man, and soul the body, and in obeying we shall find a pleasure and ease as great as the felicity of our living and reigning. And there, for all and for everyone, this state will be everlasting, and its everlastingness will be certain; and therefore the peace of this blessedness or the blessedness of this peace will be the highest good.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

But, on the other hand, those who do not belong to that City of God will receive everlasting misery, which is called also the second death (Rv 2:11), because neither the soul that is alienated from God's life can be said to live there, nor the body which will be subjected to everlasting torments; and this second death will be all the harder to bear in that it cannot be ended in death. But since just as misery is the opposite of blessedness, and death of life, so war is the opposite of peace, the question is properly raised: What or what kind of war can be understood to take place in the final state of the

wicked to correspond to the peace that is predicted and lauded in the final state of the righteous? But let the questioner attend to what is harmful or destructive in warfare, and he will see that it is nothing but the mutual opposition and conflict of things. Therefore, what war can he imagine more grievous and bitter than one in which the will is so opposed to passion and passion to will that their hostilities can be ended by the victory of neither, and in which the power of pain so struggles with the very nature of the body that neither yields to the other? For in this life, when such a conflict arises, either pain conquers, and death takes away feeling, or nature conquers, and health removes the pain. But in the life beyond, pain remains to torment and nature stays to feel it; neither ceases to be lest the punishment should also cease.

However, since these are the extremes of good and evil of which we should seek to gain the former and escape the latter, and since through judgment good men pass to the former, bad men to the latter, I will, so far as God may grant, discuss this judgment in the following book.

11.3.2 Spiritual Stillness

As early as the sixth century, one of the most influential forms of contemplation, called the Jesus Prayer, had developed. The Jesus Prayer involves continuously repeating "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me." This practice became widespread among Eastern Christian monks and was called **hesychasm** (stillness). By the thirteenth century, this prayer was supplemented with breathing techniques and postures involving resting one's chin on one's chest with eyes fixed on the heart region. The purpose of this contemplation was to clear one's mind of all distractions and directly encounter God within one's heart.

Hesychists were criticized by other Eastern Orthodox Christians in the fourteenth century (by now the split between East and West had occurred) on the grounds that a direct experience of God is impossible for humans in this life. However, despite the controversy, hesychistic practices persisted.

The following selection is one of the earliest discussions of the Jesus Prayer. It is from *On Watchfulness and Holiness* by Hesychios of Sinai, and eighth-century abbot.



HESYCHIOS OF SINAI

The Jesus Prayer

READING QUESTIONS

1. What are the benefits of the Jesus Prayer?
2. Do you notice any similarities with other forms of prayer or meditation you know about?

102. Forgetfulness can extinguish our guard over our intellect as water extinguishes fire; but the continuous repetition of the Jesus Prayer combined with strict watchfulness uproots it from our heart. The Jesus Prayer requires watchfulness as a lantern requires a candle.

103. We should strive to preserve the previous gifts which preserve us from all evil, whether on the plane of the senses or on that of the intellect. These gifts are the guarding of the intellect with the invocation of Jesus Christ, continuous insight into the heart's depths, stillness of mind unbroken even by thoughts which appear to be good, and the capacity to be empty of all thought. In this way the demons will not steal in undetected; and if we suffer pain through remaining centered in the heart, consolation is at hand.

104. The heart which is constantly guarded, and is not allowed to receive the forms, images and fantasies of the dark and evil spirits, is conditioned by nature to give birth from within itself to thoughts filled with light. For just as coal engenders a flame, or a flame lights a candle, so will God, who from our baptism dwells in our heart, kindle our mind to contemplation when He finds it free from the winds of evil and protected by the guarding of the intellect.

105. The name of Jesus should be repeated over and over in the heart as flashes of lightning are repeated over and over in the sky before rain. Those who have experience of the intellect and of inner warfare know this very

well. We should wage this spiritual warfare with a precise sequence: first, with attentiveness; then, when we perceive the hostile thought attacking, we should strike at it angrily in the heart, cursing it as we do so; thirdly, we should direct our prayer against it, concentrating the heart through the invocation of Jesus Christ, so that the demonic fantasy may be dispersed at once, the intellect no longer pursuing it like a child deceived by some conjurer.

106. Let us exert ourselves like David, crying out "Lord Jesus Christ" until our throats are sore; and let our spiritual eyes never cease to give us hope in the Lord our God (cf. Ps. 69:3).

107. If we constantly bear in mind the parable of the unjust judge, which the Lord related in order to show us that we ought always to pray and not to lose heart, we shall both profit and be vindicated (cf. Luke 18:1-8).

108. Just as he who looks at the sun cannot but fill his eyes with light, so he who always gazes intently into his heart cannot fail to be illumined. . . .

174. The single-phrased Jesus Prayer destroys and consumes the deceits of the demons. For when we invoke Jesus, God and Son of God, constantly and tirelessly, He does not allow them to project in the mind's mirror even the first hint of their infiltration—that is to say, their provocation—or any form, nor does He allow them to have any converse with the heart. If no demonic form enters the heart, it will be empty of evil thoughts, as we have said; for it is the demons' habit to converse with the soul by means of evil thoughts and so deceitfully to pervert it.

175. It is through unceasing prayer that the mind is cleansed of the dark clouds, the tempests of the demons. And when it is cleansed, the divine light of Jesus cannot but shine in it, unless we are puffed up with self-esteem and delusion and a love of ostentation, and elevate ourselves towards the unattainable, and so are deprived of Jesus' help. For Christ, the paradigm of humility, loathes all such self-inflation.

176. Let us hold fast, therefore, to prayer and humility, for together with watchfulness they act like a burning sword against the demons. If we do this, we shall daily and hourly be able to celebrate a secret festival of joy within our hearts. . . .

188. Noxious foods give trouble when taken into the body; but as soon as he feels the pain, the person who has eaten them can quickly take some emetic and so be unharmed. Similarly, once the intellect that has imbibed evil thoughts senses their bitterness, it can easily expel them and get rid of them completely by means of the

Excerpts from "On Watchfulness and Holiness" from *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, Volume I compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, translated by G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware. Translation copyright © 1979 by The Eling Trust, 1979. Reprinted by permission of Faber and Faber, Inc. Pages 179-180, 193, 196.

Jesus Prayer uttered from the depths of the heart. This lesson, and the experience corresponding to it, have by God's grace conveyed understanding to those who practice watchfulness.

189. With your breathing combine watchfulness and the name of Jesus, or humility and the unremitting study of death. Both may confer great blessing.

11.3.3 Nature, Grace, and the Sacraments

The two most important Christian rituals, dating back to the New Testament, are **baptism** and the **Eucharist** (a ritual meal of thanksgiving and fellowship based on the last supper Jesus had with his disciples—see Reading 11.2.2). These rituals came to be regarded as **sacraments** because they employed natural objects (water, bread, and wine) as sacred objects. Eventually, other sacraments developed (such as Penance, Marriage, and Ordination), and debates about the nature of sacraments developed with them.

Many Christians agreed that the sacraments were a means by which God bestows **grace**. The incarnation of God in Jesus is itself the ultimate sacramental act insofar as God makes the human flesh of Jesus a vehicle for bestowing the gift (grace) of eternal life. However, was grace really needed? Is not eternal life based on doing good and obeying God's laws? Granted, not all humans do that, but surely humans are capable of doing it? Why would God give commandments to humans if they were unable to follow them? Are means of grace, like the sacraments, really necessary?

Very early in the history of Christianity, many thought the sacraments were necessary. "There is no salvation outside the Church," proclaimed Cyprian (d. 258), bishop of Carthage and martyr for the faith. Why? Because the church dispenses the sacraments, the means by which humans receive saving grace. However, are not faith and good works necessary for salvation? Surely, grace is not automatically bestowed to anyone and everyone who participates in sacraments?

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the greatest Christian thinker of the Middle Ages, tackled these ques-

tions and others in his remarkable *Summa Theologica* (*Summary of Theology*). Thomas was a Dominican monk who taught at the Universities of Paris, Rome, and Naples. Although his ideas were controversial in his day, eventually the Roman Catholic Church made him a doctor of the church.

Many of the writings on natural philosophy by the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) had been lost to Western culture for several centuries. They were reintroduced by Islamic and Jewish philosophers and theologians, which caused considerable controversy. Augustine (Reading 11.3.1) had based his theology on a Platonic view of reality as a duality of eternity and temporality. Aristotle, a pupil of Plato, had rejected Platonic dualism. Many Christian theologians perceived this rejection of Platonic dualism as a threat to the division between nature and supernature that lay, as Augustine had taught them, at the foundation of Christianity and the teachings of Jesus. Thomas showed how Aristotle's ideas (to whom he simply referred to as The Philosopher) could be reconciled with Christianity.

He is famous for expounding five proofs for God's existence (the arguments from motion, from efficient causation, from possibility and necessity, from degrees of value, and from the order or design of things), at least two of which (from motion and from efficient causation) are directly dependent on Aristotle. If a nondualistic pagan philosopher like Aristotle could help us prove the existence of God, his ideas might also help us prove many other doctrines of the Christian faith.

In the selections from the *Summa*, Thomas argues that God's grace is an "infused quality," that God is the sole cause of grace but the sacraments are his means, and that humans cannot merit eternal life without grace.

Thomas's style may take a little getting used to. He writes in what is called the "**scholastic style**" because it had become the standard format among the "school men" or scholars who taught at the universities in the Middle Ages. Each section or article deals with a particular issue. Arguments pro and con are summarized by Thomas, then Thomas offers his own answer along with supporting arguments. He ends by refuting the initial objections.



THOMAS AQUINAS

Summa Theologica

READING QUESTIONS

1. Why, according to Thomas, should we think of grace as an infused quality?
2. What does Thomas mean when he says that grace is caused "instrumentally by the sacraments themselves"?
3. How does Thomas answer the question whether one can merit eternal life without grace?

QUESTION 110: THE ESSENCE OF GOD'S GRACE

...

Article Two: Whether Grace Is a Quality of the Soul

We proceed to the second article thus:

1. It seems that grace is not a quality of the soul. No quality acts on the subject to which it belongs. If it did, the subject would have to act on itself, since there is no action of a quality without the action of its subject. But grace acts on the soul, in justifying it. It follows that grace is not a quality.

2. Again, a substance is nobler than its quality. But grace is nobler than the soul's nature, since we can do many things by grace which we cannot do by nature, as was said in Q. 109, Arts. 1, 2, and 3. It follows that grace is not a quality.

3. Again, no quality persists after it ceases to be in its subject. But grace persists, since it is not corrupted. If grace were corrupted it would be reduced to nothing, since it is created out of nothing—wherefore it is called a "new creature" in Galatians. It follows that grace is not a quality.

On the other hand: the gloss by Augustine on Ps. 104:15, "Oil to make his face to shine," says that "grace is a beauty of the soul, which wins the divine love."

Reproduced from *Aquinas on Nature and Grace*, edited by A. M. Fairweather (*Library of Christian Classics*), pp. 159–160, 174–175, 205–206. Used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press.

Beauty of soul is a quality, just as comeliness of body is a quality. It follows that grace is a quality.

I answer: as we maintained in the preceding article, to say that a man has the grace of God is to say that there is within him an effect of God's gracious will. Now God's gracious will helps a man in two ways, as we said in Q. 109, Art. 1. In the first place, a man's mind is helped by God to know, to will, or to act. Such an effect of grace is not a quality, but a movement of the soul, since "in the moved, the act of the mover is a movement," as is said in 3 *Physics*, text 18. Secondly, God infuses a habitual gift into the soul, for the reason that it would not be fitting that God should give less to those whom he loves in order that they may attain supernatural good, than he gives to creatures whom he loves in order that they may attain only natural good. Now God provides for natural creatures not only by moving them to their natural actions, but by endowing them with forms and powers which are the principles of actions, so that they may incline to such movements of their own accord. In this way the movements to which God moves them become natural to creatures, and easy for them, in accordance with Wisdom 8:1: "... and disposes all things sweetly." Much more, then, does God infuse certain forms or supernatural qualities into those whom he moves to seek after supernatural and eternal good, that they may be thus moved by him to seek it sweetly and readily. The gift of grace, therefore, is a certain quality.

On the first point: as a quality, grace is said to act on the soul not as an efficient cause, but as a formal cause, as whiteness makes things white, or as justice makes things just.

On the second point: any substance is either the nature of that of which it is the substance, or a part of its nature. In this sense, matter and form are both called "substance." But grace is higher than human nature. It cannot then be its substance, nor yet the form of its substance. Grace is a form accidental to the soul. What exists as substance in God occurs as accident in the soul which shares in divine good, as is obvious in the case of knowledge. But since the soul shares in divine good imperfectly, this participation itself, which is grace, exists in the soul in a less perfect mode than that in which the soul exists in itself. Such grace is nevertheless nobler than the soul's nature, in so far as it is an expression or sharing of the divine goodness, even though it is not nobler than the soul in respect of its mode of being.

On the third point: as Boethius says (*Isagogue Porphyri*): "the being of an accident is to inhere." Thus an accident is said to "be," not as if it existed by itself, but because some subject "is" through possessing it. It is thus affirmed of an existence, rather than affirmed to be an existence, as is said in 7 *Metaph.*, text 2. Now since

coming to be and passing away are affirmed of what exists, properly speaking no accident comes to be or passes away. But an accident is said to come to be or to pass away when its subject begins or ceases to be actualized through possession of it. In this sense, grace is said to be created when it is men who are created in grace, i.e., when they are created anew out of nothing, and not on account of merit, according to Eph. 2:10: "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

QUESTION 112: THE CAUSE OF GRACE

We must now consider the cause of grace, concerning which there are five questions. 1. Whether God is the sole efficient cause of grace. 2. Whether any disposition for grace is required on the part of the recipient, by an act of free will. 3. Whether such a disposition can ensure grace. 4. Whether grace is equal in everyone. 5. Whether any man can know that he has grace.

Article One: Whether God Is the Sole Cause of Grace

We proceed to the first article thus:

1. It seems that God is not the sole cause of grace. For it is said in John 1:17 that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and the name Jesus Christ means the creaturely nature assumed as well as the divine nature which assumed it. It follows that what is creaturely can be the cause of grace.

2. Again, the sacraments of the new law are said to differ from those of the old in this respect, namely that the sacraments of the new law are causes of the grace which those of the old law only signify. Now the sacraments of the new law are visible elements. It follows that God is not the sole cause of grace.

3. Again, according to Dionysius (*Coel. Hier.* 3, 4): "angels purge, enlighten, and perfect both lesser angels and men." But rational creatures are purged, enlightened, and perfected through grace. It follows that God is not the sole cause of grace.

On the other hand: it is said in Ps. 84:11: "the Lord will give grace and glory."

I answer: nothing can act upon what is above its own species, since a cause must always be greater than its effect. Now the gift of grace exceeds every capacity of nature, since it is none other than a participation of

the divine nature, which exceeds every other nature. It is therefore impossible for any creature to be a cause of grace. Hence it is just as inevitable that God alone should deify, by communicating a sharing of the divine nature through a participation of likeness, as it is impossible that anything save fire alone should ignite.

On the first point: the humanity of Christ is "an organ of his divinity," as the Damascene says (3 *De Fid. Orth.* 15). Now an instrument carries out the action of a principal agent by the power of the principal agent, not by its own power. Thus the humanity of Christ does not cause grace by its own power, but by the power of the divinity conjoined with it, through which the actions of the humanity of Christ are redemptive.

On the second point: just as in the person of Christ humanity is the cause of our salvation through the divine power which operates as the principal agent, so it is with the sacraments of the new law. Grace is caused instrumentally by the sacraments themselves, yet principally by the power of the Holy Spirit operating in the sacraments.

On the third point: an angel purges, enlightens, and perfects an angel or a man by instruction, not by justification through grace. Wherefore Dionysius says (*Coel. Hier.* 7): "this kind of purging, enlightening, and perfecting is nothing other than the acquisition of divine knowledge."

QUESTION 114: CONCERNING MERIT, WHICH IS THE EFFECT OF COOPERATIVE GRACE

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Article Two: Whether One Can Merit Eternal Life Without Grace

We proceed to the second article thus:

1. It seems that one can merit eternal life without grace. It was said in the preceding article that a man merits from God that to which he is divinely ordained. Now it is of the very nature of man that he is ordained to blessedness as his end, which is indeed the reason why he naturally seeks to be blessed. A man can therefore merit blessedness, which is eternal life, by his own natural powers and without grace.

2. Again, a work is the more meritorious the less it is incumbent upon one, and a good work is the less incumbent if it is done by him who has received the fewer benefits. Now a man who has only his own natural good has received less from God than one who has received

gifts of grace in addition. His work is therefore the more meritorious in God's sight. Hence if one who has grace can in any wise merit eternal life, much more can one who is without grace.

3. Again, the mercy and liberality of God are infinitely greater than the mercy and liberality of man. Now one man can merit something from another, even though he has never had his grace. Much more, then, does it seem that a man without grace can merit eternal life from God.

On the other hand: the apostle says (Rom. 6:23): "the gift of God is eternal life."

I answer: there are two states of man without grace, as we said in Q. 109, Art. 2. One is the state of pure nature, such as was in Adam before his sin. The other is the state of corrupt nature, such as is in ourselves before restoration through grace. If we are speaking of man in the first of these states, there is one reason why he cannot merit eternal life by his natural powers alone, and that is that his merit depends on a divine preordination. No action of anything whatsoever is divinely ordained to that which exceeds what is commensurate with the power which is its principle of action. It is indeed an ordinance of divine providence that nothing shall act beyond its own power. Now eternal life is a good which exceeds what is commensurate with created nature, since it transcends both natural knowledge and natural desire, according to I Cor. 2:9: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. . . ." No created nature, therefore, can suffice as the principle of an action which merits eternal life, unless there is added to it a supernatural gift, which we call grace. But if we are speaking of man as he exists in sin, there is a second reason why this is so, namely, the impediment of sin. Sin is an offence against God which excludes us from eternal life, as we said in Q. 71, Art. 6, and Q. 113, Art. 2. Hence no one who lives in sin can merit eternal life unless he is first reconciled to God by the remission of sin. Now sin is remitted by grace, since the sinner merits not life but death, according to Rom. 6:23: "The wages of sin is death."

On the first point: God has ordained that human nature shall attain the end of eternal life by the help of grace, not by its own power. Its own action can merit eternal life by the help of grace.

On the second point: a man without grace cannot have it in him to perform a work equal to that which proceeds from grace, since action is the more perfect the more perfect is its principle. This reasoning would be valid, however, if such works were equal in each case.

On the third point: the first reason to which we have referred relates to God and to man in dissimilar ways.

For it is from God, and not from man, that a man has every power of well-doing which he possesses. He cannot therefore merit anything from God except by means of God's gift. The apostle expresses this pointedly when he says: "who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" (Rom. 11:35). The second reason, on the other hand, which is concerned with the impediment of sin, relates to man and to God in a similar way, since one man cannot merit anything even from another man whom he has offended, unless he first makes retribution, and is reconciled to him.

11.4 REFORMING CHRISTIANITY

As with many religions, so too with Christianity—from time to time reform movements develop hoping to purge a religious community of perceived corruption. Throughout the Middle Ages there were various reform movements, but in the sixteenth century a reform attempt was launched by a German Roman Catholic Augustinian monk named Martin Luther (1483–1546) that was to have far-reaching consequences. Although it failed in its goal of reforming the Roman Catholic Church, it did create the third main branch of Christianity called Protestantism. After the sixteenth century, it became customary to speak of three main types of Christianity: **Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant.**

While we still speak this way, it is, like many categorical systems, oversimplified. There are numerous subdivisions of the Protestant branch, different types of Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, and many Christian groups that do not fall into any of these three categories such as the Coptic Christian churches and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Luther's reform movement, known as the Protestant Reformation, was not the only reform attempt. In Spain, Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), a Roman Catholic Carmelite nun, launched, against much opposition, a reform of monastic life. She was eventually successful in establishing a reformed Carmelite order, and in 1568 John of the Cross and several other men founded a reformed house for men at her urging.

Perhaps Teresa's success was due to her limited goals and her refusal to side with Luther's movement in Germany. Perhaps it was due to the obvious spiritual and mystical qualities of her life and the purity of her intentions. Whatever the reasons, Teresa of Avila emerged as a leading figure in the reform of the Carmelite order in Spain.

11.4.1 Attacking the Roman Defense

Like many reform efforts, Luther's began modestly. He started preaching in his local church against the practice of selling indulgences. Indulgences were pieces of paper people could buy from a representative of the pope guaranteeing so many years off purgatory, an intermediate state between hell and heaven where Christians suffered and did penance for their sins. Indulgences were selling quite well (you could buy them for dead relatives) and filling the treasury in Rome with the much needed money to build the magnificent St. Peter's Cathedral.

There was, however, a lot of resentment in northern Europe about money being drained off to head south to the Italian states. Luther tapped into that resentment when he asked his parishioners not to waste their precious money on pieces of worthless paper. But he did more than that: He indirectly attacked the sacramental system of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Roman Catholic Church claimed that it, as God's representative on earth, had the right to dispense grace. In other words, it controlled the keys that unlocked heaven's gates. Luther, by attacking the church's right to sell indulgences, began to chip away at this sacramental system. Eventually he attacked it outright, denying that grace was an infused quality as Thomas had taught (see Reading 11.3.3), emphasizing justification by faith not meritorious works (see Paul's Letter to the Romans, Reading 11.2.1), and proclaiming such radical ideas as the "priesthood of all believers."

According to Roman Catholic teachings, only a properly ordained priest could validly perform certain rituals such as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (the Mass). The laity or nonordained could not do this, and hence an official priesthood was needed if God's grace was to flow to the people. Ordination itself had, by this time, become a sacrament, and those ordained were thought to have a special grace the laity did not have. In denying this important distinction between priest and laity, Luther was indirectly attacking the structural power and authority of the Roman Catholic Church. However, it should be noted that Luther did not intend to abolish different offices or functions among Christians. He meant only to deny the notion that priests held some special status or dignity that elevated them above ordinary Christians.

Luther and the other reformers also emphasized the absolute authority of scripture (Scripture alone). Disagreements in matters of faith were to be settled,

the reformers argued, not by appeals to priestly officials like the pope but, rather, by appeals to the "plain words of scripture." Of course, as the continuous splintering of Protestantism into various sects since the Reformation testifies, the "plain words" often did not seem so "plain."

Luther also believed that the Roman Catholic Church wrongly emphasized "works" or good deeds as the means to salvation. We, Luther argued, are not justified by what we do, but by what God does for us. Therefore, we are justified by faith in the work of Christ, not by our own good deeds. Hence, a rallying cry of the Reformation was "scripture alone and faith alone" (*sola scriptura et sola fide*).

In the following selection from *An Appeal to the Ruling Class of German Nationality as to the Amelioration of the State of Christendom* (1520), Luther calls on the secular ruling classes (princes and nobles) to aid in the reform of the church since the papacy will not do it. Historically, councils of bishops met to settle controversial issues. However, the papacy had, by Luther's time, asserted its authority over councils. One can hear, in Luther's plea, a note of desperation. Although he did receive the protection of the German nobility, he did not succeed in his reform efforts within the Roman Catholic Church and Christian Protestantism as a separate Christian movement was born.



MARTIN LUTHER

The Three Walls

READING QUESTIONS

1. What are the three walls, and what arguments does Luther use to "demolish" them?
2. How does Luther use the Bible in developing his argument?
3. Why do you think Luther's attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church failed and resulted in another schism in Christianity?

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The Romanists have very cleverly surrounded themselves with three walls, which have protected them till now in such a way that no one could reform them. As a result, the whole of Christendom has suffered woeful corruption. In the first place, when under the threat of secular force, they have stood firm and declared that secular force had no jurisdiction over them; rather the opposite was the case, and the spiritual was superior to the secular. In the second place, when the Holy Scriptures have been used to reprove them, they have responded that no one except the pope was competent to expound Scripture. In the third place, when threatened with a council, they have pretended that no one but the pope could summon a council. In this way, they have adroitly nullified these three means of correction, and avoided punishment. Thus they still remain in secure possession of these three walls, and practise all the villainy and wickedness we see to-day. When they have been compelled to hold a council, they have made it nugatory by compelling the princes to swear in advance that the present position shall remain undisturbed. In addition they have given the pope full authority over all the decisions of a council, till it is a matter of indifference whether there be many councils or none, for they only deceive us with make-believes and sham-fights. So terribly fearful are they for their skins, if a truly free council were held. Further, the Romanists have overawed kings and princes till the latter believe it would be impious not to obey them in spite of all the deceitful and cunning dodges of theirs.

May God now help us, and give us one of those trumpets with which the walls of Jericho were overthrown; that we may blow away these walls of paper and straw, and set free the Christian, corrective measures to punish sin, and to bring the devil's deceits and wiles to the light of day. In this way, may we be reformed through suffering and again receive God's blessing.

Let us begin by attacking the first wall. To call popes, bishops, priests, monks, and nuns, the religious class, but princes, lords, artisans, and farmworkers the secular class, is a specious device invented by certain time-servers; but no one ought to be frightened by it, and for good reason. For all Christians whatsoever really and truly belong to the religious class, and there is no difference among them except in so far as they do different work. That is St. Paul's meaning in I Corinthians 12:12f., when he says: "We are all one body, yet each member hath his own work for serving others." This applies to us all, because we have one baptism, one gospel, one faith, and are all equally Christian. For baptism, gospel, and

faith alone make men religious and create a Christian people. When a pope or bishop anoints, grants tonsures, ordains, consecrates, dresses differently from laymen, he may make a hypocrite of a man, or an anointed image, but never a Christian or a spiritually-minded man. The fact is that our baptism consecrates us all without exception, and makes us all priests. As St. Peter says, I Pet. 2[:9], "You are a royal priesthood and a realm of priests," and Revelation, "Thou hast made us priests and kings by Thy blood" [Rev. 5:9 f.]. If we ourselves as Christians did not receive a higher consecration than that given by pope or bishop, then no one would be made priest even by consecration at the hands of pope or bishop; nor would anyone be authorized to celebrate Eucharist, or preach, or pronounce absolution.

When a bishop consecrates, he simply acts on behalf of the entire congregation, all of whom have the same authority. They may select one of their number and command him to exercise this authority on behalf of the others. It would be similar if ten brothers, king's sons and equal heirs, were to choose one of themselves to rule the kingdom for them. All would be kings and of equal authority, although one was appointed to rule. To put it more plainly, suppose a small group of earnest Christian laymen were taken prisoner and settled in the middle of a desert without any episcopally ordained priest among them; and they then agreed to choose one of themselves, whether married or not, and endow him with the office of baptizing, administering the sacrament, pronouncing absolution, and preaching; that man would be as truly a priest as if he had been ordained by all the bishops and the popes. It follows that, if needs be, anyone may baptize or pronounce absolution, an impossible situation if we were not all priests. The fact that baptism, and the Christian status which it confers, possess such great grace and authority, is what the Romanists have overridden by their canon law, and kept us in ignorance thereof. But, in former days, Christians used to choose their bishops and priests from their own members, and these were afterwards confirmed by other bishops without any of the pomp of present custom. St. Augustine, Ambrose, and Cyprian each became bishops in this way.

Those who exercise secular authority have been baptized like the rest of us, and have the same faith and the same gospel; therefore we must admit that they are priests and bishops. They discharge their office as an office of the Christian community, and for the benefit of that community. Every one who has been baptized may claim that he has already been consecrated priest, bishop, or pope, even though it is not seemly for any particular person arbitrarily to exercise the office. Just because we are all priests of equal standing, no one must

push himself forward and, without the consent and choice of the rest, presume to do that for which we all have equal authority. Only by the consent and command of the community should any individual person claim for himself what belongs equally to all. If it should happen that anyone abuses an office for which he has been chosen, and is dismissed for that reason, he would resume his former status. It follows that the status of a priest among Christians is merely that of an office-bearer; while he holds the office he exercises it; if he be deposed he resumes his status in the community and becomes like the rest. Certainly a priest is no longer a priest after being unfrocked. Yet the Romanists have devised the claim to *characteres indelebiles*, and assert that a priest, even if deposed, is different from a mere layman. They even hold the illusion that a priest can never be anything else than a priest, and therefore never a layman again. All these are human inventions and regulations.

Hence we deduce that there is, at bottom, really no other difference between laymen, priests, princes, bishops, or, in Romanist terminology, between religious and secular, than that of office or occupation, and not that of Christian status. All have spiritual status, and all are truly priests, bishops, and popes. But Christians do not all follow the same occupation. Similarly, priests and monks do not all work at the same task. . . .

Therefore those now called "the religious," i.e., priests, bishops, and popes, possess no further or greater dignity than other Christians, except that their duty is to expound the word of God and administer the sacraments—that being their office. In the same way, the secular authorities "hold the sword and the rod," their function being to punish evil-doers and protect the law-abiding. A shoemaker, a smith, a farmer, each has his manual occupation and work; and yet, at the same time, all are eligible to act as priests and bishops. Every one of them in his occupation or handicraft ought to be useful to his fellows, and serve them in such a way that the various trades are all directed to the best advantage of the community, and promote the well-being of body and soul, just as all the organs of the body serve each other. . . .

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The second wall is more loosely built and less indefensible. The Romanists profess to be the only interpreters of Scripture, even though they never learn anything contained in it their lives long. They claim authority for themselves alone, juggle with words shamelessly before

our eyes, saying that the pope cannot err as to the faith, whether he be bad or good; although they cannot quote a single letter of Scripture to support their claim. Thus it comes about that so many heretical, unchristian, and even unnatural laws are contained in the canon law—matters of which there is no need for discussion at the present juncture. Just because the Romanists profess to believe that the Holy Spirit has not abandoned them, no matter if they are as ignorant and bad as they could be, they presume to assert whatever they please. In such a case, what is the need or the value of Holy Scripture? Let it be burned, and let us be content with the ignorant gentlemen at Rome who "possess the Holy Spirit within," who, however, in fact, dwells in pious souls only. Had I not read it, I should have thought it incredible that the devil should have produced such ineptitudes at Rome, and have gained adherents to them. But lest we fight them with mere words, let us adduce Scripture. St. Paul says, I Corinthians 14 [:30], "If something superior be revealed to any one sitting there and listening to another speaking God's word, the first speaker must be silent and give place." What would be the virtue of this commandment if only the speaker, or the person in the highest position, were to be believed? Christ Himself says, John 6 [:45], "that all Christians shall be taught by God." Then if the pope and his adherents were bad men, and not true Christians, i.e., not taught by God to have a true understanding; and if, on the other hand, a humble person should have the true understanding, why ever should we not follow him? Has not the pope made many errors? Who could enlighten Christian people if the pope erred, unless someone else, who had the support of Scripture, were more to be believed than he? . . .

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The third wall falls without more ado when the first two are demolished; for, even if the pope acts contrary to Scripture, we ourselves are bound to abide by Scripture. We must punish him and constrain him, according to the passage, "If thy brother sin against thee, go and tell it him between thee and him alone; but if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more; and if he hear them not, tell it to the church; and if he hear not the church, let him be unto thee as a Gentile" [Matt. 18:15-17]. This passage commands each member to exercise concern for his fellow; much more is it our duty when the wrongdoer is one who rules over us all alike, and who causes much harm and offence to the rest by his conduct. And

if I am to lay a charge against him before the church, then I must call it together.

Romanists have no Scriptural basis for their contention that the pope alone has the right to summon or sanction a council. This is their own ruling, and only valid as long as it is not harmful to Christian well-being or contrary to God's laws. If, however, the pope is in the wrong, this ruling becomes invalid, because it is harmful to Christian well-being not to punish him through a council. . . .

It is empty talk when the Romanists boast of possessing an authority such as cannot properly be contested. No one in Christendom has authority to do evil, or to forbid evil from being resisted. The church has no authority except to promote the greater good. Hence, if the pope should exercise his authority to prevent a free council, and so hinder the reform of the church, we ought to pay no regard to him and his authority. If he should excommunicate and fulminate, that ought to be despised as the proceedings of a foolish man. Trusting in God's protection, we ought to excommunicate him in return, and manage as best we can; for this authority of his would be presumptuous and empty. He does not possess it, and he would fall an easy victim to a passage of Scripture; for Paul says to the Corinthians, "For God gave us authority, not to cast down Christendom, but to build it up" [II Cor. 10:8]. Who would pretend to ignore this text? Only the power of the devil and the Antichrist attempting to arrest whatever serves the reform of Christendom. Wherefore, we must resist that power with life and limb, and might and main.

Even if some supernatural sign should be given, and appear to support the pope against the secular authority; e.g., if a plague were to strike someone down, as they boast has happened sometimes, we ought only to regard it as caused by the devil on account of our lack of faith in God. It is what Christ proclaimed, "False Christs and false prophets will come in my name, and will do signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" [Matt. 24:24]. St. Paul says to the Thessalonians [II Thess. 2:9] that the Antichrist shall, through Satan, be mighty in false, miraculous signs.

Therefore, let us firmly maintain that no Christian authority is valid when exercised contrary to Christ. St. Paul says, "We can do nothing against Christ, but only for Christ" [II Cor. 13:8]. But if an authority does anything against Christ, it is due to the power of the Antichrist and of the devil, even if that authority makes it rain and hail miracles and plagues. Miracles and plagues prove nothing, especially in these latter days of evil, for specious miracles of this kind are foretold everywhere in Scripture. Therefore, we must hold to

God's Word with firm faith. The devil will soon abandon his miracles.

And now, I hope that I have laid these false and deceptive terrors, though the Romanists have long used them to make us diffident and of a fearful conscience. It is obvious to all that they like us, are subject to the authority of the state, that they have no warrant to expound Scripture arbitrarily and without special knowledge. They are not empowered to prohibit a council or, according to their pleasure, to determine its decisions in advance, to bind it and to rob it of freedom. But if they do so, I hope I have shown that of a truth they belong to the community of Antichrist and the devil, and have nothing in common with Christ except the name.

11.4.2 Spiritual Marriage

Teresa of Avila entered a Carmelite convent at the age of nineteen. In 1538 she became seriously ill, lapsed into a three-day coma, and was taken for dead. She managed to revive, but she was left so paralyzed that it took her three years before she could walk.

Teresa was intensely devout and began to have visions and "raptures" (being carried away by ecstatic love or joy). She founded a strict order of Carmelites called the Discalced (sandaless) Carmelites. In one memorable vision, an angel pierced her heart with a flaming arrow, which left her with a burning love for God. Her spiritual directors were, however, suspicious of her many visions and raptures, fearing she might be either mentally unbalanced or, worse yet, seduced by Satan. After a terrifying vision of hell, she vowed to reform the Carmelite order.

News of the conflicts tearing Christians apart in northern Europe, the corrupt lifestyles of many priests in Rome, the many souls yet to be saved in the New Indies, made her heart burn even more intensely with a devotion to serve God perfectly. Teresa thought that if Christ has so few friends, these few must serve "His Majesty" (Teresa's way of referring to Jesus Christ) more deeply.

A brief selection from her book, *The Interior Castle* (1577) follows. In this book Teresa uses the metaphor of seven series of mansions or rooms to represent various stages of spiritual development. The castle is the soul, which the Christian enters through prayer. In the fifth mansion, the soul is possessed by God through the Prayer of Union. Progressing through the sixth and seventh mansions, the soul experiences a spiritual betrothal and finally a spiritual

marriage—the most intimate of unions with the divine.



TERESA OF AVILA

The Interior Castle (7.2)

READING QUESTIONS

1. How does the spiritual marriage begin?
2. What is the difference between spiritual betrothal and spiritual marriage?
3. In describing the spiritual marriage, do you think Teresa is saying that God and the human soul become identical? Why or why not?

Now then let us deal with the divine and spiritual marriage, although this great favor does not come to its perfect fullness as long as we live; for if we were to withdraw from God, this remarkable blessing would be lost.

The first time the favor is granted, His Majesty desires to show Himself to the soul through an imaginative vision of His most sacred humanity so that the soul will understand and not be ignorant of receiving this sovereign gift; with other persons the favor will be received in another form. With regard to the one of whom we are speaking, the Lord represented Himself to her, just after she had received Communion, in the form of shining splendor, beauty, and majesty, as He was after His resurrection, and told her that now it was time that she consider as her own what belonged to Him and that He would take care of what was hers, and He spoke other words destined more to be heard than to be mentioned.

It may seem that this experience was nothing new since at other times the Lord had represented Himself to the soul in such a way. The experience was so different that it left her indeed stupefied and frightened: first, because this vision came with great force; second, because of the words the Lord spoke to her and also because in the interior of her soul, where He represented Himself to her, she had not seen other visions except the former one. You must understand that there is the

greatest difference between all the previous visions and those of this dwelling place. Between the spiritual betrothal and the spiritual marriage the difference is as great as that which exists between two who are betrothed and between two who can no longer be separated.

I have already said that even though these comparisons are used, because there are no others better suited to our purpose, it should be understood that in this state there is no more thought of the body than if the soul were not in it, but one's thought is only of the spirit. In the spiritual marriage, there is still much less remembrance of the body because this secret union takes place in the very interior center of the soul, which must be where God Himself is, and in my opinion there is no need of any door for Him to enter. I say there is no need of any door because everything that has been said up until now seems to take place by means of the senses and faculties, and this appearance of the humanity of the Lord must also. But that which comes to pass in the union of the spiritual marriage is very different. The Lord appears in this center of the soul, not in an imaginative vision but in an intellectual one, although more delicate than those mentioned, as He appeared to the apostles without entering through the door when He said to them *pax vobis*. What God communicates here to the soul in an instant is a secret so great and a favor so sublime—and the delight the soul experiences so extreme—that I don't know what to compare it to. I can say only that the Lord wishes to reveal for that moment, in a more sublime manner than through any spiritual vision or taste, the glory of heaven. One can say no more—insofar as can be understood—than that the soul, I mean the spirit, is made one with God. For since His Majesty is also spirit, He has wished to show His love for us by giving some persons understanding of the point to which this love reaches so that we might praise His grandeur. For He has desired to be so joined with the creature that, just as those who are married cannot be separated, He doesn't want to be separated from the soul.

The spiritual betrothal is different, for the two often separate. And the union is also different because, even though it is the joining of two things into one, in the end the two can be separated and each remains by itself. We observe this ordinarily, for the favor of union with the Lord passes quickly, and afterward the soul remains without that company; I mean, without awareness of it. In this other favor from the Lord, no. The soul always remains with its God in that center. Let us say that the union is like the joining of two wax candles to such an extent that the flame coming from them is but one, or that the wick, the flame, and the wax are all one. But afterward one candle can be easily separated from the

From *Teresa of Avila: The Interior Castle*, translation by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. © 1979 by the Washington Province of Discalced Carmelites, Inc. Used by permission of Paulist Press. Pp. 177–182. Endnotes omitted.

other and there are two candles; the same holds for the wick. In the spiritual marriage the union is like what we have when rain falls from the sky into a river or fount; all is water, for the rain that fell from heaven cannot be divided or separated from the water of the river. Or it is like what we have when a little stream enters the sea, there is no means of separating the two. Or, like the bright light entering a room through two different windows; although the streams of light are separate when entering the room, they become one.

Perhaps this is what Saint Paul means in saying *He that is joined or united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him*, and is referring to this sovereign marriage, presupposing that His Majesty has brought the soul to it through union. And he also says: *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*. The soul as well, I think, can say these words now because this state is the place where the little butterfly we mentioned dies, and with the greatest joy because its life is now Christ.

And that its life is Christ is understood better, with the passing of time, by the effects this life has. Through some secret aspirations the soul understands clearly that it is God who gives life to our soul. These aspirations come very, very often in such a living way that they can in no way be doubted. The soul feels them very clearly even though they are indescribable. But the feeling is so powerful that sometimes the soul cannot avoid the loving expressions they cause, such as: O Life of my life! Sustenance that sustains me! and things of this sort. For from those divine breasts where it seems God is always sustaining the soul there flow streams of milk bringing comfort to all the people of the castle. It seems the Lord desires that in some manner these others in the castle may enjoy the great deal the soul is enjoying and that from that full-flowing river, where this tiny fount is swallowed up, a spurt of that water will sometimes be directed toward the sustenance of those who in corporeal things must serve these two who are wed. Just as a distracted person would feel this water if he were suddenly bathed in it, and would be unable to avoid feeling it, so are these operations recognized, and even with greater certitude. For just as a great gush of water could not reach us if it didn't have a source, as I have said, so it is understood clearly that there is Someone in the interior depths who shoots these arrows and gives life to this life, and that there is a Sun in the interior of the soul from which a brilliant light proceeds and is sent to the faculties. The soul, as I have said, does not move from that center nor is its peace lost; for the very One who gave peace to the apostles when they were together can give it to the soul.

It has occurred to me that this greeting of the Lord must have amounted to much more than is apparent

from its sound, as well as our Lord's words to the glorious Magdalene that she go in peace. Since the Lord's words are effected in us as deeds, they must have worked in those souls already disposed in such a manner that everything corporeal in them was taken away and they were left in pure spirit. Thus the soul could be joined in this heavenly union with the uncreated spirit. For it is very certain that in emptying ourselves of all that is creature and detaching ourselves from it for the love of God, the same Lord will fill us with Himself. And thus, while Jesus our Lord was once praying for His apostles—I don't remember where—He said that they were one with the Father and with Him, just as Jesus Christ our Lord is in the Father and the Father is in Him. I don't know what greater love there can be than this. And all of us are included here, for His Majesty said: *I ask not only for them but for all those who also will believe in me*; and He says: *I am in them*.

O God help me, how true these words are! And how well they are understood by the soul who is in this prayer and sees for itself. How well we would all understand them if it were not for our own fault, since the words of Jesus Christ, our King and Lord, cannot fail. But since we fail by not disposing ourselves and turning away from all that can hinder this light, we do not see ourselves in this mirror that we contemplate, where our image is engraved.

Well, to return to what we were saying. The Lord puts the soul in this dwelling of His, which is the center of the soul itself. They say that the empyreal heaven where the Lord is does not move as do the other heavens; similarly, it seems, in the soul that enters here there are none of those movements that usually take place in the faculties and the imagination and do harm to the soul, nor do these stirrings take away its peace.

It seems I'm saying that when the soul reaches this state in which God grants it this favor, it is sure of its salvation and safe from falling apart. I do not say such a thing, and wherever I so speak that it seems the soul is secure, this should be taken to mean as long as the divine Majesty keeps it in His hand and it does not offend Him. At least I know certainly that the soul doesn't consider itself safe even though it sees itself in this state and the state has lasted for some years. But it goes about with much greater fear than before, guarding itself from any small offense against God and with the strongest desire to serve Him, as will be said further on, and with habitual pain and confusion at seeing the little it can do and the great deal to which it is obliged. This pain is no small cross but a very great penance. For when this soul does penance, the delight will be greater in the measure that the penance is greater. The true penance comes when God takes away the soul's health and strength for

doing penance. Even though I have mentioned elsewhere the great pain this lack causes, the pain is much more intense here. All these things must come to the soul from its roots, from where it is planted. The tree that is beside the running water is fresher and gives more fruit. What is there, then, to marvel at in the desires this soul has since its true spirit has become one with the heavenly water we mentioned?

Now then, to return to what I was saying, it should not be thought that the faculties, senses, and passions are always in this peace; the soul is, yes. But in those other dwelling places, times of war, trial, and fatigue are never lacking; however, they are such that they do not take the soul from its place and its peace; that is, as a rule.

This center of our soul, or this spirit, is something so difficult to explain, and even believe in, that I think, Sisters, I'll not give you the temptation to disbelieve what I say, for I do not know how to explain this center. That there are trials and sufferings and that at the same time the soul is in peace is a difficult thing to explain. I want to make one or more comparisons for you. Please God, I may be saying something through them; but if not, I know that I'm speaking the truth in what I say.

The King is in His palace and there are many wars in his kingdom and many painful things going on, but not on that account does he fail to be at his post. So here, even though in those other dwelling places there is much tumult and there are many poisonous creatures and the noise is heard, no one enters that center dwelling place and makes the soul leave. Nor do the things the soul hears make it leave; even though they cause it some pain, the suffering is not such as to disturb it and take away its peace. The passions are now conquered and have a fear of entering the center because they would go away from there more subdued.

Our entire body may ache; but if the head is sound, the head will not ache just because the body aches.

I am laughing to myself over these comparisons for they do not satisfy me, but I don't know any others. You may think what you want; what I have said is true.

11.5 SOME CHRISTIAN CURRENTS IN NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

The spread of Christianity from Europe to North and South America created conditions conducive to new religious movements. Two of the more successful of these movements will be sampled here, the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), better known as the Mormons, and the Church of Christ, Scientist.

As modern biblical scholarship spread from Europe to America, conservative Christians responded by countering papal claims to infallibility with the claim that the Bible is infallible. This became a hallmark of American fundamentalism—so called because of its insistence that there are certain fundamentals Christians must believe in order to be saved. Among them is some form of the idea that scripture is infallible, free from all error, and should be interpreted literally.

The Roman Catholic Church, after a battle with modernism, went through its own reformation when Pope John XXIII called for a Second Vatican Council in 1959. This council opened the Roman Catholic Church to renewal and new currents of thought. A renewal of the contemplative mystical tradition was one of many results.

11.5.1 New Revelations

After the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, some Christians in England began a movement to "purify" the Church of England of the remnants of Roman Catholicism. The "Puritans," as they came to be called, drank deeply from the theological cup of French Protestant reformer John Calvin (1509–1551). For Calvin, God is absolutely sovereign. Two consequences flow from this: first, the utter and complete sinfulness of humans and, second, the absolute power of God to predestine some humans to salvation and allow others to go to hell (double predestination).

When the Puritans began to migrate to New England in the 1630s, where they established Congregational churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut, they brought with them the Calvinistic doctrines of the total human depravity, or sinfulness, and double predestination. They also brought with them a zeal to purify sinners and revive the intense and serious piety of early Christianity. These ideas profoundly influenced the development of Christianity in the New World. In particular, the idea of purifying Christianity through the revival of a sincere and earnest piety—a piety based on the confession of human sin and complete reliance on the power of God for salvation—took deep root in the new soil of America.

Two centuries later, in an attempt to reach the unchurched of a young United States, Protestant Christianity would draw on this heritage to develop the

technique known as the revival. Preachers would travel to the small farming regions of a largely agrarian America and hold revival meetings featuring singing, praying, and fervent preaching. Preachers asked people to accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Many did.

Upstate New York became known as “burned over” because so many different revival preachers had passed through the area seeking and making converts. Some people became upset and confused by all the different sects and all the different claims to absolute truth. Where, in all this variety, can one find the true Christian church?

In 1820, when he was fourteen, Joseph Smith Jr., who lived on his family’s farm near Palmyra, New York, was visited by what he took to be two divine personages. They told him not to join any existing sect. Smith interpreted this to mean that a “sect to end all sects” would soon be revealed. In 1823, according to Mormon tradition, Smith’s eagerly awaited revelation occurred when the angel Moroni appeared to Smith and told him about records written on gold plates detailing what happened to the lost tribes of Israel.

Four years later Smith found these hidden plates, translated them from “reformed Egyptian” into English, and published his translation as *The Book of Mormon* in 1830. The story in that book purports to bridge the gap between the true church of the apostolic age—before apostasy—and its restoration in the “latter days” in America. It tells how ancient Israelites sailed to America in 600 B.C.E. long before the Puritans arrived on these shores, how they built a great civilization, how the resurrected Christ visited them and preached the gospel, and how the Lamanites (ancestors of Native Americans) fought and destroyed the Nephites. The angel Moroni, who was the last of the Nephite prophets, recorded this history on golden plates. He buried them and now, resurrected as an angel, visited Smith and told him about their existence. Smith recovered them after fourteen centuries of being buried and translated them, and Moroni bore them away.

The story of the progress of the Mormon Church based on this book is a story of persecution, westward movement seeking a new Zion, division into sects, and triumph. Today there are more than 7 million Mormons worldwide with, at any given time, 35,000 missionaries spreading what they understand to be the true gospel of the restored church of Jesus the Christ. This story, in effect, tells Americans that they

do not have to rely on a gospel brought here from Europe. Instead, they can rely on a gospel brought here by Christ himself.

Below is a brief selection from one of the books in *The Book of Mormon* featuring a sermon by the prophet Moroni to the unbelievers in his own day. One can hear the fiery tone of the revival preacher in Moroni’s words and an argument why we should believe that the age of miracles still exists.



The Book of Mormon (“Mormon,” Chapter 9)

READING QUESTIONS

1. Do you detect in this sermon a criticism of the established churches of Smith’s day? If so, what is it?
2. Outline this sermon. What is its structure like?
3. What argument does Moroni make to support his claim that, for those who believe, the age of miracles has not ended?

Moroni calls upon those who do not believe in Christ to repent—He proclaims a God of miracles, who gives revelations and pours out gifts and signs upon the faithful—Miracles cease because of unbelief—Signs follow those who believe—Men are exhorted to be wise and keep the commandments.

And now, I speak also concerning those who do not believe in Christ.

²Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that “great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God?

³Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?

From *The Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, 1981), pp. 484–487. Reprinted by permission.

⁴Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell.

⁵For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you.

⁶O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day.

⁷And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues;

⁸Behold I say unto you, he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ; yea, he has not read the scriptures; if so, he does not understand them.

⁹For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

¹⁰And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not a God of miracles.

¹¹But behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, even the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and it is that same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are.

¹²Behold, he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man.

¹³And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.

¹⁴And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is happy shall be happy still; and he that is unhappy shall be unhappy still.

¹⁵And now, O all ye that have imagined up unto yourselves a god who can do no miracles, I would ask of you, have all these things passed, of which I have spoken? Has the end come yet? Behold I say unto you, Nay; and God has not ceased to be a God of miracles.

¹⁶Behold, are not the things that God hath wrought marvelous in our eyes? Yea, and who can comprehend the marvelous works of God?

¹⁷Who shall say that it was not a miracle that by his word the heaven and the earth should be; and by the power of his word man was created by the dust of the earth; and by the power of his word have miracles been wrought?

¹⁸And who shall say that Jesus Christ did not do many mighty miracles? And there were many mighty miracles wrought by the hands of the apostles.

¹⁹And if there were miracles wrought then, why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being? And behold, I say unto you he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God, and is a God of miracles.

²⁰And the reason why he ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that they dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way, and know not the God in whom they should trust.

²¹Behold, I say unto you that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth.

²²For behold, thus said Jesus Christ, the Son of God, unto his disciples who should tarry, yea, and also to all his disciples, in the hearing of the multitude: Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;

²³And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned;

²⁴And these signs shall follow them that believe—in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover;

²⁵And whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth.

²⁶And now, behold, who can stand against the works of the Lord? Who can deny his sayings? Who will rise up against the almighty power of the Lord? Who will despise the works of the Lord? Who will despise the children of Christ? Behold, all ye who are despisers of the works of the Lord, for ye shall wonder and perish.

²⁷O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in

need. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him.

²⁸Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God.

²⁹See that ye are not baptized unworthily; see that ye partake not of the sacrament of Christ unworthily; but see that ye do all things in worthiness, and do it in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God; and if ye do this, and endure to the end, ye will in nowise be cast out.

³⁰Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall have my words.

³¹Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.

³²And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.

³³And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.

³⁴But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof.

³⁵And these things are written that we may rid our garments of the blood of our brethren, who have dwindled in unbelief.

³⁶And behold, these things which we have desired concerning our brethren, yea, even their restoration to the knowledge of Christ, are according to the prayers of all the saints who have dwelt in the land.

³⁷And may the Lord Jesus Christ grant that their prayers may be answered according to their faith; and may God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel; and may he bless them forever, through faith on the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

11.5.2 Christian Science

In 1866 a woman named Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) had a healing experience that affected her deeply. She translated her experience into a theological and philosophical system known as Christian Science. Her experience convinced her that God has the power to heal illness and that the healing ministry of Jesus has been neglected by Christianity.

God is Mind, according to Mrs. Eddy, and the universe and humans are reflections of this one divine Mind. Mind or Spirit is the only real substance. Matter appears to be real, but it is not. Hence illness, disease, and even death, all of which afflict the material body, only seem to be real as a dream seems to be real.

Before her cure in 1866, Mrs. Eddy had been a semi-invalid and sought help from the leading therapies of the day. None proved satisfactory, although she worked with Phineas P. Quimby, a noted healer, for four years. Shortly after Quimby's death in 1866, Mrs. Eddy's cure took place. She devoted herself to nine years of study and healing practice in order to demonstrate the principles she believed were central to a "Christian science" of healing. This work eventually led, in 1875, to the publication of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*.

In 1879 she founded the Church of Christ, Scientist, in Massachusetts. Its stated purpose is "to commemorate the word and works of our Master, which should reinstate primitive Christianity and its lost element of healing." She became the pastor of the Boston church, which became known as the Mother Church. Mrs. Eddy wrote the *Manual of the Mother Church*, which still governs what is today a worldwide movement.

Mary Baker Eddy was a strong leader and maintained strict organizational control of Church of Christ, Scientist. When disagreements developed and former adherents went off to found other movements (generally referred to as New Thought), Mrs. Eddy insisted on retaining an explicitly Christian identification. "Many imagine," she wrote in the Preface to *Science and Health*, "that the phenomena of physical healing in Christian Science present only a phase of the action of the human mind . . . [but] the physical healing of Christian Science results now, as in Jesus' time, from the operation of divine Principle, before which sin and disease lose their reality in human consciousness and disappear as naturally and as necessarily as darkness gives place to light and sin to reformation" (p. xi).

What follows is a selection from a section called "Recapitulation" from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In it Mary Baker Eddy strongly affirms her belief in the power of the divine Mind to heal. One of the things that makes this religious movement interesting to students of religion is that it is one of the few churches founded and shaped by a woman. Its emphasis on healing, health, and science gives it a distinctive character.



MARY BAKER EDDY

Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures

READING QUESTIONS

1. What are the demands of the "Science of Soul," and what is "the scientific statement of being"?
2. By what reasoning does Mary Baker Eddy reach the conclusion that "evil is unreal"?
3. What is sickness, and how can it be healed?

CHAPTER XIV: RECAPITULATION

*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept;
line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a
little.*

—Isaiah

This chapter is from the first edition of the author's class-book, copyrighted in 1870. After much labor and increased spiritual understanding, she revised that treatise for this volume in 1875. Absolute Christian Science pervades its statements, to elucidate scientific metaphysics.

Questions and Answers

Question.—What is God?

Answer.—God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love.

From *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy, Pp. 465–471, 493–495. © 1994 The Christian Science Board of Directors. ISBN 0-087952-038-8. Reprinted by permission of The Christian Science Board of Directors.

Question.—Are these terms synonymous?

Answer.—They are. They refer to one absolute God. They are also intended to express the nature, essence, and wholeness of Deity. The attributes of God are justice, mercy, wisdom, goodness, and so on.

Question.—Is there more than one God or Principle?

Answer.—There is not. Principle and its idea is one, and this one is God, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Being, and His reflection is man and the universe. *Omni* is adopted from the Latin adjective signifying *all*. Hence God combines all-power or potency, all-science or true knowledge, all-presence. The varied manifestations of Christian Science indicate Mind, never matter, and have one Principle.

Question.—What are spirits and souls?

Answer.—To human belief, they are personalities constituted of mind and matter, life and death, truth and error, good and evil; but these contrasting pairs of terms represent contraries, as Christian Science reveals, which neither dwell together nor assimilate. Truth is immortal; error is mortal. Truth is limitless; error is limited. Truth is intelligent; error is non-intelligent. Moreover, Truth is real, and error is unreal. This last statement contains the point you will most reluctantly admit, although first and last it is the most important to understand.

The term *souls* or *spirits* is as improper as the term *gods*. Soul or Spirit signifies Deity and nothing else. There is no finite soul nor spirit. Soul or Spirit means only one Mind, and cannot be rendered in the plural. Heathen mythology and Jewish theology have perpetuated the fallacy that intelligence, soul, and life can be in matter; and idolatry and ritualism are the outcome of all man-made beliefs. The Science of Christianity comes with fan in hand to separate the chaff from the wheat. Science will declare God aright, and Christianity will demonstrate this declaration and its divine Principle, making mankind better physically, morally, and spiritually.

Question.—What are the demands of the Science of Soul?

Answer.—The first demand of this Science is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." This *me* is Spirit. Therefore the command means this: Thou shalt have no intelligence, no life, no substance, no truth, no love, but that which is spiritual. The second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It should be thoroughly understood that all men have one Mind, one God and Father, one Life, Truth, and Love. Mankind will become perfect in proportion as this fact becomes apparent, war will cease and the true brotherhood of

man will be established. Having no other gods, turning to no other but the one perfect Mind to guide him, man is the likeness of God, pure and eternal, having that Mind which was also in Christ.

Science reveals Spirit, Soul, as not in the body, and God as not in man but as reflected by man. The greater cannot be in the lesser. The belief that the greater can be in the lesser is an error that works ill. This is a leading point in the Science of Soul, that Principle is not in its idea. Spirit, Soul, is not confined in man, and is never in matter. We reason imperfectly from effect to cause, when we conclude that matter is the effect of Spirit; but *a priori* reasoning shows material existence to be enigmatical. Spirit gives the true mental idea. We cannot interpret Spirit, Mind, through matter. Matter neither sees, hears, nor feels.

Reasoning from cause to effect in the Science of Mind, we begin with Mind, which must be understood through the idea which expresses it and cannot be learned from its opposite, matter. Thus we arrive at Truth, or intelligence, which evolves its own unerring idea and never can be coordinate with human illusions. If Soul sinned, it would be mortal, for sin is mortality's self, because it kills itself. If Truth is immortal, error must be mortal, because error is unlike Truth. Because Soul is immortal, Soul cannot sin, for sin is not the eternal verity of being.

Question.—What is the scientific statement of being?

Answer.—There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness. Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual.

Question.—What is substance?

Answer.—Substance is that which is eternal and incapable of discord and decay. Truth, Life, and Love are substance, as the Scriptures use this word in Hebrews: "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Spirit, the synonym of Mind, Soul, or God, is the only real substance. The spiritual universe, including individual man, is a compound idea, reflecting the divine substance of Spirit.

Question.—What is Life?

Answer.—Life is divine Principle, Mind, Soul, Spirit. Life is without beginning and without end. Eternity, not time, expresses the thought of Life, and time is no part of eternity. One ceases in proportion as the other is recognized. Time is finite; eternity is forever infinite. Life

is neither in nor of matter. What is termed matter is unknown to Spirit, which includes in itself all substance and is Life eternal. Matter is a human concept. Life is divine Mind. Life is not limited. Death and finiteness are unknown to Life. If Life ever had a beginning, it would also have an ending.

Question.—What is intelligence?

Answer.—Intelligence is omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. It is the primal and eternal quality of infinite Mind, of the triune Principle,—Life, Truth, and Love,—named God.

Question.—What is Mind?

Answer.—Mind is God. The exterminator of error is the great truth that God, good, is the *only* Mind, and that the supposititious opposite of infinite Mind—called *devil* or evil—is not Mind, is not Truth, but error, without intelligence or reality. There can be but one Mind, because there is but one God; and if mortals claimed no other Mind and accepted no other, sin would be unknown. We can have but one Mind, if that one is infinite. We bury the sense of infinitude, when we admit that, although God is infinite, evil has a place in this infinity, for evil can have no place, where all space is filled with God.

We lose the high signification of omnipotence, when after admitting that God, or good, is omnipresent and has all-power, we still believe there is another power, named *evil*. This belief that there is more than one mind is as pernicious to divine theology as are ancient mythology and pagan idolatry. With one Father, even God, the whole family of man would be brethren; and with one Mind and that God, or good, the brotherhood of man would consist of Love and Truth, and have unity of Principle and spiritual power which constitute divine Science. The supposed existence of more than one mind was the basic error of idolatry. This error assumed the loss of spiritual power, the loss of the spiritual presence of Life as infinite Truth without an unlikeness, and the loss of Love as ever present and universal.

Divine Science explains the abstract statement that there is one Mind by the following self-evident proposition: If God, or good, is real, then evil, the unlikeness of God, is unreal. And evil can only seem to be real by giving reality to the unreal. The children of God have but one Mind. How can good lapse into evil, when God, the Mind of man, never sins? The standard of perfection was originally God and man. Has God taken down His own standard, and has man fallen?

God is the creator of man, and, the divine Principle of man remaining perfect, the divine idea or reflection, man, remains perfect. Man is the expression of God's

being. If there ever was a moment when man did not express the divine perfection, then there was a moment when man did not express God, and consequently a time when Deity was unexpressed—that is, without entity. If man has lost perfection, then he has lost his perfect Principle, the divine Mind. If man ever existed without this perfect Principle or Mind, then man's existence was a myth.

The relations of God and man, divine Principle and idea, are indestructible in Science; and Science knows no lapse from nor return to harmony, but holds the divine order or spiritual law, in which God and all that He creates are perfect and eternal, to have remained unchanged in its eternal history.

The unlikeness of Truth,—named *error*,—the opposite of Science, and the evidence before the five corporeal senses, afford no indication of the grand facts of being; even as these so-called senses receive no intimation of the earth's motions or of the science of astronomy, but yield assent to astronomical propositions on the authority of natural science.

The facts of divine Science should be admitted,—although the evidence as to these facts is not supported by evil, by matter, or by material sense,—because the evidence that God and man coexist is fully sustained by spiritual sense. Man is, and forever has been, God's reflection. God is infinite, therefore ever present, and there is no other power nor presence. Hence the spirituality of the universe is the only fact of creation. "Let God be true, but every [material] man a liar." . . .

Question.—Will you explain sickness and show how it is to be healed?

Answer.—The method of Christian Science Mind-healing is touched upon in a previous chapter entitled Christian Science Practice. A full answer to the above question involves teaching, which enables the healer to demonstrate and prove for himself the principle and rule of Christian Science or metaphysical healing.

Mind must be found superior to all the beliefs of the five corporeal senses, and able to destroy all ills. Sickness is a belief, which must be annihilated by the divine Mind. Disease is an experience of so-called mortal mind. It is fear made manifest on the body. Christian Science takes away this physical sense of discord, just as it removes any other sense of moral or mental inharmony. That man is material, and that matter suffers,—these propositions can only seem real and natural in illusion. Any sense of soul in matter is not the reality of being.

If Jesus awakened Lazarus from the dream, illusion, of death, this proved that the Christ could improve on a false sense. Who dares to doubt this consummate test of the power and willingness of divine Mind to hold man

forever intact in his perfect state, and to govern man's entire action? Jesus said: "Destroy this temple [body], and in three days I [Mind] will raise it up"; and he did this for tired humanity's reassurance.

Is it not a species of infidelity to believe that so great a work as the Messiah's was done for himself or for God, who needed no help from Jesus' example to preserve the eternal harmony? But mortals did need this help, and Jesus pointed the way for them. Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need. It is not well to imagine that Jesus demonstrated the divine power to heal only for a select number or for a limited period of time, since to all mankind and in every hour, divine Love supplies all good.

The miracle of grace is no miracle to Love. Jesus demonstrated the inability of corporeality, as well as the infinite ability of Spirit, thus helping erring human sense to flee from its own convictions and seek safety in divine Science. Reason, rightly directed, serves to correct the errors of corporeal sense; but sin, sickness, and death, will seem real (even as the experiences of the sleeping dream seem real) until the Science of man's eternal harmony breaks their illusion with the unbroken reality of scientific being.

Which of these two theories concerning man are you ready to accept? One is the mortal testimony, changing, dying, unreal. The other is the eternal and real evidence, bearing Truth's signet, its lap piled high with immortal fruits.

Our Master cast out devils (evils) and healed the sick. It should be said of his followers also, that they cast fear and all evil out of themselves and others and heal the sick. God will heal the sick through man, whenever man is governed by God. Truth casts out error now as surely as it did nineteen centuries ago. All of Truth is not understood; hence its healing power is not fully demonstrated.

If sickness is true or the idea of Truth, you cannot destroy sickness, and it would be absurd to try. Then classify sickness and error as our Master did, when he spoke of the sick, "whom Satan hath bound," and find a sovereign antidote for error in the life-giving power of Truth acting on human belief, a power which opens the prison doors to such as are bound, and sets the captive free physically and morally.

When the illusion of sickness or sin tempts you, cling steadfastly to God and His idea. Allow nothing but His likeness to abide in your thought. Let neither fear nor doubt overshadow your clear sense and calm trust, that the recognition of life harmonious—as Life eternally is—can destroy any painful sense of, or belief in, that which Life is not. Let Christian Science, instead of corporeal sense, support your understanding of being, and this understanding will supplant error with Truth, re-

place mortality with immortality, and silence discord with harmony. . . .

11.5.3 Battles Over the Bible

Among European Protestant scholars, the so-called “higher criticism” of biblical literature began making headway in the nineteenth century. This scholarship called into question many traditional views about dating, authorship, and composition of biblical writings. Liberal Protestants in Europe and America accepted this scholarship because of their conviction that the true Word of God is Jesus and the Bible is only indirectly God’s word insofar as it witnesses to the true Word. The Bible is not infallible, only God is infallible.

Higher criticism was part of the general movement known as modernism. Growing out of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, the spirit of modernism convinced many that human reason could be applied to the study of anything, including religion and religious scriptures, and that humans had a duty to “follow reason wherever it may lead.”

Many reacted negatively to the application of Enlightenment reason to the Bible. It seemed, for many Christians, to undermine the authority of revelation. Conservatives among Roman Catholics reacted by claiming that the pope, when speaking *ex cathedra* (in his official capacity as the Vicar of Christ on earth), is infallible. Conservative Protestants reacted by claiming the written words of the Bible are infallible.

Princeton Theological Seminary became the home of a number of Protestant Presbyterian theologians in the nineteenth century who opposed the “higher criticism” and defended the infallibility of scripture. Although not fundamentalist in the strict sense, but conservative evangelicals, they nevertheless helped formulate what became an important part of the credo of American fundamentalism, the belief that the Christian scripture is literally God’s word and the original autographs (no longer extant) are without error.

Benjamin B. Warfield (1851–1921) was a professor of theology at Princeton for many years. His many publications in the field of biblical studies are scholarly and influential. We find in one of his writings, in the selection that follows, one of the clearest statements of the belief that the Bible is infallible.



BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD

The Inspiration of Scripture

READING QUESTIONS

1. What is inspiration, and what is its result?
2. How can the words of the Scriptures be both human and divine?
3. Liberals have often accused Warfield’s position of being a kind of “bibliolatry” or Bible worship. Given what you have read, do you think that charge is fair?

Inspiration is that extraordinary, supernatural influence (or, passively, the result of it,) exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and, therefore, perfectly infallible. In this definition, it is to be noted: 1st. That this influence is a supernatural one—something different from the inspiration of the poet or man of genius. Luke’s accuracy is not left by it with only the safeguards which “the diligent and accurate Suetonius” had. 2d. That it is an extraordinary influence—something different from the ordinary action of the Spirit in the conversion and sanctifying guidance of believers. Paul had some more prevalent safeguard against false-teaching than Luther or even the saintly Rutherford. 3d. That it is such an influence as makes the words written under its guidance, the words of God; by which is meant to be affirmed an absolute infallibility (as alone fitted to divine words), admitting no degrees whatever—extending to the very word, and to all the words. So that every part of Holy Writ is thus held alike infallibly true in all its statements, of whatever kind.

Fencing around and explaining this definition, it is to be remarked further:

1st. That it purposely declares nothing as to the mode of inspiration. The Reformed Churches admit that this is inscrutable. They content themselves with defining carefully and holding fast the effects of the divine influence, leaving the mode of divine action by which it is brought about draped in mystery.

2d. It is purposely so framed as to distinguish it from revelation;—seeing that it has to do with the communication of truth not its acquirement.

From Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), pp. 420–422. Reprinted by permission.

3d. It is by no means to be imagined that it is meant to proclaim a mechanical theory of inspiration. The Reformed Churches have never held such a theory: though dishonest, careless, ignorant or over eager controverters of its doctrine have often brought the charge. Even those special theologians in whose teeth such an accusation has been oftenest thrown (e.g., Gaussen) are explicit in teaching that the human element is never absent. The Reformed Churches hold, indeed, that every word of the Scriptures, without exception, is the word of God; but, alongside of that they hold equally explicitly that every word is the word of man. And, therefore, though strong and uncompromising in resisting the attribution to the Scriptures of any failure in absolute truth and infallibility, they are before all others in seeking, and finding, and gazing on in loving rapture, the marks of the fervid impetuosity of a Paul—the tender saintliness of a John—the practical genius of a James, in the writings which through them the Holy Ghost has given for our guidance. Though strong and uncompromising in resisting all effort to separate the human and divine, they distance all competitors in giving honor alike to both by proclaiming in one breath that all is divine and all is human. As Gaussen so well expresses it, “We all hold that every verse, without exception, is from men, and every verse, without exception, is from God”; “every word of the Bible is as really from man as it is from God.”

4th. Nor is this a mysterious doctrine—except, indeed, in the sense in which everything supernatural is mysterious. We are not dealing in puzzles, but in the plainest facts of spiritual experience. How close, indeed, is the analogy here with all that we know of the Spirit’s action in other spheres! Just as the first act of loving faith by which the regenerated soul flows out of itself to its Saviour, is at once the consciously-chosen act of that soul and the direct work of the Holy Ghost; so, every word indited under the analogous influence of inspiration was at one and the same time the consciously self-chosen word of the writer and the divine-inspired word of the Spirit. I cannot help thinking that it is through failure to note and assimilate this fact, that the doctrine of verbal inspiration is so summarily set aside and so unthinkingly inveighed against by divines otherwise cautious and reverent. Once grasp this idea, and how impossible is it to separate in any measure the human and divine. It is all human—every word, and all divine. The human characteristics are to be noted and exhibited; the divine perfection and infallibility, no less.

This, then, is what we understand by the church doctrine:—a doctrine which claims that by a special, supernatural, extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, the sacred writers have been guided in their writing in such a way, as while their humanity was not superseded, it

was yet so dominated that their words became at the same time the words of God, and thus, in every case and all alike, absolutely infallible.

11.5.4 Contemplation

Thomas Merton (1919–1968) died tragically. He was electrocuted by a faultily wired fan in his room in Bangkok while visiting Buddhist monks. He was on a trip to learn more about spirituality and mysticism in Buddhism. Christians, Merton believed, could learn much from the spirituality found in other religions.

Merton had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1939 and, at twenty-six, became a Trappist monk. His best-selling autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, published in 1948, helped to renew interest in Catholic spiritualism and mysticism.

Merton did not fear encountering religions other than Christianity and was open to the valuable lessons they could teach. One of his finest works is *Mystics and Zen Masters*. His love of God, and his life devoted to contemplation, spiritual dialogue, and writing, reveal a deep sensitivity to spiritual matters. The Dalai Lama (see Reading 7.6.3) remarked after meeting with Merton just weeks before his death, “This was the first time that I had been struck by such a feeling of spirituality in anyone who professed Christianity. Since then I have come across others with similar qualities, but it was Merton who introduced me to the real meaning of the word “Christian.”

Read a little Merton for yourself and see if you experience in his writings what the Dalai Lama experienced when he met Merton.



THOMAS MERTON

New Seeds of Contemplation

READING QUESTIONS

1. What is contemplation, and what are its seeds?
2. How does Merton answer the question, “How can I know God’s will?”

From *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton, pp. 1–5, 14–20. Copyright © 1961 by the Abbey of Gethsemani, Inc. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

3. What sort of spirituality do you find in Merton's words and ideas? Is it distinctively Christian or more universal? Explain your answer.

Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness and for being. It is a vivid realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent, and infinitely abundant Source. Contemplation is, above all, awareness of the reality of that Source. It *knows* the Source, obscurely, inexplicably, but with a certitude that goes both beyond reason and beyond simple faith. For contemplation is a kind of spiritual vision to which both reason and faith aspire, by their very nature, because without it they must always remain incomplete. Yet contemplation is not vision because it sees "without seeing" and knows "without knowing." It is a more profound depth of faith, a knowledge too deep to be grasped in images, in words or even in clear concepts. It can be suggested by words, by symbols, but in the very moment of trying to indicate what it knows the contemplative mind takes back what it has said, and denies what it has affirmed. For in contemplation we know by "unknowing." Or, better, we know *beyond* all knowing or "unknowing."

Poetry, music, and art have something in common with the contemplative experience. But contemplation is beyond aesthetic intuition, beyond art, beyond poetry. Indeed, it is also beyond philosophy, beyond speculative theology. It resumes, transcends, and fulfills them all, and yet at the same time it seems, in a certain way, to supersede and to deny them all. Contemplation is always beyond our own knowledge, beyond our own light, beyond systems, beyond explanations, beyond discourse, beyond dialogue, beyond ourself. To enter into the realm of contemplation one must in a certain sense die: but this death is in fact the entrance into a higher life. It is a death for the sake of life, which leaves behind all that we can know or treasure as life, as thought, as experience, as joy, as being.

And so contemplation seems to supersede and to discard every other form of intuition and experience—whether in art, in philosophy, in theology, in liturgy, or in ordinary levels of love and of belief. This rejection is of course only apparent. Contemplation is and must be compatible with all these things, for it is their highest fulfillment. But in the actual experience of contemplation all other experiences are momentarily lost. They "die" to be born again on a higher level of life.

In other words, then, contemplation reaches out to the knowledge and even to the experience of the transcendent and inexpressible God. It knows God by seeming to touch Him. Or rather it knows Him as if it had been invisibly touched by Him. . . . Touched by Him Who has no hands, but Who is pure Reality and the source of all that is real! Hence contemplation is a sudden gift of awareness, an awakening to the Real within all that is real. A vivid awareness of infinite Being at the roots of our own limited being. An awareness of our contingent reality as received, as a present from God, as a free gift of love. This is the existential contact of which we speak when we use the metaphor of being "touched by God."

Contemplation is also the response to a call: a call from Him Who has no voice, and yet Who speaks in everything that is, and Who, most of all, speaks in the depths of our own being: for we ourselves are words of His. But we are words that are meant to respond to Him, to answer to Him, to echo Him, and even in some way to contain Him and signify Him. Contemplation is this echo. It is a deep resonance in the inmost center of our spirit in which our very life loses its separate voice and resounds with the majesty and the mercy of the Hidden and Living One. He answers Himself in us and this answer is divine life, divine creativity, making all things new. We ourselves become His echo and His answer. It is as if in creating us God asked a question, and in awakening us to contemplation He answered the question, so that the contemplative is at the same time, question and answer.

The life of contemplation implies two levels of awareness: first, awareness of the question, and second, awareness of the answer. Though these are two distinct and enormously different levels, yet they are in fact an awareness of the same thing. The question is, itself, the answer. And we ourselves are both. But we cannot know this until we have moved into the second kind of awareness. We awaken, not to find an answer absolutely distinct from the question, but to realize that the question is its own answer. And all is summed up in one awareness—not a proposition, but an experience: "I AM."

The contemplation of which I speak here is not philosophical. It is not the static awareness of metaphysical essences apprehended as spiritual objects, unchanging and eternal. It is not the contemplation of abstract ideas. It is the religious apprehension of God, through my life in God, or through "sonship" as the New Testament says. "For whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . The Spirit Himself gives testimony to our own spirit that we are the sons of God." "To as

many as received Him He gave the power to become the sons of God. . . ." And so the contemplation of which I speak is a religious and transcendent gift. It is not something to which we can attain alone, by intellectual effort, by perfecting our natural powers. It is not a kind of self-hypnosis, resulting from concentration on our own inner spiritual being. It is not the fruit of our own efforts. It is the gift of God Who, in His mercy, completes the hidden and mysterious work of creation in us by enlightening our minds and hearts, by awakening in us the awareness that we are words spoken in His One Word, and that Creating Spirit (*Creator Spiritus*) dwells in us, and we in Him. That we are "in Christ" and that Christ lives in us. That the natural life in us has been completed, elevated, transformed and fulfilled in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Contemplation is the awareness and realization, even in some sense *experience*, of what each Christian obscurely believes: "It is now no longer I that live but Christ lives in me."

Hence contemplation is more than a consideration of abstract truths about God, more even than affective meditation on the things we believe. It is awakening, enlightenment, and the amazing intuitive grasp by which love gains certitude of God's creative and dynamic intervention in our daily life. Hence contemplation does not simply "find" a clear idea of God and confine Him within the limits of that idea, and hold Him there as a prisoner to Whom it can always return. On the contrary, contemplation is carried away by Him into His own realm, His own mystery, and His own freedom. It is a pure and a virginal knowledge, poor in concepts, poorer still in reasoning, but able, by its very poverty and purity, to follow the Word "wherever He may go."

SEEDS

Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. Most of these unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because men are not prepared to receive them: for such seeds as these cannot spring up anywhere except in the good soil of freedom, spontaneity, and love.

This is no new idea. Christ in the parable of the sower long ago told us that "The seed is the word of God." We often think this applies only to the word of the Gospel as formally preached in churches on Sundays (if indeed it is preached in churches any more!). But every expres-

sion of the will of God is in some sense a "word" of God and therefore a "seed" of new life. The ever-changing reality in the midst of which we live should awaken us to the possibility of an uninterrupted dialogue with God. By this I do not mean continuous "talk," or a frivolously conversational form of affective prayer which is sometimes cultivated in convents, but a dialogue of love and of choice. A dialogue of deep wills.

In all the situations of life the "will of God" comes to us not merely as an external dictate of impersonal law but above all as an interior invitation of personal love. Too often the conventional conception of "God's will" as a sphinx-like and arbitrary force bearing down upon us with implacable hostility, leads men to lose faith in a God they cannot find it possible to love. Such a view of the divine will drives human weakness to despair and one wonders if it is not, itself, often the expression of a despair too intolerable to be admitted to conscious consideration. These arbitrary "dictates" of a domineering and insensible Father are more often seeds of hatred than of love. If that is our concept of the will of God, we cannot possibly seek the obscure and intimate mystery of the encounter that takes place in contemplation. We will desire only to fly as far as possible from Him and hide from His Face forever. So much depends on our idea of God! Yet no idea of Him, however pure and perfect, is adequate to express Him as He really is. Our idea of God tells us more about ourselves than about Him.

We must learn to realize that the love of God seeks us in every situation, and seeks our good. His inscrutable love seeks our awakening. True, since this awakening implies a kind of death to our exterior self, we will dread His coming in proportion as we are identified with this exterior self and attached to it. But when we understand the dialectic of life and death we will learn to take the risks implied by faith, to make the choices that deliver us from our routine self and open to us the door of a new being, a new reality.

The mind that is the prisoner of conventional ideas, and the will that is the captive of its own desire cannot accept the seeds of an unfamiliar truth and a supernatural desire. For how can I receive the seeds of freedom if I am in love with slavery and how can I cherish the desire of God if I am filled with another and an opposite desire? God cannot plant His liberty in me because I am a prisoner and I do not even desire to be free. I love my captivity and I imprison myself in the desire for the things that I hate, and I have hardened my heart against true love. I must learn therefore to let go of the familiar and the usual and consent to what is new and unknown to me. I must learn to "leave myself" in order to find myself by yielding to the love of God. If I were looking

for God, every event and every moment would sow, in my will, grains of His life that would spring up one day in a tremendous harvest.

For it is God's love that warms me in the sun and God's love that sends the cold rain. It is God's love that feeds me in the bread I eat and God that feeds me also by hunger and fasting. It is the love of God that sends the winter days when I am cold and sick, and the hot summer when I labor and my clothes are full of sweat: but it is God Who breathes on me with light winds off the river and in the breezes out of the wood. His love spreads the shade of the sycamore over my head and sends the water-boy along the edge of the wheat field with a bucket from the spring, while the laborers are resting and the mules stand under the tree.

It is God's love that speaks to me in the birds and streams; but also behind the clamor of the city God speaks to me in His judgments, and all these things are seeds sent to me from His will.

If these seeds would take root in my liberty, and if His will would grow from my freedom, I would become the love that He is, and my harvest would be His glory and my own joy.

And I would grow together with thousands and millions of other freedoms into the gold of one huge field praising God, loaded with increase, loaded with wheat. If in all things I consider only the heat and the cold, the food or the hunger, the sickness or labor, the beauty or pleasure, the success and failure, or the material good or evil my works have won for my own will, I will find only emptiness and not happiness. I shall not be fed, I shall not be full. For my food is the will of Him Who made me and Who made all things in order to give Himself to me through them.

My chief care should not be to find pleasure or success, health or life or money or rest or even things like virtue and wisdom—still less their opposites, pain, failure, sickness, death. But in all that happens, my one desire and my one joy should be to know: "Here is the thing that God has willed for me. In this His love is found, and in accepting this I can give back His love to Him and give myself with it to Him. For in giving myself I shall find Him and He is life everlasting."

By consenting to His will with joy and doing it with gladness I have His love in my heart, because my will is now the same as His love and I am on the way to becoming what He is, Who is Love. And by accepting all things from Him I receive His joy into my soul, not because things are what they are but because God is Who He is, and His love has willed my joy in them all.

How am I to know the will of God? Even where there is no other more explicit claim on my obedience, such as a

legitimate command, the very nature of each situation usually bears written into itself some indication of God's will. For whatever is demanded by truth, by justice, by mercy, or by love must surely be taken to be willed by God. To consent to His will is, then, to consent to be true, or to speak truth, or at least to seek it. To obey Him is to respond to His will expressed in the need of another person, or at least to respect the rights of others. For the right of another man is the expression of God's love and God's will. In demanding that I respect the rights of another God is not merely asking me to conform to some abstract, arbitrary law: He is enabling me to share, as His son, in His own care for my brother. No man who ignores the rights and needs of others can hope to walk in the light of contemplation, because his way has turned aside from truth, from compassion, and therefore from God.

The requirements of a work to be done can be understood as the will of God. If I am supposed to hoe a garden or make a table, then I will be obeying God if I am true to the task I am performing. To do the work carefully and well, with love and respect for the nature of my task and with due attention to its purpose, is to unite myself to God's will in my work. In this way I become His instrument. He works through me. When I act as His instrument my labor cannot become an obstacle to contemplation, even though it may temporarily so occupy my mind that I cannot engage in it while I am actually doing my job. Yet my work itself will purify and pacify my mind and dispose me for contemplation.

Unnatural, frantic, anxious work, work done under pressure of greed or fear or any other inordinate passion, cannot properly speaking be dedicated to God, because God never wills such work directly. He may permit that through no fault we may have to work madly and distractedly, due to our sins, and to the sins of the society in which we live. In that case we must tolerate it and make the best of what we cannot avoid. But let us not be blind to the distinction between sound, healthy work and unnatural toil.

In any case, we should always seek to conform to the *logos* or truth of the duty before us, the work to be done, or our own God-given nature. Contemplative obedience and abandonment to the will of God can never mean a cultivated indifference to the natural values implanted by Him in human life and work. Insensitivity must not be confused with detachment. The contemplative must certainly be detached, but he can never allow himself to become insensible to true human values, whether in society, in other men, or in himself. If he does so, then his contemplation stands condemned as vitiated in its very root.