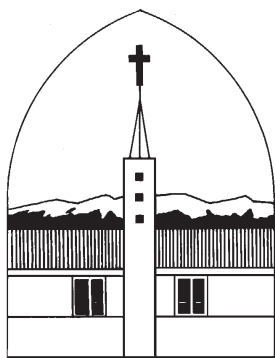


21st CENTURY SPIRITUALITY

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PREFACE

Vatican Council Two was the catalyst that triggered off changes in almost every area of Catholic life. Those of us who lived before the Council and who lived through it and after it have had to re-examine our Catholicism and re-orient our lives in new directions. I am still grappling with the new challenges ushered in by the Council and with the problems we must constantly face in a mobile, rapidly changing world.

Vatican II was only one of the factors that forced us to re-think our morality and spirituality. Other factors that affect us deeply are the knowledge explosion, modern technology, the communications media, rapid change, constant mobility and travel, pluralistic society, secularisation, exposure to many religions and ideologies, affluence, greed, world poverty, globalisation etc. The list could be expanded indefinitely. All the realities listed and many others not listed call for a spiritual and moral response from the follower of Christ.

I would like to draw attention especially to the freedom that we Catholics now enjoy. Many of our rules and structures have been swept away and we are free to decide for ourselves how we will live the Christian life. In one sense we are never free because we must always try to discover God's will and implement it. Formerly, however, the rules tended to point out God's will to us and we were free of the burden to discover it for ourselves. Today we must often struggle to discover what is best in what is often a complex situation. Unfortunately, our decisions are often governed by the values of our culture rather than by the gospel. Often we do not realise the extent to which we have been culturally conditioned in our thinking, willing and acting. We Christians frequently act no differently from those around us who have no religion.

Modern people are constantly bombarded with sensations coming from the media, T.V., the computer, travel etc. The consequence of this unceasing exposure to worldly values is that our minds and hearts are being increasingly secularised and our faith is being

slowly eroded. It is very difficult for Christ's values to take deep root. There is a danger that the word is sown among thorns and that the thorns will grow up and choke it.

UNCHANGING VALUES IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Despite the many changes listed above there is much that has remained unchanged in the spiritual life. The interior dimension of the spiritual life remains unchanged. Modern people, like their ancestors, have intellects, wills and emotions, and like their forebears they must exercise their intellects and wills in the practice of faith, hope, love, humility, justice and all the virtues. Doubtless modern people will sometimes be called to express the virtues in new ways.

Since love unifies our spiritual lives we will focus briefly on it here. On her deathbed St. Therese gave a final message - 'Love alone counts.' This truth had been loudly proclaimed in I Cor.13 by St. Paul. Even in the 21st century this truth is still valid. If we truly love God everything else will fall into place. If we fall in love and stay in love it will solve all our problems. If we truly love we will avoid waste and consumerism. We will live simply and not pollute the planet. We will overcome greed and generously help the poor. Love, and it alone, will solve all the problems of the modern world. Lonergan points out that we must love not only affectively with our whole hearts, but also with our whole minds. We must put on the mind of Christ.

All people are called to the love of God and of neighbour for God's sake. This duty remains unchanged from person to person, from one generation to the next. This is the interior dimension of all spiritualities, and it is more important than the externals. Jesuits, Franciscans, Benedictines, the clergy, the laity, religious and even atheists all have the Holy Spirit and he is leading each and every one of us to the fullness of love (*Lumen Gentium* 42). Doubtless love can be expressed in innumerable forms by different people in different situations. It will be expressed in one way by a manual worker, in another way by a soldier and still another way by a priest. But the interior love remains the same for all.

But what is love? Unless we adopt the Thomist explanation of the faculties it is very difficult to clearly understand charity and the various other virtues. I have found that it is almost impossible to understand myself and others clearly, unless I first understand the nature and operations of the intellect, will and emotions. Many people confuse feelings with acts of the will. This leads to confusion about sin, temptation, prayer, love etc. I need to remind myself and others, constantly, that temptation is not a sin; feeling is not a sin; all sin is in the will. Most of us find it very difficult to identify pure acts of the will that are devoid of feeling.

Furthermore, there are many English words that we use, whose meaning is not clearly defined. Among such words are mind, heart, image, imagination, thoughts, thinking etc. Even the terms 'intellect', 'will' and 'emotions' will not be clearly understood unless we adopt the Thomist explanation of these faculties. Aquinas has built his whole spiritual/moral system on the activities of these faculties, as he understands them. We will only understand these faculties in a confused manner unless we make a penetrating study of them. These faculties need to be precisely defined and understood.

A few people have asked me - 'what do you mean by the 'love of God?' I myself have been puzzled about the nature of humility and the other virtues. I am convinced that our understanding of the whole inner life will be confused unless we are able by personal reflection on our own experience, to identify the activity of intellect, will and emotions. Unless we accept the Thomist explanation of the virtues we will be confused about their nature. Aquinas explains all the virtues in terms of the intellect and the will. He clearly pinpoints for us the interior dimension of each virtue.

So as to deal with these problems I have included in this book chapters on knowledge and affectivity. Unless we understand these two areas of our experience we will fail to understand sin, virtue, prayer and temptation. All these realities must be grasped not only from books, but still more, by reflecting on our experience of ourselves and of others. Books serve to make us aware of our own inner life and that of others.

The Thomist philosophy of the faculties can be complemented by other philosophies but in my opinion it should never be discarded. I know of no other way of explaining the inner dimension of the spiritual life except in terms of the inter-relationships of the intellect, will and emotions. It is only after I can clearly understand the activity of these faculties that I can understand what is happening in the area of morals and spirituality. Understanding my own inner life helps me in dealing with others who often struggle to express what is happening within them.

Formerly priests were obliged to study logic, epistemology and Thomist psychology. These studies helped them to identify the activities of their faculties. Today these disciplines are no longer widely studied by candidates for the priesthood. Perhaps this is part of the problem that we have in clearly understanding our inner life.

One of the activities of the intellect is reasoning. I have made an effort in this book to apply right reason to our modern world. It is only when we reason correctly that we become aware of many new moral obligations. Right reason demands that each of us avoids consumerism, that we share our superfluous wealth with the poor and that we be better stewards of the earth. Reason alerts us to our obligation to reduce carbon emissions that are causing global warming and thereby endangering the future of the earth. We also act against reason and so sin when we abuse God's gifts and when we throw away material goods that could serve us for many years. A throw-away society is a sinful society.

CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

This book is an effort to offer the basic principles that govern all spiritualities. It is based largely on St. Thomas Aquinas. It tries to offer the non-changing Christian principles that underlie all particular spiritualities. It could be called a universal spirituality.

In the first chapter I try to describe the modern situation in the 21st century, which seems to demand what I have called a universal spirituality or theology. Spirituality is above all concerned with our relationship with God, especially with knowing and loving him. It

is primarily interior. Hence it is important to understand our inner life. In my view most modern people do not understand clearly their inner life. For this reason I devote Chapters 2, 3 and 4 to knowledge and affectivity. Before we can talk meaningfully about our ultimate end and our primary vocation to love God, we must understand, especially by reflecting on ourselves, the functions of intellect and will.

When we understand how our intellects and wills function we can speak of our ultimate end or the meaning in life, which is to know and love God with our intellects and wills. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with our ultimate end.

But it is no use knowing what constitutes our ultimate end and primary vocation unless we are motivated initially and in an ongoing way to live it out. Hence we need to understand motivation. The will is motivated to love by the perceptions of the intellect. Chapter 7 deals with how we motivate our wills to love.

Up to this point in the book we could say that I have been concerned with the ultimate end in itself, rather than with the means to the end. So that I may be able to love God consistently I must grow up physically, socially, culturally etc. For full human growth I need material things, I need to learn from others etc. All earthly things can be viewed as means to the ultimate end. They must serve that end for all people and not human selfishness. The means to the end must be used in a morally correct way. They are intended as means to the ultimate end. We sin if we use them in a way that is contrary to charity.

But how do we know whether our choices are compatible with the ultimate end of love or not. Right moral reason determines whether or not our choices harmonise or conflict with our ultimate end. Hence we have included a chapter on the moral life and right reason, Chapter 8.

At every stage of the journey intellect and will are involved. But these two faculties need to be formed so that they will function more easily. They are formed by virtues or good habits. They are deformed by bad habits or vices. For example, if I have the habit of resisting temptations to take pleasure in lust I am likely to refuse consent to

a temptation immediately it arises. If I have not this virtuous habit I am much more likely to consent. Chapter 9 deals with virtues.

But some choices are out of harmony with our ultimate end, incompatible with love. In other words some choices are sinful. Hence there is need of a chapter on sin, Chapter 10.

FINAL TWO CHAPTERS

The first ten chapters deal with general theology and spirituality that is valid for all times and all situations. Chapters 11 and 12, however, deal with two important specific areas of morality, namely, social justice and consumerism. These are two important issues in the modern world that call for a moral and religious response from the Christian. I have tried to apply the principles contained in the first ten chapters to these two specific areas.

These principles also need to be applied to other great modern problems, such as climate change, world poverty, secularisation etc.

BOOK ONE

UNDERSTANDING OUR INNER LIFE

CHAPTER 1

THE NEED FOR A UNIVERSAL THEOLOGY

In our day there has been a flood of religious publications that would not have been dreamt of a hundred years ago. Innumerable spiritual books with attractive covers are constantly being offered to us. If we visit a library or a bookshop we see scores of books that we never saw before. Only God knows how many spiritual books are in circulation.

All this is part of the knowledge explosion that has hit the world over the last century. This is obviously a marvellous achievement of modern technology, but it is not without its downside. How do we integrate all these spiritual books into a single spirituality?

This problem is intensified by the fact that each religious order tends to jealously guard its own spirituality. Thus we hear of the following spiritualities - Jesuit, Franciscan, Dominican, Benedictine, Cistercian, Carmelite, Marist, Salesian, feminist etc. In addition there are spiritualities associated with places such as European, African and Asian spirituality. There are spiritualities that have their origin in particular saints such as the spirituality of John of the Cross, St. Therese, the Desert Fathers etc. We can say that each writer presents revelation in his own unique way. Ultimately there are as many spiritualities as there are human beings. How do we integrate all these into a unified whole?

I would suggest that most of the saints had no intention of producing a new spirituality. They merely intended to preach the gospel to their contemporaries. They may have used new terminology to express age-old spirituality. Ultimately Christians have only one spirituality, that of Jesus. Paul wasn't impressed with the Corinthians when they

promoted different spiritualities, ‘I am for Cephas,’ ‘I am for Paul,’ ‘I am for Apollo.’ He simply asked, ‘is Christ divided?’

Even if we open the New Testament we discover not one book with a single theology but many books with many theologies. Mark presents the Christian message in his own way; Luke is somewhat different. Above all Paul and John are in another world. One wonders whether they are talking about the same Jesus as Mark and Luke.

People often say, ‘I use the Bible for my spiritual reading; surely there is nothing to equal the word of God.’ But perhaps we can get confused even in reading the Bible. The different authors do not consistently teach the same truths about Jesus. Furthermore, they use a wide variety of images and different terms so that it becomes difficult to see the unity underlying all this diversity. Our knowledge can become a whole collection of bits and pieces devoid of any unifying principle. All Christian teaching needs to be understood within the framework of an organised whole. Only a skilled exegete or theologian will be able to synthesise into a unified whole what the various biblical writers are telling us. In a word innumerable books and articles can confuse people unless the reader possesses a universal theology or spirituality.

Unless we have a clear grasp of the essentials of Christianity, which presumably are present in nearly all religious publications, we will be drawn hither and thither by the books that we read. There is a great need in the church today for a universal theology, which transcends and includes all particular theologies. In the Catholic Church before Vatican II we had one theology and all particular theologies expressed this one theology in their own individual ways. Today there are countless theologies. Indeed one could say that each writer has his/her own theology. One of the results of this is that the essential Christian message is often obscured.

OUR SPIRITUAL VOCABULARY

Our spiritual vocabulary today is very diverse. We are dealing not only with diversity among biblical authors but also with the terminology that has been used over the last two millennia to

communicate the Christian message. Some words that turn up everywhere in our Christian heritage can have very many different meanings. Terms, such as 'love', 'faith', 'flesh', 'spirit', 'soul', 'heart', 'mind', 'humility', 'justice' etc. can carry a wide variety of meanings, depending on the context in which they are used.

Part of the problem is the meaning of the above words in modern English. Often the meaning of a word in present day English can be quite different from its meaning in spiritual books. The word 'love' is a good example. It can have very many meanings. A pure love of the will, without a feeling of love, is incomprehensible to the untrained theologian. Yet an understanding of unfelt love is fundamental for an understanding of sin, virtue, temptation, prayer etc. All the other terms we use to describe our affectivity (such as hate, like, dislike, anger, fear, sorrow, joy etc.) present the same difficulties for our understanding, as does the term 'love'.

Spirituality is mainly concerned about interior dispositions while a secular society is mainly concerned about the external actions of those around them. In such a milieu there is always the danger that we will identify spirituality with externals e.g. obedience will be identified with the external fulfilment of a command. Who cares about one's motive for obedience in a secular society? But the motive is all-important from a spiritual viewpoint.

Even the terms used by modern writers do not always convey a clear meaning. The meaning of terms is never defined and the reader is often left with confused ideas about what words mean. What do we mean by integrity, transparency, operating from one's centre, mind, heart, spirit, imagination, love, faith etc.? In the scientific theology of Aquinas all the important terms used have a strict clearly defined meaning. Today however, when books and preachers wax eloquently on love etc. I often have difficulty in clearly understanding what they mean by 'love' and other commonly used words.

Some time ago I wished to understand clearly the meaning of 'humility.' I read three different modern books on the subject but I didn't understand clearly its nature after all this study. Perhaps I'm stupid! Fortunately, Aquinas cleared up my confusion when he explained humility in terms of intellect and will. I now know what

he means by ‘humility’. In like manner I did not understand what love was until I studied Aquinas, who again explained it by using Aristotelian/ Thomist psychology.

THE *SUMMA THEOLOGICA*

The need for a universal theology is not new. In the 13th century St. Thomas Aquinas saw the need for such a transcendent theology. One could argue that he was trying to meet this need when he wrote the *Summa Theologica*. At the risk of over-simplification we can say that the *Summa* tries to synthesise all spiritualities prior to the 13th century. Aquinas used the philosophy of Aristotle as an important basis for this synthesis.

However, all the theology and doctrine in the *Summa* comes ultimately from the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers. One should remember that each Father presents Christian teaching in his own unique way. When the Catholic Church promoted the *Summa* as a basic source of theology for 700 years there was no question of putting the *Summa* ahead of the Bible. As we said above the *Summa* is derived mainly from the Bible and synthesises its basic teaching. Consequently the *Summa* needs the bible and the Bible needs the *Summa* or some other summary of basic Christian doctrine. The *Summa* would have nothing to summarise if there weren’t many different theologies in the Bible and among the Church Fathers. Hence the *Summa* depends on the Bible and the Fathers. However, the Bible needs the *Summa* so that we can understand clearly the essential truths of Christianity, which we could easily miss when reading the Bible, unless we can interpret it in the light of a universal theology such as the *Summa* gives us.

The *Summa* provided such a theology for the church for 700 years. For seven centuries most books on theology and spirituality relied heavily on the *Summa*. Having one universally accepted theology helped to give a clear understanding of Christianity and the spiritual life. When we relied on a single text there was less danger of an identity crisis. We knew where we were going and we knew the way there. Now, since we no longer have a universal theology, we

are a bit confused about the purpose of the Christian life and what is required for fulfilling that purpose.

Why was the *Summa* scarcely mentioned at VaticanTwo? Why were the writers and church doctors of the last thousand years never mentioned or quoted in the Conciliar Documents? A number of factors contributed to this. The following are some of the reasons why Vatican Two decided to base all its teaching on the Bible and the ancient Church Fathers.

1: Vatican Two was an ‘ecumenical’ council and every effort was made to adapt ourselves to the ‘Separated Brethren’ whose spirituality is based largely on the Bible and the ancient Church Fathers. The *Summa* would not be acceptable to Christians of other denominations. Acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God is the factor that unites all Christian churches. All the main Christian denominations also recognise the Church Fathers.

2: Some elements in the synthesis of Aquinas are obviously dated, especially his biblical exegesis. We will not find an adequate response in Aquinas to many problems that beset the modern world, such as secularism, materialism, social justice etc.

3: The language of Aquinas is very technical. Only those who have been initiated into his terminology can understand easily what he is teaching. It needs to be simplified for the average Christian in the pews. However, it is not difficult to translate most of his teaching into simple language that all can understand. Skilled teachers and preachers will have no problem doing this.

While the reasons, just listed, justified us to some extent in discarding the *Summa* we must not overlook the fact that abandoning the *Summa* has left a huge gap in Catholic theology. What is going to fill this gap? There is now no one theology that all recognise but scores of little theologies and little theologians.

REQUISITES FOR A UNIVERSAL SPIRITUALITY AND THEOLOGY

1: We need to ask ourselves, what is the purpose of spirituality? Its purpose is to unite us to God in this world and in the next. So that this union can be achieved we need to know ourselves and to know God. A universal spirituality should communicate to us the deepest truths about ourselves and about God so that we will know, as far as humans can, both God's role and our role in bringing about divine union. Such a spirituality should spell out clearly for us God's love for us, and how we must respond to this love. Union with God is loving communion between two lovers.

We will see in the course of this book how both Aquinas and Ignatius of Loyola highlight for us the ultimate end of human life as the source of all spirituality. The ultimate purpose of life is to love God with our whole hearts here and hereafter.

2: As a basis for our spirituality we need an anthropology that will best help us to explain how humans can live in loving union with God. I have found the Thomist/ Aristotelian understanding of human nature a tremendous help for understanding myself and other people. Briefly, the human person is a body/soul unity. The person has knowing faculties (the five senses, instinct, imagination, memory and the spiritual faculty of intellect). The person has also got appetitive faculties by which we get affectively involved with what we know. Our appetitive faculties include the natural appetite, sense appetite and the rational appetite or will. We hope to deal more fully with these in the next two chapters.

I find that understanding how all these faculties interrelate is fundamental for understanding my own feelings, emotions, desires, motivation, temptation, virtue, commitment, vice, faith, charity, prayer etc.

Again a clear understanding of ourselves, and our faculties, will help us to interpret the spiritual books we read. I find it almost impossible to clarify the meaning of the virtues and vices unless we adopt the Thomist philosophy of the human person. Without a Thomist understanding of the inner life we tend to identify virtues

and vices with external actions. This is obviously a great limitation in our spirituality. In dealing with people I very often get the impression that they identify virtue, vice and sin solely with external actions. This is the only criterion of evaluation that a secular society has. Yet God doesn't look at externals, he sees the heart (I Sam. 16, 7). The *Summa* focuses on the inner life.

3: Other philosophies and psychologies can complement Thomism but they should not supplant it. The ideas of Freud, Jung and other psychologists can all help. The Bible has many conceptions of the person such as body, mind and spirit; body, soul and spirit; flesh and spirit. Unfortunately, these words can have a whole range of meanings in the Bible and this can lead to confusion. Most of these terms need to be translated into Thomist terminology for the sake of clarification. Asian conceptions of the 'deep-self', 'the ground of our being', can be more or less identified with Thomist 'substance'.

As I said above, other psychologies can complement Thomist psychology but never supplant it. In my view this is one area where we have thrown out the baby with the bath water in recent decades. Doubtless, there was plenty of bath water in Thomism that needed to be discarded. However, its insights into the nature of the intellect, will and emotions are perennially valid. If we discard Thomist teaching in this area we have no basis for clearly understanding our inner life. Unless we have a good grasp of Thomist logic, epistemology and psychology we tend to have fuzzy ideas about love, faith, virtue, contemplation, virtue and vice.

Aquinas always insists that the most important dimension of virtue is the interior dimension. When we choose to act what kind of thinking and willing lie at the source of our actions? What are our motives? Are we acting in the Spirit or naturally? Virtue is largely a question, not only of external actions, but of the motives that inspire them.

4: In a scientific spirituality words need to be strictly defined. On two different occasions a priest and a nun have asked me, what do you mean by 'loving God?' I think that it is not possible to understand the love of God unless we understand how our feelings and wills operate and the relation between them. We first need to

understand our own affectivity, and then we will be in a position to answer what we mean by 'loving God.'

So as to clarify our knowledge words such as faith, love, contemplation, humility, spirit, desire etc. need to be defined in terms of Thomist psychology. All the realities, just mentioned involve activity of intellect and will. The precise activity in each case needs to be understood. Recently I was asked by a deacon, who had done several years study with a view to ordination, what is the difference between the intellect and the will? I hope to answer this question in the next two chapters.

5: Understanding of desires is fundamental for spirituality. All our virtuous and sinful choices arise from desires. Desires usually spring up in our consciousness and it is characteristic of every desire that it inclines us to make a choice. It can incline us to both good and bad moral choices. Initially the desire is nearly always indeliberate. An indeliberate bad desire we call a 'temptation'. Desires always have to be evaluated before we deliberately embrace them. We sin if we deliberately take pleasure in an evil desire. A good desire on the other hand must be pursued if it urges us to do what is obviously God's will for us.

In a word we need to be aware of our desires and subject them to sound discernment before we deliberately embrace them or discard them. This is a fundamental discipline for one who desires to live in union with God. It is a discipline that has to be practised at all times. We will deal more fully with desires when we treat of affectivity.

CHAPTER 2

KNOWLEDGE - THE INTELLECT

The ultimate purpose of our lives as human beings is to love God here and hereafter. Love is mainly an interior activity even though it will be necessary to express it in exterior forms. Interior and exterior love complement and enrich each other. Both are necessary. Love of God will manifest itself mainly in love of neighbour but also in many other ways.

So as to understand clearly what we mean by love of God and of neighbour we need to reflect on love and affectivity in our daily experience. What is love? What is affectivity? We need to understand our natural affectivity, in order to understand affectivity in relation to God, because grace builds on nature.

However, before we deal with love and affectivity we must study knowledge and especially intellectual knowledge. I hope to deal mainly with knowledge and the intellect in this chapter. In the next two chapters I will focus more on love and affectivity.

Usually we only love what we know; knowledge leads to love. However, some times knowledge and love are so intertwined that it is almost impossible to say whether love precedes knowledge or knowledge precedes love. If two people are deeply in love the love can lead them to a deeper knowledge of each other. In this case we are justified in saying that knowledge causes love and that love also causes knowledge. There is a kind of circular causality.

Conversion experiences are another example of where knowledge and love are almost indistinguishable. The grace of God simply overflows one's heart so that one knows and loves God simultaneously. It is impossible to say in this case whether knowledge leads to love or vice versa.

However, all this does not negate the fact that knowledge usually precedes love. This is true of our experience of the world around us and also of our union with God. Knowledge rouses our affectivity. It causes, not just love, but all the other feelings, emotions and

affections that flow from love, such as hate, fear, anger, joy, sorrow, desire, like, dislike etc.

When I use the word ‘affectivity’ I am using it as a blanket term for all the activities of our appetitive faculties. ‘Affectivity’, as used here, embraces our feelings, emotions and voluntary activity. We will deal with it more fully in the next two chapters.

Since much of our activity has its source in knowledge I would like to treat briefly in this chapter of knowledge, especially in so far as it is related to our affectivity. Our main interest in knowledge in these pages is to relate it to love of God, our ultimate end.

We need to know God in order to love him. As we said already ‘grace builds on nature’. Hence it helps to understand how knowledge and love are interconnected at the level of nature. The truth of our knowledge will determine the value of our love.

ANIMAL KNOWLEDGE

All knowledge comes through the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch). What enters through the senses passes into the imagination. When we close our eyes we have images in the imagination of what we have just seen. Those images are stored in the memory. This type of knowledge is possible even for an animal. Animals have 5 senses, an imagination and a memory. They also have instinct, as we have, which seems, especially in the animal, to be a mixture of knowledge and affectivity. Instinctively the animal loves itself, it practices sexual intercourse, eats and drinks etc. At the appropriate time birds will build their nests and sit on their eggs etc. These activities flow from instinct.

Animals never change their habits. They don’t write, or speak. They cannot analyse or judge an object. They never learn how to speak English. All these activities require spiritual faculties, the intellect and the will, which only humans possess.

Like the animal a human being can perceive an object, e. g. food. Both animals and humans will not just know the food but they will also desire to eat it if they are hungry. Affectivity is involved as well as knowledge. However, there is a difference in animal perception

and in human perception. The human can exercise self-denial because one has an intellect that may judge ‘it is not good to eat now’, and one may choose not to eat. An animal is incapable of judgement and of free choice.

When I use the term ‘perception’ I am referring to the total impact that an object makes on me as a person. Sometimes knowledge of an object will stir up in me my affectivity; often it will not affect me. ‘Perception’ refers to the total impact that something makes on me whether my affectivity is involved or not.

THE FUNCTION OF THE INTELLECT

The word ‘intellect’ comes from two Latin words, ‘*in*’ which can be translated ‘into’ for our purposes, and the word ‘*legere*’ which means to ‘read’. These two words highlight for us what the intellect does. It is the power I have to ‘read into’ an object that I perceive. Let us clarify what it does with an example. If a stranger walks into the room I first of all get a total perception of him. All my knowing faculties, including the intellect are involved simultaneously in the act of perception. But I am not satisfied with a general perception of the man. I get a series of ‘insights’ into him and express these insights by judgements. ‘He is a nice man’, ‘he is a small man’, ‘he is about 12 stone etc.’ The intellect first of all knows an object totally. Then it gets a succession of insights into the thing. It knows a thing from many aspects. It analyses the object. All these insights are expressed by judgements. These judgements may be expressed in words, writing or actions.

It is well to be aware that we use our intellect and wills all day long. Every time I open my mouth, and every time I do something it is because I have judged with my intellect that this act is good and I have chosen with my will to do it. We use our intellects and wills constantly without realising what we are doing. Just as we breathe constantly, without noticing the fact, so too we constantly have insights that lead to judgements and choices without being aware of the fact. Intelligence is the ability to get true insights into an object.

Insights into an object may be very simple as in the example given above, or they may be very profound and philosophical. Formation consists largely in developing insights and good judgement in some particular area, such as medicine, law, farming, spirituality etc. Our speculative judgement, practical judgement and our moral judgement all need development.

In regard to people who seek close union with God it is important to have good moral and spiritual insight and judgement. We should not forget that faith perfects our intellectual judgement in a way that surpasses our natural powers. The word 'faith' has many meanings in spirituality but it always includes in its various uses the intellectual acceptance of revealed truth.

Paul recommends that we renew our minds (intellects) (Rom. 12, 2). He also counsels us to think about 'whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious... what you have learned, received, heard and seen in me, do' (Phil. 4, 8). He also asks us to put on the mind of Christ (Phil. 2, 5). Faith will play a major role in fulfilling Paul's counsels. Paul is asking us in the quotes, just given, to form our intellectual insight and judgement.

In the spiritual journey the intellect will be constantly at work in the search for truth. Underlying all the virtues and their acts there will always be a spiritual insight expressed in the judgement of the intellect. All morally good and evil choices have an intellectual component and a voluntary element. Our two spiritual faculties are also involved in the exercise of faith, hope and charity. They will also be at work in our prayer, spiritual reading and in our struggles with temptation.

For these reasons it is important to understand the basic functions of intellect and will. This understanding will come largely from reflecting on our own experience. At the moment we are focusing on the intellect. Later we will deal with affectivity and the will.

We shouldn't forget that the Holy Spirit is the principal teacher of truth. 'He will teach you all things' (Jn. 16, 13). We are expected to co-operate with the Spirit in the ways mentioned by Paul above.

INSIGHTS AND JUDGEMENTS CAN BE ERRONEOUS

We have already pointed out that the intellect enables us to get insights into things and to express these insights in judgements. There is little danger of error in many everyday judgements. Evidence is what determines whether I assent to an insight or not. Often the evidence that some insight or judgement is true is unquestionable. I do not question my judgement that ‘it is raining’, if I look out the window and see that the rain is pouring down. The evidence of my senses justifies the certain judgement that ‘it is raining.’ In more complex judgements I can often make mistakes and errors.

Between a certain judgement and one that I know is false there can be various degrees of certitude and doubt. I may be very certain about the truth of my judgement or I may feel that a judgement is only possibly or probably true. I can have doubts about it. I may have a mere suspicion that something is true. Finally, I may be certain that my judgement is false. In all these cases the degree of certitude should be proportionate to the quality of the evidence that supports my judgement. I shouldn’t be too certain when there is insufficient evidence. Indeed we need good judgement to evaluate the evidence.

All these types of judgement turn up in trying to work out complex moral obligations in today’s world. Even people of good will do not always agree on moral issues. The church itself has changed its teaching on a number of points, such as the morality of slavery, usury etc.

However, we can say that human beings are obliged to do their best to live according to right reason or right judgement. Aquinas teaches this constantly. In most decisions this will not be too difficult.

If we want to live in union with God we will want to discover and implement his will. One of the chief ways of doing this will be to consistently choose what seems most reasonable in one’s situation. I might add that we need the mind and heart of Christ to consistently judge and choose what is true and good. If we have a secular mentality we will not easily recognise the true and the good. Our judgement is likely to be influenced by the secular values that we have assimilated.

RIGHT REASON AND INSIGHT

In this book I often use the terms ‘right reason’, ‘reasonable’, ‘rational’ or simply ‘reason’. All these terms usually refer to correct moral reasoning. It is well to be aware that every fully free choice of the will has a moral dimension. Hence right moral reasoning must govern all our deliberate choices.

In general when I reason I deduce a third insight or conclusion from two known insights. For example if I know that all men are mortal and that Bill is a man. I deduce that Bill is mortal.

In this book the terms, mentioned above, nearly always refer to moral reasoning. Every fully deliberate choice of the will is a consequence of a reasoning process of the intellect. For example, sin is evil; but murder is a sin. Therefore murder is evil; therefore it is good not to murder. The will then chooses what is morally good. When we choose not to murder we act according to right reason.

However, a murderer will ‘reason’ differently and persuade himself that it is good to murder his enemy. He acts contrary to right reason. Indeed, his ‘reasoning’ is not genuine reasoning at all. Our natural reasoning needs to be perfected by revelation and the gospel. Probably, only Jesus always acted according to right reason.

We will deal more fully with right reason later in the book. Right reason needs to be applied to all the great moral challenges of our age, such as secularisation, consumerism, climate change, social justice, world poverty, use of the media, use of the world’s resources, of money and of time etc.

CAUSES OF ERROR IN OUR INSIGHTS AND JUDGEMENTS

My judgement in many specialised fields would be of little value because I have not been trained in these fields. Lack of formation and education can lead to poor judgement. This can also hold for morality and spirituality. This is mainly what concerns us here. One who has been immersed in our secular culture is not likely to understand the secrets of the spiritual life.

Disorderly attachments to sin and worldly values can make it difficult for one to judge spiritually. Almost all sins arise from disorderly attachments. These can have a strong influence on our judgements and our choices. All sins include a false moral judgement of the intellect and a sinful choice of the will. Disorderly love takes many forms, such as anger, fear, hatred, lust, gluttony, sorrow, empty pleasure, rationalisation, prejudice, ego-trips and sins of every description.

Another cause of erroneous judgement is that some people are less gifted by nature than other people. The judgement of very young children is unreliable, and they must be guided by others. But even among older people some may have a less acute judgement than others. In areas where we lack good judgement all of us have to trust the judgement of others. Most of us have no option except to trust the doctor, the mechanic, the electrician etc.

In the spiritual life the Spirit is the great teacher of truth. Due to his action simple people may have very accurate judgement in spiritual matters. One thinks of saints like Joseph of Cupertino, John Vianney, Bernadette Soubirous etc.

INTERACTION BETWEEN INTELLECT AND WILL

The will is a blind faculty and it always follows the last practical judgement of the intellect. But it is the will itself that determines what is the last practical judgement of the intellect. The will is always motivated in its choices by the last practical judgement of the intellect.

However, the intellect can be influenced in its judgement by very many factors, such as our inordinate attachments, our value system, our habits (good and bad), our formation, our culture etc. These and other factors can influence one's practical judgement in the practise of both virtue and vice. Our culture can condition us to judge and choose according to its standards, which are often opposed to Gospel standards. On the other hand a good Christian formation influences us to judge and choose according to the mind of Christ.

Virtues and vices are distinguished by Aquinas, not so much by external actions, but by the intellectual judgement that inspires the action. Different judgements give us different virtues. Let us give a few examples. If I judge that an action is pleasing to God and carry it out for that motive, I practise charity. If I obey because I judge that the command comes from legitimate authority, I practice obedience. If I obey a human superior so as to please God my ‘obedience’ is more an act of charity than of obedience. I practice humility when out of fear or reverence for God I subject myself to him. I judge that he is my Almighty God and that I am totally dependent on him. Therefore, I should subject myself totally to him. This is the kind of judgement that underlies true humility. It involves staying humble and lowly in my relation to God and not exalting myself. Justice also deserves to be mentioned. It is a virtue that urges us to give the neighbour what is his right as a human being. Temperance is concerned with restraining my desire for pleasure according to right reason.

Lest I be misunderstood it is assumed in the above examples that we choose in each case something that is objectively good. To steal in order to please God would not be an act of charity but of theft.

The point that I am trying to make in this whole section is that each virtue has its own intellectual component that distinguishes it from other virtues. Acts of virtue differ from one another mainly because of the different intellectual insights and judgements that underlie them. It is not the external acts that primarily distinguish the virtues as we so often assume today. All the moral virtues are different habits that enable us to live according to right reason or right judgement.

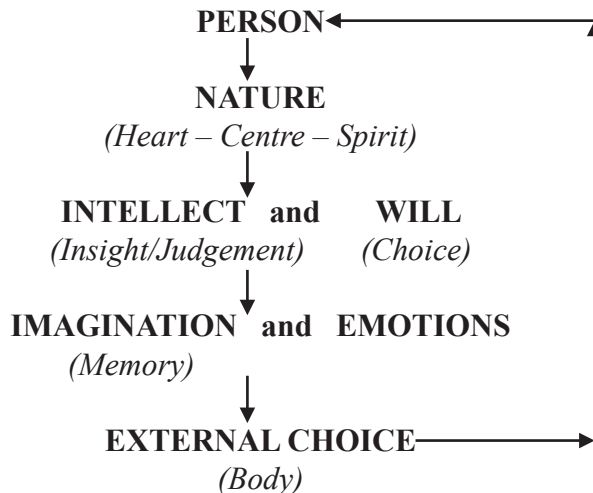
It is also worth noting that charity or love of God will inspire us to practice all the moral virtues because all of them are God’s will and pleasing to God. In this way obedience, humility, justice etc. can become acts of love. Therese of Lisieux claims that love was the only motive that she ever had for her choices. In our secular society many good people, who scarcely believe in God, practice moral virtue and live according to their consciences. It is one thing to practice moral virtue because it is the correct thing to do, it is

something else to practice it mainly so as to please God. The motive makes a big difference. Lonergan says that when we practice moral virtue out of love for God we change silver into gold.

EFFICIENT CAUSES OF FREE DELIBERATE CHOICE.

Both faculties of intellect and will must be understood in their relationship with the whole person. All free deliberate choices come primarily from the human person. The person acts according to his/her nature (centre, heart etc). Human nature has the power of judgement (intellect) and of choice (will). Often the choice will be purely internal. Sometimes the choice will be expressed in an external act of the body.

Human nature has the power of judgement(intellect) which always functions in combination with images in the imagination. Human nature also has the power of choice(will) which follows the last practical judgement of the intellect. Choice may be influenced by emotion. Sometimes the choice is expressed in an external act of the body. A very simplified diagram of this process may be drawn as follows.



In daily conversation we attribute choice to the person, sometimes to one's nature or heart, or to good judgement (intellect), to the will, to one's imagination, to one's emotions or even to a bodily member such as the hands. One uses all these dimensions of one's person in performing a free external action.

It is worth noting also that the terms 'nature', 'heart', 'centre' and 'spirit' can have a variety of meanings, Hence in using these terms it is easy to get confused. The other terms used have precise meanings.

We are concerned especially with free deliberate choices, often called 'human acts'. It should be noted that humans perform a wide range of acts, ranging from those that are fully deliberate and free to those that are completely un-free. In between total freedom and total un-freedom many choices can be more or less free.

THE CONSCIOUS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

All free deliberate choices come primarily from the human person. All are due to a judgement of the intellect and a choice of the will. Judgement and choice are conscious acts.

At any given time we are usually conscious of only one judgement and one choice. However, the activity of the intellect and the will can be deeply affected by unconscious influences.

I have been conditioned by my culture, formation and the experiences of a lifetime. I have developed many habits, good and bad, and all are unconscious. As seen in the diagram above, these feedback on my person and they can affect the activity of the intellect and the will for better and for worse. Past experiences, good and bad, even though long forgotten, continue to influence my emotions, my judgment and my choices. They can undermine in varying degrees my freedom. However, despite our harmful past experiences we have the vocation to grow in freedom to the best of our ability with God's grace.

My knowledge of my unconscious is very imperfect. By reflection I can recognise that I have certain faculties and habits. I can recall recent experiences. But most of my life experience is buried deep

in the unconscious and cannot be recalled. However, it can still influence me emotionally and in making choices.

Above all the Blessed Trinity dwells deep in my heart. I cannot discern God's presence with my natural intelligence, but the fruits of the Spirit can be imperfectly discerned at the conscious level. I know God in a dark manner by faith.

My heart or nature has been conditioned by my life experiences. Much of this conditioning can be recognised by reflection, much of it has mysterious sources.

INTERDEPENDENCE OF BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

In this section, 'mind' = activity of the intellect and will that is largely conscious; and 'spirit' = nature and is largely unconscious.

Examples may help. Bodily activity can affect our conscious and unconscious. What we see and hear often affects the whole person deeply. Singing and bodily postures can also affect mind and heart. Mental activity will often be expressed in bodily forms and it will also affect our deep self which can be activated by mental activity. Sometimes unconscious forces affect us at the level of consciousness. The Holy Spirit is present deep down in the heart but he influences the operations of intellect and will. He is a spring of water bubbling up to eternal life (Jn.4, 14). There is a kind of circular movement. On the one hand external activity can affect both mind and heart. Words can trigger off a deep personal response. On the other hand our inner dispositions will manifest themselves in bodily form.

BODILY, MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

For overall health we need to exercise body mind and spirit. None of them must be neglected; neither must any of them be over-worked. In the busy lives of many people the conscious mind and the left brain are frequently over-worked while the unconscious deep-self is neglected. The ideal integration of the three levels of our personality is not maintained. Harmony can be restored by the practice of meditation, wherein the conscious mind is reduced

to silence while the deep-self and the right brain are activated. John Main's Christian Meditation and Centering Prayer help one to achieve this integration, and at the same time one is practicing passive prayer. One of the advantages of being integrated is that one is a more suitable instrument in God's hands. If our minds are overactive, and we are suffering from stress, God cannot use us. But when we are integrated we are predisposed to obey him. In his rule St. Benedict says that we should 'prepare our hearts and bodies to obey God' (Prologue 40). This is what we do when we activate the deep-self through silencing the conscious mind.

To sum up, there is a time to use our intellects and wills and a time to give them a rest, and let the unconscious, deep-self unfold. My own experience and innumerable studies have convinced me that meditation is a wonderful antidote to stress. There is also a time for bodily activity and a time to rest from it. We must maintain a harmonious rhythm of activity of body, mind and spirit. By meditation we achieve in some degree the ideal of the early Church Fathers – 'integration of body, mind and spirit under the Holy Spirit'. Meditation kills two birds with the one stone. It promotes mental health by remedying over-stress and it is also a form of passive prayer. In our prayer there needs to be a rhythm of active and passive prayer.

During meditation we seem to be doing nothing. It can feel like a waste of time. However, the many studies carried out have proven its value. In my own experience, meditation served to pacify a very active mind. I found that my headaches ceased once I practiced it twice a day. Finally, as a result of meditation, I have more mental energy for study, reading and active prayer.

CHAPTER 3

LOVE AND AFFECTIVITY

In this chapter I will deal with affectivity. What is affectivity? As human beings we experience two types of knowledge. One type of knowledge does not affect us in any way, either at the level of feeling or of judgement and choice. Another type of knowledge triggers off feelings and desires within me. Let me explain further.

If I take a walk I perceive innumerable objects in a detached way, such as sticks and stones. I also hear many sounds that leave very little impression on me. Knowledge of reality can sometimes be very detached, objective and purely intellectual, without my affectivity being involved in any way. I neither love nor hate sticks and stones. I am not afraid of them. I have no desire to possess them because they give me no pleasure. My knowledge of them is completely detached. I don't like them nor dislike them.

Detached knowledge can also apply in some measure to my perception of human beings. How deeply am I affected by each one of the thousands of people that I see walking our streets every day? My affectivity is only slightly involved, if at all, by my perception of all these people. I simply perceive them and forget about them immediately.

AFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

Besides the detached knowledge, just described, we also experience knowledge that triggers off an affective response from us. My perception is no longer purely intellectual. My affectivity is involved, either at the level of emotions or at the level of will or at both levels. This affective response admits of various degrees of intensity. If one pointed a loaded gun at me and told me in all seriousness, 'I'm going to shoot you', I would have a very strong affective reaction of fear or terror. If I am starving the sight of food will affect me very strongly. However, if I have eaten enough I have

very little or no desire to eat more. The awareness of pain triggers off in me the desire to get rid of it. The awareness of pleasure stirs up in me the desire to prolong the pleasure. Many other examples could be given that serve to show that some perceptions stir up various kinds of affections and these can be more or less intense.

INNATE LOVE OF SELF AND DESIRES

We are born with a love of self. This love is innate. Many other loves and desires spring out of this innate love, such as the desire for self-preservation, for food, drink, pleasure etc. At the spiritual level Aristotle says that humans naturally desire to know. We seem to have a natural desire to exercise all our faculties. However, these desires become focused on certain specific things due to our perceptions. I may desire to eat this particular food simply because I see it on the table. But I wouldn't desire this particular food if I already hadn't a desire for food in general. We simply wish in this section to draw attention to the fact that certain basic loves and desires are rooted in our nature and they determine specific desires.

Natural desires cannot be followed simply because they are 'natural'. We have the moral obligation to educate them so that they will operate according to right reason. Moral formation is largely a matter of developing habits of intellect and will so that our natural inclinations will operate according to God's law. The virtues of fortitude and temperance regulate my emotions and inclinations according to right reason.

It should be noted also that natural drives and desires are not a consequence of my perceptions. Aquinas points out that natural loves and desires are unlike sense desires and rational desires because they arise without knowledge from an interior source (S.Th.1-1, q.6).

Natural love and desires are always general in that they are not concerned about specifics. Aristotle tells us that we naturally desire to know. But when it comes to deciding what specific things I should know nature does not supply me with the knowledge. I must be guided by right reason in deciding what knowledge I should seek and what knowledge I should not seek. This holds also for the

will. The will naturally and necessarily desires good in general prior to all judgements of the intellect. But when it comes to choosing particular goods it is dependent on the judgement of the intellect as it discerns what specific thing is good and what is not good. Nevertheless, if the will did not first of all have the natural desire to choose good in general it wouldn't be able to choose specific goods. Furthermore, the will is not free in regard to good in general; it necessarily desires it. But it is free in regard to loving, desiring and choosing particular goods.

WHAT IS MEANT BY LOVE?

Benedict XVI in his encyclical, *'Deus Caritas Est'*, raises the question about the meaning of 'love' in modern languages. The term 'love' is used with very many different meanings. We speak of love of God, love of people, love of food, love of virtue, love of sin etc. It can have so many different meanings that when we use the word 'love' it can be difficult for others to latch on to what we are saying. In passing it is worth noting that the words 'like' and 'dislike' are often used as synonyms for 'love' and 'hate'.

Here we are mainly concerned with our affectivity in so far as it affects our prayer and our moral life. I think that the English word 'love' has three basic meanings.

1: We use the word 'love' to designate a feeling only. I can feel a love and desire for sin but if I refrain from sinning this 'love' is only a feeling. It is not a deliberate voluntary desire. It is not in the will. Temptation to sin usually arises from a feeling that pushes me towards a sinful choice. If I resist this desire with my will I do not sin but practice virtue.

2: We use the word 'love' for a feeling of love that is integrated with the will. When a mother kisses the baby that she loves, her will and her feeling of love are integrated. If one deliberately immerses oneself in lustful pleasure one's feelings are integrated with one's will. When we enjoy singing God's praises feeling and will are integrated.

3: Finally we use the word 'love' for a pure choice of the will that is accompanied by no feelings. This can take place when I choose to resist temptations and evil inclinations and refuse to consent to them. In dry arid prayer there is often a minimum of feeling while the will more or less chooses God. The spiritual masters assure us that such prayer can be very pleasing to God. In our daily lives we often, by sheer will power, choose to carry out duties that we dislike. The will often has to operate without any help from our feelings. Indeed our feelings can sometimes be in opposition to our will.

We are trying in this section to analyse the basic meanings of the word 'love' so that we will better understand its meaning when we come across the word. This knowledge should also help us to understand our prayer and our moral life. The English language should have three different words for these three types of love. Unfortunately, it uses the same term 'love' to designate three activities that are morally very different. This can lead to confusion and misunderstanding.

What is true of the word 'love' is also true of the many other words we use to describe our affective states. The words 'hate' 'anger', 'fear', 'desire', 'joy', 'sorrow', 'like', 'dislike' and the many other words we use to describe our affective states can also have the three meanings that the word 'love' has. Each of these words may refer to a feeling or a voluntary feeling or a pure choice of the will that is devoid of feeling. When these words are used we always need to ask ourselves, which of the three meanings, mentioned above, is intended?

It might also be worth calling attention to the word 'heart'. It is often used in modern books. But what do we mean by 'heart'? I think that it can have three different meanings. It can refer to the source of emotions only; it can refer to the source of an act of will integrated with emotion; it can also refer to the source of a pure choice of the will. I think that most people see the heart as in some way connected with feeling. They might think that dry arid prayer of the will was useless since it doesn't come from the 'heart' as they conceive it. Other writers speak of acting from our 'centre'. What do

they mean? I think that ‘centre’ usually refers to a voluntary choice, whether it is accompanied with emotion or not.

Another problem arises with all the words that we use to describe our affectivity. When we hear the word ‘love’ our first reaction is to think of the feeling of love. When a preacher urges us to love God we immediately think that he is asking us to have a feeling of love. Again, if we have no feelings of love, we tend to think that love is absent. The truth is that we can show great love of God when we continue to love him when feelings are absent. Likewise we can show a love of chastity when we consistently overcome feelings of lust. But this love is only an unfelt choice of the will and we are tempted to doubt its existence.

What we said about the word ‘love’ being identified with feeling is also true of the other words that we use to describe our affective states. We tend to identify the words ‘joy’, ‘fear’ etc. with feelings. St. Therese speaks of the ‘joy of unfelt joy’. She is telling us of a type of joy that is in the will and unfelt. Francis of Assisi is talking a similar language in his famous parable of perfect joy.

Another problem arises in recognising in ourselves pure choices of the will. I have pointed out above that we usually tend to identify the affective terms ‘love’, ‘hate’ etc. with our feelings rather than with choices of the will. The reason for this is that it is relatively easy to recognise feelings in ourselves and in others. On the other hand it is not at all easy to recognise affections that are purely voluntary and unaccompanied by feeling. When our love of God and perhaps of people is a matter of will only, without feeling, we tend to think that love is non-existent. Likewise, when we are strongly tempted to sin we are very aware of strong sinful desires, but it is not always easy to recognise with certainty the choice of the will, resisting these desires. Because it is so difficult to recognise the activity of the will we tend to identify love, ‘hate’, ‘fear’ etc. with our feelings rather than with the will. This again leads to confusion and misunderstanding of ourselves and others.

To sum up this section: We need to remember that the words used to describe affective states do not always refer to feelings. They

can have three different meanings. Unless we latch on to the right meaning we misunderstand these words.

ALL THE AFFECTIONS ARE ROOTED IN LOVE

I use the word ‘affections’ to cover both emotions and voluntary choices. I wish to include under this term all three types of affective experience mentioned in the previous pages. I realise that the word ‘affection’ can often have a narrower meaning but I use it in these pages in a wider sense. It designates, not only feelings, but also choices of the will that may be without feeling.

Love, whether it is a feeling or a voluntary choice, is the root out of which the other affective states spring. When I love something I desire it if it is absent. I hate whatever deprives me of what I love. If something, that I love, is threatened and I cannot ward off the threat, I fear. If I think that there is a chance of getting what I love, I hope.

Underlying all love of particular things is an innate love of myself. This is the condition in which I am born. Out of this innate love flows the duty to love myself. Unfortunately, we often love ourselves in the wrong way. Since God has endowed us with reason and faith we are obliged to love ourselves according to right reason, enlightened by faith. When we sacrifice ourselves for the love of God we love ourselves in the right way.

CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS AFFECTIONS

Affections and feelings can be conscious or unconscious. We are born with a love of self, and many other loves and desires that flow from self-love. These loves are usually unconscious. In addition to the affections we are born with we have developed innumerable affections for particular things on our journey through life. All these affections are part of our personality. They are unconscious most of the time until they are awakened by some perception. This holds for all our good habits and bad habits. We have innumerable likes and dislikes of particular objects and activities. They are unconscious most of the time but they surface in certain circumstances.

This applies also to what we call ‘virtues’ and ‘vices.’ Most of us have plenty of both. They both enrich and impoverish our personalities. These virtues and vices are good and bad habitual affections of the will. The purpose of the virtues is to regulate our affections, emotions, feelings and bodily pleasures according to right reason. This integration is the work of a lifetime. This is especially the role of fortitude and temperance.

In these pages we often speak of ‘right reason’. It is important to be clear about what constitutes ‘right reason.’ Like all our faculties reason is flawed and limited. In order that our reason be right, it needs to be enlightened by revelation. As we said already probably only Christ always lived according to right reason. However, to live according to right reason is an excellent ideal to encourage us to live a good moral life, even if we sometimes fail to measure up to our ideal.

GROWTH IN AFFECTIVITY

The affectivity of a small child is roused mainly by sense values, by the pleasures and pains that it feels in its body. Eating, drinking, being loved etc. are all-important to it. The child’s intellect, will and freedom are undeveloped. It is incapable of denying itself pleasures or of preferring others to itself. Its affectivity centres around bodily pains and pleasures. To some extent the pains and pleasures of the body will always rouse our affectivity. Nevertheless, I think that it is true to say that the child loves itself with all its affective powers and loves everything else for its own sake.

As the child grows intellectually in wisdom and knowledge, and this growth will continue all through life, through the instruction of its parents and the help of the Holy Spirit, it gradually learns to practice true love. It learns to forego its own selfish goals and think of the welfare of others. It learns to set its heart, not just on bodily pleasures but on higher values such as knowledge, virtue and charity. We should remember that each child has the Holy Spirit who is leading it to perfect love of God and neighbour (L.G. 40). Each child has the vocation to increasingly appropriate to itself the

Spirit's program for it. When it finally grows into a mature adult it will have to continue trying to integrate perfectly the three levels of affectivity by a life of virtue.

DESIRES

Desires are very important for understanding our affectivity. Desires spring from love and they are dynamic. When we love something we desire it and wish to obtain it. Even when we possess what we desired, this does not end our desires. We still desire to prolong the pleasure that possession gives us. Love and desire are inextricably intertwined.

But all the other affections, whether they are feelings or voluntary affections, produce different desires. Hate will generate the desire to reject what I hate. Fear produces the desire to withdraw from what I fear. Anger generates the desire to fight. If we reflect on all the other affective states we will discover that each of them is accompanied by a specific desire.

In living the spiritual life desires must be always discerned. As I explained earlier a desire may be a mere feeling, or a pure act of the will without feeling or a combination of both.

Initially a desire will usually be an involuntary feeling. At this stage we must discern whether the desire is inclining us to a morally good choice or not. Obviously sinful desires must be rejected with our wills. Furthermore, if we want to live in union with God, we cannot embrace with our wills desires that, perhaps, are not God's will for us. If we do not know whether something is God's will or not we must remain indifferent to it until God's will becomes clear to us.

All our desires spring up from our affections of feeling and of will. All our desires incline us to obtain some good for ourselves. It may be a real good or only an apparent good. They incline us to choose a 'good' because it will give us pleasure that may be either good or sinful. Feelings of themselves have no morality. Morally speaking they are neither good nor bad. However, they produce desires and if

we consent to these desires we have a moral act that may be morally good or morally bad.

In the technical language of Aquinas the OBJECT of the will, of love and of all desires is GOOD, real or apparent. There is the question of what is good for me. By nature I love myself and desire my own good and wellbeing. Out of this natural desire will spring specific desires for whatever gives me pleasure. Whatever gives me pleasure I tend to call 'good' even if it is not a true good.

What I love and desire tends to influence my judgement. I tend to judge as good what I desire even if it is not a true good. We must not make false judgements under the influence of bad desires. False judgements will motivate the will to make sinful choices.

Desires admit of many degrees of intensity, ranging from very weak to very strong. Probably very strong desires can destroy freedom of choice. How free is the alcoholic who cannot stop drinking? Or the drug-addict who cannot break his habit? Only God can judge our degree of freedom when our desires are very strong.

The knowledge that triggers off affections and desires may come from many sources. It can come from outside us, from our reading, from what we perceive, from what others tell us, from looking at the TV. the internet etc. But it can also come from inside us, from our memories and our imaginations. In one way or another the contents of our minds will determine the quality of our affections and desires. If our minds are worldly we will have worldly affections and desires. If they always entertain gospel values we will have a mind and heart like Christ. Consequently, it is important to fill our minds with the ideas and values of Christ. Sometimes, strong voluntary affections can overflow into the emotions. Our love of God can often be felt, though not always.

DIVISION OF DESIRES AND APPETITES

Aquinas divides desires into three categories, which, I think, are very helpful for understanding our affectivity. He speaks of three 'appetites' - the natural appetite, the sense appetite and the rational

appetite. These are three appetitive faculties or powers that enable us to love and desire three different kinds of good.

NATURAL APPETITE - NATURAL DESIRES

In large measure we have dealt with these three appetites in previous pages. However, let us sum up here again what has been said. All desires spring from love of self. We are born with a natural love of ourselves, and a natural desire for our own wellbeing. We have already listed some of the natural loves and desires that flow from self-love, such as the desire for pleasure both of sense and of spirit. We have a natural desire for food, drink, rest, company etc. At the spiritual level we desire good in general, knowledge etc. These natural desires have no morality. They acquire morality only when we deliberately desire and choose something specific. It is because we have these natural desires that we want to fulfil them by specific desires and choices. They are pre-conditions for being able to desire and choose specific good things. These natural desires are not preceded by knowledge of some particular good object as is the case with sense desires and spiritual desires mentioned below. God, the author of nature, put these general desires into us when he created us.

SENSE APPETITE - SENSE DESIRES

Unlike the natural desires, mentioned above, the desires in this second category are caused by sensation or sense knowledge. Even animals can have the desires mentioned in this section. We are dealing here, not with general unspecified desires, but with desires for specific goods of the senses. We are partly animal by nature and we need food, drink, rest etc. We desire some foods and love them and dislike other foods. We experience fears of specific dangers and we are angry with definite people. Animals experience all these emotions just as we do. However, in the case of humans there is a moral obligation to control our sense desires according to right reason, which needs to be further enlightened by faith.

The sense appetite is roused when I perceive a particular sensible good. Various emotions can be aroused by my perception. Emotions have their origin in sense knowledge and are shared by humans and by animals. The word ‘feeling’ has a wider meaning than the word ‘emotion’. It includes emotion but also bodily feelings dealt with below. The usual emotions are love, hate, fear, anger, sorrow, joy etc. Bodily feelings include hunger, thirst, bodily pain and pleasure.

The reason why we can have different affections and emotions is that we can perceive good under different aspects. If I simply think of good I love it. If I simply think of evil I hate it. If I think of good as absent I desire it. If I judge that someone will deprive me of good, I fear. If there is a possibility of obtaining good, I hope.

In humans all these feelings need to be properly integrated with our rational faculties. Much discipline is required to achieve perfect integration. Many sins are committed when we are governed by unruly feelings. We do not use the term ‘emotions’ for voluntary affections. We have no special word for such affections, but the term ‘affections’ can also be applied to emotions.

As we said above there is a distinction between feelings and desires that flow from sense knowledge and those caused by the condition of our body. Some call these latter ‘bodily passions’. We have seen how knowledge of sense goods causes the emotions of love, hate, fear etc. But bodily feelings and desires are caused by the condition of the body. I may feel too cold, too hot, in pain or sick. I can become aware of pleasant and unpleasant feelings in my body. If the feelings are pleasant I desire to prolong them; if unpleasant I desire to get rid of them. Whenever we experience desires we need to morally evaluate them before embracing them. Feelings of lust can arise in the body, which are not always caused by sense perception. They just emerge from nowhere. These feelings generate desires for unlawful pleasure; obviously, we have a moral duty to reject such desires.

THE WILL OR RATIONAL APPETITE

The will is the faculty by which we love, choose and desire spiritual good, such as knowledge, virtue, eternal life, God etc. We have a natural love and desire for spiritual good in general. Even when we choose to sin we still choose 'good' because we persuade ourselves that evil is good. Sin is the voluntary choice of an apparent good.

The will is a blind faculty. It only desires and chooses the specific objects that are presented to it as good by the intellect. This means that in its operations the will must be motivated in its desires and choices by the insights of the intellect. Intellectual formation should serve to move our wills to choose spiritually, and not like animals who are always governed in their actions by love of the goods of the senses.

However, the will interacts with the sense appetite. It loves and desires both sense goods and spiritual goods since it desires the good of the whole person. Ideally it should always be guided by right reason, whether there is question of sense goods or spiritual goods.

Since the will only loves, desires and chooses what the intellect presents to it as good it follows that both faculties of intellect and will operate together in all the choices and decisions that we make in our daily life.

As I said already the will has a natural desire for good in general. It necessarily loves and desires good in general. It is not free in regard to its love of good in general. But it is free in choosing particular goods. The reason for this freedom is that the intellect can see an object from a variety of angles both good and bad. This ability of the intellect to get a variety of insights into an object is the root of our freedom. If we could only see things as good we wouldn't be free to reject them. Our inner freedom should be exercised in choosing what is truly good. Unfortunately when we sin we choose evil under the appearance of good. We choose not a real good but an apparent good.

Since the will has a natural desire for good in general it is never fully satisfied with particular goods no matter how many of them it

enjoys. It seems to have ‘an infinite capacity for good or for God’ (John of the Cross). Only God can fill this capacity. Hence Augustine could say, ‘you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts rest not until they rest in you.’

The will commands the other faculties and the bodily members. All voluntary activities take place under the direction and choice of the will. Talking, walking, working, study, prayer etc. are all undertaken and pursued under the command and choice of the will.

All the different habits, good and bad, virtues and vices, are developed as a result of repeated choices of the will. Again these habits are activated by the will in daily life. In order to type a letter I have only to will it and the habit that I have developed comes into play.

In all the acts of the moral and theological virtues the intellect and the will are both involved. They supply the interior dimension of every voluntary act and this is usually far more important than the external dimension of the act.

Ideally the will should always be motivated by right reason, but, unfortunately, many factors can affect the intellect and will in their operations. We can be prevented from judging correctly by disorderly attachments, prejudice, lack of attention, emotions, selfishness, unconscious motivation etc.

How do we motivate the will so that we will undertake a life of union with God and persevere therein? God’s grace is obviously the prime requisite. But how do we co-operate with God in growing spiritually? Since the will depends on the intellect for its motivation we need to put in place a set of habits, practices and disciplines that will enable us to develop intellectual convictions that will motivate us to undertake and continue the journey to perfect charity. We need to pray for God’s help, fill our hearts and minds with God’s word, and exclude from our hearts and minds ungodly values and words. Self-denial so as to follow Christ is essential. If the books we read and the studies we undertake do not motivate us to love God more they are of little value to us. Perhaps much of the reading we do is only remotely connected with charity. Too much secular reading can weaken our motivation. The goal of formation should be charity

and not mere intellectual knowledge. Our intellectual study and formation must contribute to our charity. Otherwise it is useless. St. Therese once said, ‘the only science that I desire is the science of love.’

As we have said many times the object of the will is good; it loves, desires and chooses good. It can exercise love in two main ways, affectively and effectively. When I deliberately contemplate some thing or person with love, without making any decision, I am exercising affective love. We can do this in admiring an artistic masterpiece. Prayer largely consists of the affective love of God. But the will operates differently when it makes a choice or chooses something because it is good. It may choose to perform a virtuous act so as to please God. This is an act of effective love. Affective love and effective love, when fully deliberate, could also be sinful. Deliberately taking pleasure in pornography would be an example of sinful affective love. Choosing to do a sinful act would be an example of sinful effective love.

BEING IN TOUCH WITH UNFELT ACTS OF THE WILL - CHOICE

In dealing with people and often in understanding myself I often have difficulty in recognising unfelt love. We usually say that we love with our wills. But, as we said already, it is not always easy to recognise unfelt loving acts. An example may help to clarify the problem. A priest told me that when he is preparing young couples for marriage he always reminds them that there will be times in their marriage when they feel no love for one another. He warns them that when this happens they will have to love one another with their wills. They find this advice baffling and always object. ‘How can we love one another if we feel no love for each other?’ Often we feel guilty because we do not recognise any feelings of love in our hearts. We may feel little love for either God or human beings. The problem is that we do not understand unfelt love, or love that is in the will only, because the term ‘love’, in our culture is nearly always associated with feeling.

In dealing with this problem I think that the words ‘choose’ and ‘choice’ are most helpful. It is easy to reflect on the fact that we make choices all day long. Very often we do not even notice that we are making choices. But we couldn’t make choices unless we had a faculty for making choices. We have the power to make choices and this power or faculty we call the human will.

All choices, whether we realise it or not, are acts of love because we only choose what we love and value. No significant feelings accompany most of our choices. The word ‘choice’ is very helpful because in English it is used only for acts of the will. We do not associate choice with feelings. Much of our love of God and of the practice of virtue is a matter of making appropriate choices. Most of the time these virtuous choices will be accompanied by no significant feelings.

With the exception of our love of good in general every act of the will is a choice. We may choose what is good, bad or indifferent. We always choose good, real or apparent. We can choose virtue or sin. Before we can choose evil, our intellect must propose it to us as good. Obviously, it is not a real good but only an apparent good.

INTERACTION BETWEEN THE THREE APPETITES

Although it is helpful to distinguish three levels of affectivity, natural affectivity, that of the senses and that of the will, it is important to remember that all three types of affectivity are constantly interacting in a human being. Without natural affectivity, which flows from an innate love of self, the other types of affectivity would not be possible. A natural love of oneself is the root of all affective habits and acts. Out of self-love flows other natural desires, sense desires and even spiritual desires.

In heaven all three types of affectivity will be perfectly integrated in loving God. We will love him with our whole heart (will), soul (feelings), mind (right reason) and strength (external acts). In this world we should have as our goal in life to move towards this perfect integration. The Holy Spirit is leading us in this direction and we are called to co-operate with him.

CHAPTER 4

AFFECTIVITY IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

In this chapter I will try to apply briefly what we have written above to our Christian lives. We shall apply it to three areas of our life - temptation, virtue and prayer. We have touched on these already as we tried to analyse our affectivity, but in the following sections we will deal with them a little more fully.

Then I hope to deal with disorderly affections and the dispersal of our affective energy in too many directions.

TEMPTATION

Temptation usually takes the form of a desire for some forbidden pleasure. It could be bodily pleasure or even spiritual pleasure. If the will consents to these desires, our lower sense affectivity controls our higher spiritual affectivity. The spirit becomes the slave of the 'flesh', as Paul would say. But if the will rejects the pleasure the will governs or rules the 'flesh'; we are the victors. However, we are often left wondering, did I really say 'no' to these strong sinful desires? We are humiliated because purely voluntary success is not accompanied by the feeling of success. We tend to identify our true self with our feelings rather than with pure unfelt acts of the will, which are difficult to recognise. The truth is that when we will or choose what is right we are operating out of our true self even if our feelings push us towards evil. If we persevere in rejecting sinful desires by these pure choices of unfelt love we are practising heroic virtue. This is the teaching of all the masters of the spiritual life and of Scripture (Jas. 1, 12).

Temptations against patience are always frustrating. Sometimes, in our weakness we manifest impatience. Even when we succeed in suppressing external signs of impatience we can still be very irritated within. Are we patient or impatient? Only God knows. This also holds for temptations to anger, lust etc.

In many temptations it is not a question of black and white. When we, in a moment of weakness, yield to these temptations, how free are we? We could be totally unfree or totally free or somewhere in between. Again only God can judge. Aquinas teaches that strong emotion can sometimes completely destroy freedom. If this happens there is no sin.

Again we should not forget the difference between a sin of weakness and a sin of malice. A sin of weakness is normally not committed with full deliberation and is repented of immediately. A sin of malice, on the other hand, is pre-meditated, is fully deliberate and may have been intended for a long time. The will is probably in a sinful state long before the sinful act and is likely to remain in this state after the sinful act, until one gets the grace of true repentance.

Personality types can also affect our freedom for better or for worse. How guilty are psychopaths, homosexuals, drug addicts etc. On the other hand we can be very patient due to our temperament. Often our temperament predisposes us to practice easily certain virtues. However, the task for everyone is the same not matter what kind of personality we have, namely, to grow in true freedom as best we can.

PRAYER

Prayer is another activity where the different levels of affectivity mix in varying degrees. Prayer is essentially a choice of the will. If we do not choose with our wills to pray there is no prayer. In prayer I always make a choice with my will to worship the unseen God. The will is operative, not only in initiating prayer, but much more during prayer, which consists mainly in loving attention to God, or affective love of God. My initial choice is ongoing.

Prayer, that is only at the level of emotion, is impossible. An irrational animal cannot pray because it is incapable of faith in an unseen God. However, humans have a higher knowledge and affectivity than the animal. We can know God by faith and express our love for him in thanks, praise and adoration. All this constitutes prayer and is essentially an activity of the will. In prayer our lower

affectivity or emotions can be combined in varying degrees with the essential activity of the will. Sometimes we can make acts of the love of God and feel them deeply. In this case our lower and higher affectivity are integrated. At other times our prayer is purely in the will with little or no feeling. Such an experience is humiliating, and we often wonder whether we are truly praying.

However, all the great spiritual masters, such as Francis de Sales, John of the Cross and others assure us that such dry arid prayer can call for a much greater love than a strongly felt prayer. Francis de Sales writes that he ‘prefers dry fruit’. This is very re-assuring and it means that we can pray and remain in union with God no matter how we feel or how sick we are. With God’s grace we can fix our will on God in all circumstances.

When John of the Cross speaks of a ‘dark night’ he is really describing a state in the life of prayer where our feelings no longer function. We have to be satisfied with fixing our wills on God. People in the dark night find it difficult to believe that they are praying at all. It often seems to them that they are doing nothing and wasting time. Nevertheless, if they drop the innumerable distractions and try to fix their wills on God, with the occasional dry act of love, they are truly praying.

VIRTUE AND DAILY LIFE

Sometimes we enjoy practising virtue; at other times we practise it with repugnance. Our hearts do not seem to be in it. Which type of virtue is the most pleasing to God? St. Therese says that ‘to pick up a straw from the ground out of love for God, when we are weary and depressed, can please God more than a much greater act done in a moment of enthusiasm.’ Picking up the straw is done out of pure love for God. Perhaps the bigger action may be tainted by natural motives.

The will and the feelings can be integrated in varying degrees in purely secular activities, that may have nothing to do with the spiritual life. Workers may hate the work they have to do but they force themselves to do it because they need money or for some other

motive. It is part of life that we often have to undertake tasks that we do not like. In this case the will has to function in spite of our emotions.

DISORDERLY AFFECTIONS OR ATTACHMENTS

I now wish to discuss what is probably the most fundamental obstacle to growth in the spiritual life. We will have recourse to Sts. Ignatius and John of the Cross for guidance.

Arguably St. Ignatius and his Jesuits have contributed more than any other religious order to the welfare of the church in recent centuries. Ignatius didn't write much, but the little that he wrote carries great weight. He had an extraordinary ability for pinpointing the essentials of the Christian life. His most famous religious work is the 'Spiritual Exercises.' Why did he write these Exercises? He himself leaves us in no doubt. He tells us in three different places why they were written. The purpose of the 'Exercises' is to free us from inordinate attachments or affections, so that we will be free to hear and obey God's word in our lives. Here we have one example of Ignatius' gift for highlighting an essential component of the spiritual journey. He saw clearly that it is impossible to advance in holiness or charity, as long as we are enslaved by inordinate affections or attachments. Such affections bring progress to a standstill. Such attachments involve making reservations in our love of God.

It should be noted that later writers, such as John of the Cross and Francis de Sales, also lay great stress on detachment. I cannot develop their doctrine fully here. However, I cannot refrain from citing the famous quote of John of the Cross. 'It doesn't matter whether a bird is held down by a thread or a rope, it still cannot fly.' Likewise a small attachment holds one back from full union with God.

A disorderly attachment indicates a sinful will. It is a habitual state of the will. Such an attachment differs from a sin of weakness, where we do something wrong and repent immediately. But a disorderly attachment alienates us from God until we break our attachment.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A DISORDERLY AFFECTION?

If we love something or some action more than God, we are over attached to that thing or action. The rich young man, mentioned in the gospel, loved his money more than he loved Jesus. His affection for his wealth was disorderly. Holiness demands that I love things in God, namely, in the way and to the extent that he wills. Ideally we should love God with our whole being and all other things in the way that God wills. In this way our love of other things and people is the overflow of our love of God. All our loves, hates, fears, likes, dislikes and all our affections should be subject to and governed by our love for God.

I may be strongly attached to a person, a thing or an activity; I may like it very much but so long as I am prepared to subject my love to God's will I am not held in bondage by inordinate affection. St. Thomas More is a good example of orderly love, of one whose affections were in order. He loved the king, his wife and especially his daughter, Margaret. He would have liked to obey Henry VIII so as to please the king, his wife and his daughter and also save his own life. However, if he did this he would disobey God and his conscience. So he chose to disobey the king and he was executed. His love was in order; he had no disorderly affections. Jesus also proved that he had no disorderly affections in Gethsemane. He feared death but he was prepared to die because it was his Father's will. 'Not my will but your will be done.'

Spiritual writers often use other words to describe inordinate attachments or affections. Even when they use different words they are speaking of the same reality, namely, love that is excessive. St. Paul speaks of, 'slavery' and 'freedom.' The terms 'freedom' or 'inner freedom' are much used today. Detachment is also used as a synonym for freedom. Ignatius and de Sales speak of 'indifference' which is more or less equivalent to detachment. The term 'attached' is often used for disorderly attachments. 'Addiction' and 'bondage' are very common words in modern English. We speak of addiction to cigarettes, alcohol, drugs etc. Indeed all of us have our own personal addictions.

When we meet these words we need to interpret them correctly. Being 'indifferent' or 'detached' from things has no spiritual value unless these dispositions are governed by our love for God. The practice of love demands that we be interested in many people and things so as to please God. There is no virtue about being lazy and indifferent in carrying out God's will. All things must be loved in and for God. Often indifference and detachment are due solely to our natural temperaments. In such cases they have no spiritual value.

IDENTIFYING ATTACHMENTS

How do we recognise our attachments? We need to recognise them so as to deal with them. We are over attached when we love something more than God. The whole of the spiritual life consists in getting our affections in order. All sin arises from disorderly affections. In order to identify inordinate attachments we have only got to look at our sins and ask ourselves why we committed them. All sin, big and small, is motivated by disorderly affection. Both sins of commission and omission are due to such affections.

One strong attachment may produce many sins. If a politician is over attached to his job he may be guilty of many crimes so as to keep himself in office. In our day many of the African leaders, due to inordinate love of power, have held on to their jobs by unlawful means. A single inordinate affection can generate a whole harvest of sins and crimes. Disorderly love of self, of pleasure, of power, money, sex, a person, a job etc. can lie at the root of very many interior and exterior sins and imperfections.

The opposite of disorderly love is purity of heart, which consists of loving God with our whole heart and all other things in God. It consists of getting our affectivity in order. This will probably be only perfectly achieved in heaven.

Our disorderly attachments are often unconscious. We may be aware of external misdemeanour without being aware of the disorderly affection that produced it. We see the externals and fail to notice the dispositions of our own hearts.

Our sins are signs of disorderly love. When I knowingly get my priorities wrong or knowingly act unreasonably I am influenced by some inordinate attachment. In examining our consciences let us not be content with looking at the externals but let us also focus on the internal affections that produced the external actions.

OVERCOMING OUR ATTACHMENTS

Freedom from disorderly affections is a gift from God. ‘If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed’ (Jn. 8, 36). Sometimes God grants it without effort on our part. More frequently, however, he expects us to play our part. How do we play our part?

Prevention can be better than cure. Many addictions grow on one gradually. This can happen with cigarettes, alcohol, falling in love with one who is not one’s spouse, love of power, money etc. Often such addictions could be prevented by timely action. ‘A stitch in time saves nine.’ In the early stages often one still has the power to step free. But one can get to a stage where this freedom is lost; one is enslaved. Timely prevention is better than cure.

If we grow in the love of God by his grace and our own efforts the things of this world will lose their attractiveness. Any strong love tends to dominate one’s whole personality. The drug addict lives solely for his next fix; the alcoholic lives only for alcohol.

In similar fashion those who love God deeply live only for God. Hence the first way to overcome inordinate attachments is to grow in the love of God by prayer, self-sacrifice, spiritual reading etc. The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius consist mainly of prayer, and he expects that these exercises will help people to overcome their disorderly affections.

Self-denial so as to follow Christ will always be necessary. Even when love is strong there are times when it wanes and creatures strongly attract us. So it is necessary to support love with discipline, structures and probably a personal Rule of Life. These prevent us from falling back into selfish activity.

In a word all, who seriously pursue holiness of life will have to identify their own personal over-attachments and with God's grace step free from their bondage.

DISPERSAL OF OUR AFFECTIONS

In the last section I was mainly concerned with particular disorderly affections, such as love of power, money etc. In this section we will deal also with disorderly affection in so far as our affective energy is scattered over too many interests.

The Holy Spirit is leading us to love God with all our affective energy. 'You shall love the Lord, your God, with your whole heart.' This should be the top priority in life for every human being since we all have been given the Holy Spirit to achieve this purpose. If I succeed in this my life will be a resounding success, even if I fail in other areas. At the end of the day when we come to judgement we will be judged on love alone.

But it is not easy to direct all our affective energy to loving God alone and all other things for his sake. By nature we are selfish and we are constantly tempted to prefer ourselves to God. We are urged on by the culture and especially by the advertising media to seek our own pleasure at all times rather than God's pleasure. Trying to live for God rather than for ourselves is a constant uphill battle.

In our modern culture, which is secular and materialistic and oriented to pleasure, we are being urged constantly to pursue our own selfish goals. We are bombarded by a thousand different images on the T.V. screen, on the internet and the other communications media. Our affectivity is stirred up by sensational colourful images. Travel and city life also offer us a whole variety of exciting experiences that attract our affections and consume our affective energy. The more we seek pleasure for ourselves in those sensations the more we are living for our own pleasure rather than for God. Carried to extremes we could end up living totally for our own pleasure. This is the direction in which the culture urges us.

But the gospel urges us in the opposite direction. It urges us to forget ourselves and follow Christ. Modern consumerist, individualistic

culture and the gospel are totally opposed. This makes Christian formation difficult since the culture is constantly undermining it. Christian formation is achieved by making sure that gospel values penetrate deeply into the mind and the heart. This will inevitably mean that we must be exposed constantly to the values of Christ, and that opposing values are excluded from our minds and hearts.

It should be noted that our affective energy is limited. If we lack discipline and disperse our affections in all directions we will tire ourselves out and have no strength left for the Lord. Eventually, we will become disoriented and confused. Life will lose its meaning. Surely, one of the main reasons why millions of modern people no longer worship God is that their interest and affections have been drawn into the pursuit of the world's many pleasures. When we devote all our time and energy to the pursuit of the gods of this world the true God is sidelined and forgotten. In past centuries Christian beliefs were held in high esteem by most Europeans as the various Christian churches tried to evangelise the culture. But in our day instead of the culture being evangelised by the church, the church has been effectively evangelised by the culture.

Let us borrow an image from St. Francis De Sales. He warns us that our affectivity can suffer the same fate as the mighty river that was made to disappear in the desert when the king of Persia channelled it into hundreds of little streams. In like manner our affections in the modern world tend to be directed towards so many secular values that all our affective energy is consumed so that there is little, if any, left for God.

Yet we are called to love God with all our heart. We are called to rein in our affective energy and focus it on God alone. Our love for God must not be a diluted and watery love but intense and involving our whole being and all our affectivity.

Focused energy can be very powerful. If the heat of the sun is spread over a wide area it is relatively harmless. However, if, with the aid of a magnifying glass, we succeed in focusing the sun's heat on a given point the heat can be intense enough to set fire to a combustible object, such as a cigarette, a piece of paper or even wood. In like manner intense love of God demands that we cease

to disperse our affective energy in all directions and focus it all on God. This is the direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading us.

It has been said that, if we fall in love and stay in love, it will solve all our problems. This of course is true only of the love of God. If we fall in love with false gods we will end up with more problems than before.

One of the disciplines which sincere Christians need to introduce into their lives, is to tune into the Spirit who is leading each of us to perfect love of God. This tuning in can only be accomplished by directing all our affective energy towards God, and withdrawing it from false gods. Initially one may have to eliminate from one's life interests that are too absorbing so as to preserve one's strength for God. In time, however, we will learn to love creatures in God rather than for our own selfish pleasure.

There can be no depth of spirituality without disciplining our affectivity. Love will never develop, or, if it does exist, it will die unless it is structured as happens in marriage and religious life. Love is a duty and obligation as well as an enjoyable experience. The contracts of marriage and religious vows ensure that love will be practised in an ongoing stable way. Such contracts channel our affectivity and keep it on track. If we view love only as a virtue that we practice when we feel so inclined, it will soon die. Love must be seen as an obligation, our most important obligation in life. We are bound to love. This gives our love of God stability.

Let us sum up what we have been saying. We must learn to focus our affective energy on God and stay focused. We direct our affections mainly to God by prayer, spiritual reading and the practice of virtuous good works. Simultaneously we will have to withdraw our affections from the false values of the culture. In time we should arrive at a state where we love all things only in the way that God desires.

BOOK TWO

GENERAL MORALITY

CHAPTER 5

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF OUR EXISTENCE

In chapters two, three and four we examined our knowledge and love. Having studied these we are now in a position to deal with the purpose of our existence, which is to know and love God.

What is the ultimate purpose of my existence? There are probably many reasons why God has put me on this earth. One may have been created to be a nurse, a mother, a politician or a businessman. If we sit down and ponder we could find hundreds of reasons for our existence.

However, we need to prioritise these reasons. Some are more central to God's plan than others. God may intend that I realise a wide spectrum of values in my life but the question remains, why did he basically create me at all? Did he call me into existence merely to be a mother or a father, to beget children?

It is important that we be aware of God's fundamental purpose for our lives and commit ourselves to it. Our main concern here is not with God's secondary purposes in creating us but with the ultimate purpose of our existence.

God made us primarily for himself. He made us that we might worship him and love him. He wants our love more than anything else that we can give him. He desires that we freely commit ourselves to this love. He has endowed us with a heart that cannot be satisfied with anything but communion with himself. He has given us the Holy Spirit to lead us to this communion of love. It follows that loving communion with God here and hereafter is the ultimate purpose of our existence.

We can discover the chief purpose of our existence from divine revelation. The teaching and experience of the saints confirm what revelation tells us. Even pagan philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, caught some imperfect glimpse of the ultimate purpose of life. We ourselves, by reflecting on our own experience, can recognise that our hearts are made for God and that they never rest until they rest in him.

Jesus pinpoints our ultimate end when he tells us that the first and greatest commandment is to love God with our whole being (Mk. 12, 30; Mt. 22. 38). In other words we were created to love God here and hereafter. Many other texts in the Bible could be cited that demand unconditional love of God but we will not weary the reader with them.

The whole Christian tradition has been unanimous in reminding us that we are created to love God without reservation. But this raises a question. Do we have the power to love God in this absolute way? It could be very frustrating if we were made to love God and lacked all power to do so. Fortunately, God doesn't expect us to realise this goal by our own power or by our own efforts. Vatican II teaches that we are called to holiness, which it identifies with perfect love of God and neighbour for God's sake (*Lum. Gen.* 40). It furthermore assures us that each of us has been given the Holy Spirit to help us on this wonderful journey. Therefore, we do not have to realise our ultimate end by our own power. We have the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us on the way.

Hence, trusting in God's unfailing help we can confidently commit ourselves to this challenging journey.

It is interesting and enlightening to note that Aquinas made our ultimate end the foundation of his theological system. To a large extent his *Summa* is concerned with our ultimate end and how to realise it in our lives. The moral and spiritual teaching of Aquinas is mainly concerned with the virtues to be practised so that we may achieve the final purpose of our existence. He sees the whole moral and spiritual life in the light of our ultimate end, namely, in the light of charity. He has no doubt that the purpose of our existence is to love God as fully as possible here and hereafter. Great minds think

alike. Hence it is no surprise that Ignatius of Loyola also draws attention in his Spiritual Exercises to the purpose of our existence.

He teaches that we are created to praise, reverence and serve God, Our Lord, and by this means to save our souls. To simplify this we can say that we were created to love God. Ignatius reminds us that all other things on earth are given to us to enable us to fulfil the purpose for which we were created. This means that all things are given to us to enable us to love God. From this it follows logically that we are to use things to the extent that they will help us to the end of loving God. Likewise we must rid ourselves of them to the extent that they prevent us from realising our purpose which is to serve and love God. If we are not sure whether things will help us to love God or not, we must remain indifferent to them until it becomes clear whether they help or hinder us in our love of God. Therefore, for our part we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honour to dishonour, a long life to a short one... and so in all things we should desire and choose only those things that will help us to attain the purpose for which we were created. What we have just said is a summary of the teaching of Ignatius; I think that his logic is impeccable.

We need to be clear as to what is meant by our 'ultimate end.' When we undertake any project we usually have several ends in view. Immediate ends are always subordinate to more remote ends. Let us take an example from farming. The farmer intends to plough his field because he intends to sow a crop because he desires a harvest from the crop. He further intends to make a profit from selling his harvested crop, and he may have other intentions about using the money earned. We could list other possible intentions but eventually all his work must be oriented to an ultimate intention and that ultimate intention should be to please God which is to practise charity. All our deliberate desires and choices should have as their ultimate end the desire to please God, even though they may have other more proximate ends, as explained in the example given above.

Some desires and choices are not compatible with our ultimate end; adultery, murder, stealing etc. are incompatible with our ultimate end. Therefore, they are sinful. Indeed Aquinas would say

that that any choice contrary to right reason is incompatible with out ultimate end and hence sinful. It is right reason that helps us to desire and choose in a way that is in tune with our ultimate end. We practice virtue when we make choices that are in accord with our ultimate end. We sin, on the other hand, when we make unreasonable choices. Choices are unreasonable if they conflict with the ultimate end of my existence.

Therefore, the ultimate end is a value that we should realise in all our desires and choices. It is not a value that is achieved only at the end of one's life. Even now, as I type, my voluntary activity must be in line with my ultimate end. This compatibility will render my activity virtuous.

I do not consciously and actually intend to please God at all times. Often I am not consciously thinking of God. Hopefully, however, I am virtually united to him, and not living for my own selfish interests. If we lead a good moral life we are at least virtually united to God, even if we are not actually thinking of him. In this way we are achieving the purpose of our existence.

When we consciously try to please God we actually and explicitly fulfil the ultimate end of our life. Aquinas points out that it is psychologically impossible to be actually and explicitly conscious of God at all times. However, we are bound to love him always at least virtually and implicitly. We do this by living morally in accordance with right reason.

We have pointed out how Aquinas and Ignatius like to see the Christian life as a journey towards a definite goal, and that goal is to love God with our whole being. People may object and say, 'this is just scholastic and Jesuit spirituality. Therefore, we can ignore it.' To this I reply that even though it is a scholastic and Ignatian approach, it is valid for all Christians. Aquinas and Ignatius simply draw our attention to a very fundamental truth about all human beings. All of us are created to love God; we are created with a hunger for God. This hunger will be satisfied to the extent that we love God.

What Aquinas teaches in this matter is pure gospel, coming from Jesus' own lips (Mk. 12, 30). Jesus intended this message for all his disciples. Surely it is the highest wisdom to commit ourselves

to his program for us. Jesus promises that those who make such a commitment will receive a hundred fold in this life and life everlasting in the next (Mk. 10, 30).

CHAPTER 6

COMMITMENT TO OUR ULTIMATE END OR TO PLEASING GOD

It is probably true to say that most Christians, who have a minimum Christian formation, know that we are created to love God. Most people, who have faith in God, will be able to tell us why God made us. Why then is it necessary to draw attention to our primary vocation in life if everyone knows about it already?

In the language of Newman, ‘notional assent’ differs from ‘real assent.’ We all know from our own experience that we can give a detached intellectual assent to many human obligations, without getting involved at a more personal level. We are all aware of the dire poverty in the world but like the priest and the Levite, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10, 29), we pass by on the other side. Few of us are ready to surrender our superfluous wealth so that the poor may have the necessities of life. We are locked into our affluent culture, and we are affectively enslaved by love of wealth, pleasure and comfort.

In similar fashion we know intellectually, as educated Christians, that we are created to love God with our whole being. But mere intellectual assent to this primary obligation is not sufficient. We can be paralysed affectively from facing up to the challenge of unselfish love. Indeed we are often over attached to many practises and pleasures that are incompatible with our ultimate end. Our will is held captive by many addictions and disorderly affections. The Holy Spirit is leading us to ‘live, not for ourselves but for God’, but most of us are like the rich young man. We love our wealth and our pleasures excessively and we are unable to follow Jesus.

However, we have got to face up to this sad situation. How can we be roused out of our indifference so that we become passionately committed to loving God with our whole being? Is it possible to put in place strategies that will lead us, and others, to a deeper commitment and conversion? We know that the Holy Spirit is

leading us to such a commitment. The question is, how can we best co-operate with him? Hopefully, in the pages that follow, we will be able to make some positive suggestions, which, if implemented, will help us to deepen our commitment to our primary vocation in life.

Firstly we need to realise that all are called to unselfish love. Someone said to me recently, 'I thought that commitment to love God unconditionally was only for monks and nuns. Now I realise that it is everyone's vocation.' Such a realisation is a wonderful grace of the Holy Spirit. We pointed out several times that the Holy Spirit is leading us all to unselfish love (*Lum. Gen.* 40). Therefore, all people, and not just monks and nuns, have the duty to commit themselves to the Spirit's program.

Most of us, who will read this, are probably already committed in some measure to love God. It is important to remember that there are many degrees of commitment. At one end of the scale are those who are content if they can avoid hell and scrape into heaven. Their commitment to love God scarcely exists. They are committed to themselves rather than to God.

At the other end are passionate lovers of God, like Therese of Lisieux, who claims that she always acted from the motive of love. Again she says that she refused nothing to Jesus from the age of three onwards. We are dealing here with a saint who was deeply in love and fulfilled at all times the purpose of her existence.

The Holy Spirit is leading all of us to this kind of love but, unfortunately, few of us have the generosity of the saints. Our commitment to loving God can fluctuate up and down. Indeed we may be satisfied with giving God an hour on Sunday mornings and then reserving the other 167 hours of the week for our own projects. God wants the whole 168 hours of the week for himself. Are we content to love God for one hour and ourselves for 167 hours? Are we living according to the gospel that requires us to leave all things and follow Jesus? "One cannot be my disciple unless one gives up all one possesses" (Lk. 14, 33). Love of God, of its nature, must be a love without reservation.

UNSELFISH COMMITMENT TO PLEASING GOD

In our chapter on ‘Affectivity’ and also in the last chapter we pointed out that the word ‘love’ can easily be misunderstood and that it can have many meanings. Similarly the word ‘charity’ is often misunderstood and associated with external actions. I have been trying to find more suitable English words to express our relationship with God. So as to evoke from the reader what the true love of God is I would like to use the words ‘unselfish commitment to pleasing God.’

The term ‘unselfish’ needs no explanation. It simply draws attention to the fact that love, at its best, forgets about one’s own selfish interests and thinks only of the wellbeing of the one loved.

The term ‘commitment’ does not necessarily imply strong feeling but it connotes a serious choice of the will. It implies that we are convinced that something is valuable and worth pursuing. Because we are convinced of its value we choose to commit ourselves to it. A big commitment will be preceded by a detailed study of all the implications arising from the proposed choice. Such a commitment is not made lightly but only after serious consideration. In practice we always commit ourselves to a value or to what is perceived as valuable. No activity on earth has greater value than the love of God. Pleasing God is the greatest thing we can do on this earth. Therefore, it is logical to commit ourselves to it unreservedly. We need the grace of God both convincingly to perceive that it is the greatest of all values, and also to commit ourselves to it unconditionally. In order to make this commitment we need to be strongly motivated and in order to persevere in our commitment ongoing motivation will be necessary.

It might be worth drawing attention to the fact that both intellect and will are involved in making a commitment. Commitment is obviously a decision of the will. There will be a primary decision for initial commitment, and many more decisions for ongoing commitment. But the will is a blind faculty. It must be motivated by intellectual perception and insight. Hence there is an important intellectual role in making commitments. Before we commit

ourselves to a project we must be intellectually convinced of its value. We will deal more fully with this later when we treat of motivation.

In the heading to this section I have used the words ‘pleasing God’. Most of us can grasp immediately what is meant by trying to please a person. We want to please those we love. We can easily recognise this motive when doing services for those we love. To please people means that we wish to give them pleasure. We want to fulfil their desires and do their will. We may not necessarily like doing the things that give them pleasure. Indeed we may find them hard and may only decide to do them by a difficult decision of the will. Jesus was committed to pleasing his Father. ‘I always do the things that please him’ (Jn. 8, 29). But he had no feeling of pleasure as he hung on the cross even though he primarily underwent death so as to please his Father. A life of love means that we are committed to pleasing God in all our deliberate desires and choices. Love and commitment to love do not count the cost. When the lover is convinced that something pleases the one loved he/she doesn’t hesitate to grant what the loved one desires. Perfect love requires that there be no personal agenda in serving God. The lover simply desires to please him and is not concerned about what is received in return. “Love doesn’t seek its own advantage” (1 Cor. 13, 5).

Commitment to pleasing God has many implications. In the first place it is a commitment to affective love. This will mean a commitment to spending a lot of quality time in prayer, just loving. Affective love is nourished by prayer, especially personal prayer. Without affective love there will probably be no effective love. That is why Teresa of Calcutta tells us that prayer is the way to holiness.

If we love God affectively we will want to please him in our desires and choices. In other words we will want to practise the virtues. Commitment to pleasing God implies the practise of the virtues. Paul teaches that love is patient, kind, unselfish etc (1 Cor. 13). Aquinas points out that love commands all the other virtues. It urges us to seek out God’s will and fulfil it so as to please him. Hence commitment to pleasing God is a commitment to seek out

the activities that please him and implement them, no matter what the cost.

It is the Holy Spirit that inspires us and enables us to make this commitment and to implement it in our lives. Without God's help we can do nothing.

CHAPTER 7

MOTIVATION

We saw in the last chapter that it is not enough to give an intellectual detached assent to loving God. We need to make a strong personal commitment to focus our lives on God and remain focused.

But one cannot make such a radical commitment unless one is strongly motivated. Motivation is necessary to make the initial commitment but this is not enough. Ongoing motivation alone will ensure that we persevere in our commitment.

Doubtless spiritual motivation is above all the work of the Holy Spirit who operates above all in those who pray (Lk.11,13). But grace builds on nature. Hence we need to reflect on the nature of all motivation.

Why are some people motivated to devote themselves completely to the pursuit of wealth? Why do others, like St. Francis, despise wealth and embrace poverty? What motivates some people to indulge in lust and sex, while others are motivated to live a chaste life? Why are some motivated to live for themselves only, while others, like St. Therese, live for God only?

Ultimately we are motivated in our choices by our perceptions. But what do we mean by ‘perception?’ By ‘perception’ I mean the manner in which an individual knows a particular object. ‘Perception’ refers to the total impression that my knowledge makes on me. Perception can range in intensity from a detached intellectual knowledge of something to a passionate loving knowledge of something. We have only to reflect how indifferent some of us are to a life of love in comparison to a saint, who is totally committed to love God with all his/her heart.

As we said above we are motivated by our perceptions. If I perceive lust as a great good that brings great pleasure, especially if this is the last practical judgement of my intellect, I will be motivated to embrace it. We should remember that the will always follows the last practical judgement of the intellect. However, if by God’s grace,

I perceive chastity as a much greater good I will commit myself to chastity.

I am not necessarily motivated to choose what is objectively virtuous and desirable unless I perceive it as virtuous and desirable. So as to provide motivation in living the Christian life, true objective values must be perceived as such and must be personalised. I must appreciate, not only intellectually, but also affectively, that the love of God is the supreme Christian value. A life of love is obviously the most wonderful life that a human being can live. But unless I personally perceive it as such, at both the intellectual and affective levels of my being, I will not be motivated to embrace such a life.

I can perceive unselfish love as too demanding. 'Taking up one's cross and following Jesus is O.K. for the saints but I'm only a simple Christian.' Unless, with God's grace, I can change my perception, so that I perceive with mind and heart what is of true value, I will never be motivated to embrace the life of unselfish love to which Jesus calls us.

Both initial and ongoing motivation are concerned with internalising objective values. Both our intellects and wills, our minds and hearts, are intimately involved in motivating us to live a life of unselfish love. That is why Paul counsels us to 'renew our minds' (intellects) (Rom.12, 2).

Our intellects will not function properly if our affections are disorderly. Disorderly affections produce false perceptions; good is seen as evil and evil is perceived as good. *Lumen Gentium* 42 warns us to govern our affections rightly. Unless our affections are in order we will never perceive the truth in a life-giving affective manner. Both Ignatius of Loyola and John of the Cross have pinpointed for us with keen spiritual insight how disorderly affections enslave us and prevent union with God.

As we have said elsewhere Ignatius says in three different places that the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises is to set people free from disorderly affections so that they will be able to perceive and implement God's will in their lives. The saint saw clearly that disorderly affections can motivate us in the wrong way, and that this

is our basic spiritual problem. Hence in order to get our motivation right we must be free from bondage to these affections.

John of the Cross showed similar insight when he taught that it doesn't matter whether a bird is tied down by a thread or a rope. In either case it cannot fly. In like manner a small attachment to something trivial can hold us back from union with God. Hence in order to get our motivation right we need to be free from all disorderly affections.

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

In this work of motivating our minds and hearts, our intellects and wills, the Holy Spirit plays a vital role. 'He will teach you all things' (Jn. 16, 13). In the paragraphs that follow we will focus mainly on how we prepare ourselves for the Spirit's activity in us and cooperate with his grace. Without his help we can do nothing. Whether we realise it or not God must initiate all our good works and support us at every step of the journey.

Holiness consists mainly in loving God affectively and effectively (*L. G.* 40). But all love proceeds from the human will, and it may or may not be accompanied by feeling. But the human will is a blind faculty, which must be motivated in its choices by the perceptions of the intellect. In the practice of charity, ideally, the will should be guided by right reason and faith, and very often we are so guided. However, frequently, the intellect in its reasoning and perceptions is strongly influenced by the habitual values, good and bad, that we have developed due to our cultural upbringing, our education, religious formation and other influences. Habits and values strongly affect reasoning and perception and as a consequence our voluntary activity. Hence motivation of the will towards love of God depends largely on renewing our minds, on acquiring good moral habits and values and on the practice of affective love in prayer.

Furthermore, since both affective and effective love often involve living, not for oneself but for God, we have to develop habits of self-denial. In the words of St. Benedict, we have to learn to deny ourselves so as to follow Christ (C.4, 10). The practice of authentic

love often involves ‘*agere contra*’, or going against ourselves so as to please God. Modern writers have invented a new word for this; they tell us that we must be ‘counter cultural’. Strong motivation is needed, so that we will have the generosity to practice unselfish love, which so often demands that we die to ourselves in order that we may live for God.

Practising the love of God presents no problem when God asks for something that we like doing. We will do it with great alacrity and satisfaction. But it is a different matter when he asks us to take up our cross and follow him. It is in this situation that we need to be strongly motivated in order to forego our natural desires so as to please God.

One could argue that Christian formation is equivalent to formation in the love of God. This will include formation in effective love, which is exercised mainly in the practice of the moral virtues out of love; it will include also formation in affective love or in prayer. But formation consists above all in motivating people to practice love. If formation doesn’t motivate people to love God it is useless. In the words of Therese, ‘love alone counts.’ But we will not love in practice unless we are motivated to love. Therefore, all formation should aim at motivating people to love God and the neighbour for God’s sake.

The Holy Spirit is leading all to love of God and neighbour (*Lumen Gentium*. 40). Therefore, all formation should aim at motivating people in the direction in which the Spirit is leading them. If formators motivate people to love they are tuning into the Spirit’s program for them. After all the Spirit is the chief formator, whom all must obey.

HOW ARE WE MOTIVATED IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE?

1: The Holy Spirit is the Prime Mover

He always takes the initiative in any good works that we perform. He lives within every human being and he is leading each one to love of God (*Lum. Gen.* 40). Without his initial grace we would never

even start on the journey. If we commit ourselves to the journey of love we are responding to God's grace.

The Spirit not only moves us initially, but he supports us all along the way. This is true of every act of love that we make. God is always the initiator and co-operates with our feeble responses. The Spirit will influence both my intellectual perceptions and my voluntary choices. "He will teach you all things" (Jn. 16, 13).

Since affective love is the foundation of the whole spiritual life and since it is the root from which comes all the virtues, the Spirit will inspire us with affective love of Jesus and the Father. He will lead us into genuine prayer, and teach us how to pray, as we ought. "The Spirit himself intercedes for us according to God's will" (Rom. 8, 27).

2: Prayer is the root of all love.

Affective love, which is practised and nourished in prayer, is the root which generates effective love. The Spirit leads us to prayer, and in prayer he inspires us to love God. Jesus tells us that he bears witness to both Father and Son. He will fill our hearts with affective love.

When this love grows strong it will produce a harvest of virtues as Paul teaches in I Cor. 13. Aquinas tells us that charity commands all the other virtues. It moves us to practice them. If we affectively love God we will be zealous for all that pleases him. Affective love is a kind of universal motive that urges us to practise all the virtues because every virtuous moral act is pleasing to God. We already cited Teresa of Calcutta who teaches that prayer is the way to holiness or perfect love. If our prayer doesn't inspire us and strengthen us to practise virtue it is not authentic. Furthermore, living virtuously is impossible without God's help. But we obtain his help in prayer when we ask for it. This again demonstrates that prayer is the way to holiness.

Therefore, we must conclude that the first requisite for a life of love is the ardent practise of prayer. We need to build a loving relationship with Jesus. From this will flow effective love. Hence to motivate people on the spiritual journey, they must be persuaded

to spend time in prayer. They will often need training in prayer and much encouragement on the journey.

3: Being convinced that God loves us.

This should be one of the fruits of authentic prayer. In prayer we experience his love because the ‘love of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given us.’ (Rom. 5, 5). If we are convinced that he loves us we will want to return his love. This conviction is a great grace but we can dispose ourselves to receive it by prayerful reflection on the many ways in which God has shown his love for us. He manifests this great love in his passion and death, in the divine indwelling and in the holy Eucharist. No wonder we sing in one of our hymns, ‘Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.’

4: Attending a School of Love will motivate us in many ways to love God. We should not forget that the Church, and the various sub-groups within the Church, all exist for one ultimate purpose only, namely, to lead their members to perfect love of God. That is why I like to call them all ‘schools of love.’ If we have the good fortune to belong to a good school of love that has an effective sub-culture of love, it will be a great help in motivating us on the journey.

St. Therese of Lisieux grew up in such a school. I mentioned already that she never acted, except from the motive of love, and that she refused nothing to Jesus after the age of three. From her earliest years she lived in an excellent school of love that had a very effective culture of love. Her family lived in close union with God. Elements in this culture of love were prayer, making little sacrifices out of love, never complaining, religious education, not reading newspapers, talking habitually about God and spiritual matters etc. She knew the ‘Imitation of Christ’ by heart when she was fourteen years old. The family was largely cut off from the secular world. The lifestyle and values of the family were almost monastic. The result was that Therese developed a great desire to become a saint and to love God unto folly.

5: Constant exposure to the word of God will motivate us to devote ourselves generously to the spiritual journey. *Lum. Gent.* 42 points out that in order to grow in love ‘we must willingly hear

the word of God and with his grace act to fulfil it.’ Hearing the word will stimulate us to both prayer and good works. This word enters our hearts, especially through prayerful spiritual reading, by participation in the liturgy, by listening to sermons and suitable recordings etc. If our reading does not motivate us to prayer and the practise of virtue it can hardly be called ‘spiritual reading.’

It is well to realise that our reading might well be an exercise in curiosity, or a mere search for knowledge. We might be reading unsuitable books. In order to deserve the name ‘spiritual reading’ it should orient us proximately, or at least remotely, to either affective or effective love of God.

Repetition plays a powerful role in motivation and in formation. Many people are locked into our secular affluent culture. They are affectively enslaved by secular values and they are not free enough to give themselves to God in love. This over-attachment has gradually grown in their hearts over the years by being constantly exposed to secular values. They were given the message repeatedly by our culture that pleasure, power, money, sex, sport etc. are all important and they have internalised this message unconsciously, and now they are trapped.

But constant exposure to God’s word can produce similar effects. If we are told repeatedly in a thousand different ways that ‘love alone counts’, the message will eventually stick and take root in our hearts. Eventually love will develop into a mighty torrent that permeates the whole of life. Repetition plays a big role in this growth. This is one of the chief ways of co-operating with the Holy Spirit who is always the Prime Mover.

6: In the last section we spoke about how we positively grow in love through repeatedly assimilating gospel values. Here we wish to stress the negative side of motivation.

Our motivation to live according to the gospel will be weakened unless we exercise discipline in regard to secular values. We frequently need to say ‘No’ to the secular in order to say ‘Yes’ to Jesus. Being a disciple means leaving all things in order to follow Jesus. Sometimes we can literally forego secular values. At other times we must take account of them, but we should give ourselves

to them only to the extent that God wills. We have to love the world in God and for God and according to his will, not primarily for our own pleasure. All this calls for much self-denial in order to follow Christ. Love and self-sacrifice are two complementary dimensions of authentic charity.

Let us express this teaching more concretely. It is hard to see how we can avoid becoming trapped in the secular unless we exercise discipline in the use of the media. It will also be necessary to be disciplined in our travel. Unless we primarily seek God, rather than ourselves, in these two areas of life, we may end up living for ourselves rather than for God.

7: We are motivated by our habits of thought, will and external action. Being in love is a habitual state, which produces many interior and exterior acts of love. The habit serves to motivate us. The acts and the habit are complementary. The habit becomes more deeply rooted in our hearts by repeated acts. The more intense the habit, the easier and more frequent are the acts.

Francis de Sales points out how we develop the habit of love. He tells us that we learn to walk by walking; we learn to talk by talking. So we learn to love by loving. Therese of Lisieux put this into practice by missing no opportunities for practising love. Let us remember always that a habit that is not exercised languishes and dies. Hence the wisdom of Arrupe's counsel - 'fall in love and stay in love, and it will solve all your problems.'

8: The conviction that 'love alone counts' will strongly motivate us to commit ourselves to it. Surely the Holy Spirit is leading us to this conviction. We can co-operate with him by constant reflection on the value of love. Through meditation, study, spiritual reading and prayer an appreciation of the love of God must take root in us so radically that we commit ourselves to the journey of love unconditionally and without reservation. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit this compulsion to love God at all times must become increasingly the only reason for our existence. All other things, that our secular culture over-values, we see as only relatively important.

St. Therese can help us here once again. She writes: "The science of loving...that is the only kind of science I want. I would barter

away everything I possess to win it, and then, like the Bride in the Canticle, think nothing of the loss. It is only love that makes us what God wants us to be. For that reason it is the only possession that I covet.’ (Autobiography, Knox, P.228).

In this context of love alone being of value, let us remember that affective love is exercised primarily in prayer. Hence prayer is of supreme value. By authentic prayer we fulfil the purpose of our existence; we realise our ultimate end and primary vocation in life.

9: A Personal Rule of Life, oriented to perfect love, can be a powerful help in motivating us on our journey. This personal rule of life will ensure that many of the strategies for motivating us, already mentioned, will in practice be implemented. A timetable will be the main element in our rule of life. Leading an organised life helps us to keep our priorities right. Our timetable should make provision for prayer, spiritual reading and study focused on love. It is essential that in our rule of life we impose strict discipline on ourselves in the search for pleasure, in the use of the media and secular reading. All our reading must be in the Lord, according to what we think is his will.

If we have no personal rule there is a danger that we will live out of our instincts, living in the ‘flesh’, as Paul would say, always choosing what we like and avoiding what we dislike. Christ demands that we try to choose, not what we like but what God likes. A wise Rule of Life will help us to persevere in a life of love, provided we observe it.

10: The Spirit can use all kinds of means to motivate us. The example of others, their counsel, cassettes, DVDs, videos etc. can all be helpful when used with discernment. Most of these helps would probably be available in a school of love (N.4 above).

11: Underlying all other motives is a holy love of ourselves. We are commanded to love ourselves and we are born with an innate love of self. We love ourselves truly to the extent that we love God with our whole heart. Love will bring us a hundred-fold in this life, and life everlasting in the next. “God has made us for himself and we will never rest until we rest in him.” The saints were the most fulfilled and happiest of all human beings.

To conclude this chapter on motivation the following quote from St Bernard (On Consideration, Chap. 2) is very much to the point. Bernard is offering advice to Pope Eugene who has just been elected Pope. Before his election he was a Cistercian contemplative monk.

“Rely not too much on your present disposition. For there is nothing in the soul so firmly established that it cannot be removed by time and neglect... What disposition cannot be induced, destroyed or changed to its contrary by force of habit? How many have come by habit to find pleasure in the evil, which before inspired only horror and disgust?

“At first something will seem intolerable to us. After a while, when we get accustomed to it, it will not appear so very dreadful. Later it will shock us less; later still it will have ceased to shock us at all. Finally, we begin to take delight in it. Thus little by little our heart grows insensitive to spiritual values and we can arrive at a state where we hate virtue and love sin.”

CHAPTER 8

THE MORAL LIFE AND RIGHT REASON

We have already mentioned that Lonergan says somewhere that Christians need to undergo a double conversion, namely, a moral conversion and a conversion to love. When we observe the moral law out of love we change silver into gold.

In practice the moral life and the life of love are always intertwined. There is a kind of circular movement. The moral virtues are means to the ultimate end of love but if one is in love one will be moved by love to practice the moral virtues. The moral virtues can sometimes be practised without explicit charity.

People, who do not believe in God, often live a very good moral life. They faithfully follow their conscience and respect moral values. They can be classified as people of good will who love the 'unknown God'. Rahner invented the term 'anonymous Christians' to describe such people.

I like to think that they love God implicitly, even though they themselves do not realise this. Vatican II teaches that people of good will will be saved. Since they cannot be saved without charity, we must conclude that people of good will have charity, whether they know it or not. Christ wants all people to be saved. People of good will love God implicitly; they cannot do so explicitly if they are unbelievers.

THE ULTIMATE CRITERION OF MORALITY

In our modern world there are a wide variety of opinions about the morality of some of our actions. Indeed many people today decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong without reference to any objective standards. Some imagine that if an action feels good and gives me pleasure it is morally acceptable. Others argue that one view is as good as another. Some say that abortion is acceptable; others say it is morally wrong. Who are we to believe? Frequently,

our moral conscience is formed solely by the civil law. When the secular law allows something we assume that it is morally O.K; when the secular law forbids something we assume, without further thinking, that it is morally wrong.

Unfortunately, civil law often conflicts with Scripture and Church teaching. Examples of this conflict occur in the areas of abortion, homosexuality, civil unions, embryonic experimentation, the use of money etc.

However, everyone seems to have some conscience about the morality of one's choices. A certain moral sense seems to be innate in human beings even if we differ about what specific acts and practises are morally right and wrong.

The fact that all of us have a conscience raises an important question. Why, ultimately, do we have to make sure that our choices are morally good? Why can't we live like animals that never worry about morality?

In order to answer this question we must ask ourselves why did God create us? What is the purpose of one's existence? We all know the answer. God created us that we might freely love him here and hereafter. We cannot live like animals because God made us rational and is calling us to a moral and loving life. He wants us to love him freely with our whole heart. This is the sole ultimate purpose of our existence. All our deliberate desires and choices, while they may have proximate ends, must ultimately serve our ultimate end. If they serve the ultimate end of love they are morally good; if they do not serve this end they are morally bad.

I eat, I drink, I buy and sell and make money for only one ultimate purpose, namely, to lead myself and others to the fullness of the love of God here and hereafter. All these activities mentioned, and others not mentioned, are morally good or bad to the extent that they serve or do not serve the ultimate purpose of my existence. Indeed, all human acts, while they may have many immediate ends, should have only one ultimate end, namely, to love God. Therefore, compatibility with our ultimate end is what ultimately makes a choice morally good.

We already mentioned how Ignatius teaches that we are created to praise, serve and love God. All created things are given us to achieve this purpose. Therefore, we are to use created things to the extent that they help us to achieve this purpose. We must discard them if they hinder us. The teaching of Ignatius could be expanded to include all deliberate desires and choices, and not just those that concern material things. All such desires and choices must be embraced or rejected in so far as they serve our ultimate end or not.

Moral theology and spirituality try to specify in more detail what desires and choices in practice serve our ultimate end and what actions are incompatible with it. Indeed the secular media, while it doesn't always clearly distinguish what is moral from what is illegal, is constantly expressing opinions about whether certain decisions are right or wrong. Politicians and those who make economic decisions are constantly being criticised. In the complex world in which we live it is not always easy to know for certain whether certain decisions are morally right or not. However, we can make one assertion without fear of error. Every deliberate decision has a moral dimension, whether people are aware of this or not.

Our deliberate desires and choices must contribute not merely to our personal love of God but also to the common good. I am responsible, according to my vocation and charisms, not only for realising my own ultimate end but also for helping others on the journey. Each Christian has the responsibility to make a contribution to building up the kingdom of God in all its dimensions in the world.

RIGHT REASON

In studying right reason and natural law it is helpful to do so in the context of our ultimate end. In order to appreciate fully the role of right reason in our lives we need to realise that it is essentially connected with the purpose of our existence or our ultimate end.

We know that God made us to love him here and hereafter. We are called to love him both affectively and effectively. We love him affectively mainly when we praise him, adore him, reverence him

and love him in prayer. Prayer is loving affective communion with God.

But we must also love him effectively. Our love is not complete if we merely sing psalms and forget about God immediately we leave the choir. Our love must be both affective and effective. Affective love must lead to deeds. It must lead to love of the neighbour, the practice of justice towards God and neighbour. Paul is referring to both affective and effective love when he tells us that love is patient, kind, does not envy etc. Love will urge us to seek out what pleases God and implement it. In the words of Aquinas, love commands all the other virtues.

But at this stage we encounter a problem. How do we know what pleases God? In general we can say that God desires his creatures to live according to the nature they have received. A stone glorifies God simply by being a stone. Animals honour God by living according to their irrational instincts. We humans must also fulfil God's designs by living according to the nature we have received. Unlike brute animals we are rational beings and called to freedom. If we live irrationally we are not living according to the nature we have received. In order to please God we must live according to right reason.

Aquinas says that 'to be human is to live according to right reason' (2da 2dae q.155, art 1). We live according to right reason when a choice is compatible with the love of God, which is the purpose of our existence. Our drives, instincts and emotions must all be regulated according to right reason. Above all our voluntary choices must be regulated by right reason. Irrational choices are objectively sinful.

We should remember that right practical reason or prudence is the charioteer of all the virtues. The moral virtues of justice, fortitude and temperance, and the many virtues included under them, are only different ways of living according to right reason. Indeed when we find ourselves in any concrete situation we don't ask ourselves, 'what virtue does this situation call for?' I certainly never ask myself that question. But I do ask myself, 'what is the most reasonable choice in this situation?'

Speaking generally we please God by acting according to the nature he has given us. A rational being will please him by acting according to right reason. It is right reason that distinguishes virtue from vice. When we sin, we usually reason and discern incorrectly. We are often under the influence of disorderly affections. Sin is always irrational.

Ideally the will should always be guided by right reason and accurate discernment of what is true and good. We grow in freedom and in virtue the more we are guided in our choices by right reason. But it is not easy to consistently distinguish right from wrong. Our judgement and reason are strongly influenced by the values unconsciously absorbed from the surrounding culture. Most of us have appropriated some false cultural values that influence our reason. We are locked into our culture in unhealthy ways in varying degrees. Nothing so interferes with objective judgement and growth in true freedom as affective bondage. Hence one of the most important conditions for making a choice according to right reason is freedom from disorderly affections.

Another important help towards living rationally and according to the truth is intellectual formation, especially formation of conscience. We have a serious duty to be properly informed before we make important decisions. In practice the consciences of most of us are selective in their judgement. In some areas we perceive clearly what is right and wrong; in other areas e. g. on questions of social justice and consumerism, most of us need to be ‘conscientised’ about our obligations. This failure in moral judgement is partly due to affective bondage and partly due to lack of intellectual moral formation. The brainwashing of our culture plays a major role in blinding us to the truth. In the words of John Paul II we have been trapped ‘in a web of sense gratifications’ in our consumer society.

For a Christian right reason means having the mind of Christ. It means being taught the truth by the Holy Spirit. It means filling our minds and hearts with what is true, good and loving. It means co-operating on our part with the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Right reason does not mean accepting unquestioningly what everyone around us judges to be morally acceptable. The majority

opinion is not necessarily reasonable. In democratic societies the majority opinion is often identified with moral goodness. Truth is not necessarily found in the majority view. Indeed the majority can be locked into an unjust structure and refuse to change. Does this disposition harmonise with the freedom of the Spirit?

It is worth noting that Augustine and Aquinas make a distinction between low reason and high reason. Low reason takes little or no account of revelation and the teaching of Christ. Secular societies usually operate out of low reason. Low reason is obviously inadequate as a norm for moral behaviour. High reason on the other hand takes into account God's plan for human beings as revealed by Christ and Church teaching. Christian revelation perfects our reason and enables us to live according to the mind of Christ.

The determination to act according to high reason is an excellent foundation for all the virtues. Indeed all the moral virtues are only different ways of acting according to right reason. A few examples may help. By the virtue of prudence we judge what is the most reasonable choice. Justice urges us to respect the rights of others. The true rights of others are discovered by using our reason. Fortitude urges us to overcome our fears when they incline us to run away from performing a good reasonable action. Temperance inclines us to restrain all our desires for pleasure within reasonable limits. Thus right reason will determine how far it is lawful to seek after the pleasures of sex, of the palate, status, honour, power etc.

Living by right reason is a wonderful ideal in theory but it is very demanding in practice. To achieve this ideal our reason must be enlightened by faith and the Holy Spirit. While we will never achieve this goal fully in this life we are meant to come as close as possible to living reasonably at all times. The more we live according to right reason the closer we come to fulfilling the ultimate purpose of our existence.

As I pointed out above we were created to love God affectively and effectively. We practice effective love by trying to live according to right reason in each unique situation. Living according to right reason and the truth consistently will require of us much self-denial

and self-sacrifice. In order to live the truth we must often sacrifice self-interest and lay down our lives for God and neighbour.

What is the connection between right reason and effective love? We are all called to practice effective love. This implies that we must search for God's will and implement it so as to please him. One of the chief ways of discovering God's will is to discern what is most reasonable in our situation. Hence there is a necessary connection between the practice of love and right reason. Love expresses itself in living according to high reason.

RIGHT REASON AND NATURAL LAW - THEIR LIMITS

In practice people can differ a lot as to what is reasonable and what is not. What makes a choice reasonable? A choice is reasonable if it is compatible with love of God, or with the purpose of my existence. Another way of stating the same truth is to say that a choice conforms to right reason if it is in accord with my nature. By nature I am made for God and called to love him. Furthermore, the Spirit is leading me, and all other human beings, to perfect love. Surely it is according to right reason to co-operate with his guidance.

I am bound to follow the law of nature by living rationally and loving God. This leads us to a difficult problem. How far do we know the natural law? In our modern world people often object to the theory of natural law. What use is natural law if we cannot work out with any certainty its implications? A short answer to that question would be that the theory of natural law is very valuable for leading our moral life even though it is not always easy to reason out with certainty all its implications. In most circumstances we can judge with reasonable certainty what is reasonable and in accord with natural law.

Aquinas points out somewhere that the primary precepts of the natural law are easily known and unquestionable. Examples of primary precepts would be: we should do good and avoid evil; we should live reasonably; we should love God etc. However, secondary precepts that are deduced from the primary precepts do not enjoy

the same certitude as the primary precepts. While we are certain that we must act reasonably we are not always certain whether a particular concrete choice is reasonable or not. Some examples may help. Some maintain that homosexuality is against nature; others deny that this is so. Catholic teaching holds that all deliberate sexual activity outside of marriage is immoral; other Christians disagree. In modern times there are ethical questions about abortion, contraception, stem cells, in vitro fertilisation etc. Some say that these activities are against nature while others deny that this is so.

It is not my intention here to enter into these disputed areas. As a Catholic I accept the teaching of my church. My main purpose here is to highlight the ongoing value of traditional teaching on right reason and natural law. While we cannot have absolute certitude about many of the secondary precepts of natural law the theory that we should live according to our nature and right reason is a very valuable foundation for the moral and spiritual life. If we focus our attention too much on the limitations of reason and the natural law there is a danger that we will fail to appreciate their importance and value in leading a life of union with God.

In this context it is worth noting that most of the social teaching of the Church is based on sound reasoning about human beings and their rights. Right reason and natural law are very important tools when it comes to discussing social justice, human rights, consumerism etc. As far as I know the Catholic Church's teaching on social justice is widely accepted by our separated brothers and sisters and even by secular politicians. This serves to show that her teaching is true and relevant to our world, even if few people live it out. Several Church Fathers teach that our superfluous goods belong to the poor. This teaching seems to me to be in accordance with right reason and the natural law.

I have already mentioned the value for the spiritual life of trying to live according to right reason. I myself find that, in my search for God's will, right reason is a wonderful tool. Often when I find myself in situations where God's will is not clear, it can be very helpful to ask myself, what is the most reasonable course of action in this situation? I believe that God always wants me to make a

reasonable choice. Put in other words, it is God's will that we make a reasonable choice.

This is a valuable rule of thumb for using spare time. I find that the greatest danger, when I have time on my hands, is to reach out for what will give me immediate gratification. I tend to seek primarily my own pleasure rather than that of God. The primary question in all situations ought to be, what will please God most in this situation? I have often been asked, how does one know God's will? God has given us reason to direct us. We are doing his will when we act according to right reason. He expects us to act according to the nature that he has given us. Sometimes it may be most reasonable to relax and enjoy ourselves. At other times it may be most reasonable to make great personal sacrifices so as to please God and help others.

To complete my treatment of right reason and natural law I would like to stress once again that right reason and natural law are not just about serious sins and disorders such as murder, adultery etc. They are important for living in close union with God in our daily lives. We have tended to identify natural law with the sins just mentioned as well as many other serious disorders. The truth is that, if we are committed to live morally and spiritually, we must live at all times according to our nature, properly understood. We cannot love God effectively if we do not live at all times according to right reason enlightened by revelation.

CHAPTER 9

THE VIRTUES

HABITS, VIRTUES AND VICES

As we have already said our primary vocation and the purpose of our existence is to love God as fully as possible here and hereafter. This vocation is realised to the extent of our love. Ideally all our human acts should contribute to love proximately or remotely. Right reason helps us to discern what acts contribute to love and what acts do not. It helps us to distinguish a good moral act from a sin.

But it is not easy to live according to right reason because in the practice of love we encounter many obstacles. We experience desires to live only for our own pleasure and not for God. Worse still, we may have yielded to these desires, and done so habitually, thus developing sinful habits. Such habits could in time develop into addictions that are very difficult to eradicate.

On the other hand we can develop habits of resisting evil desires. When we frequently say ‘no’ with our wills to such desires we build up a good habit e. g. the habit of chastity. This good habit makes it easier for us to resist evil desires in the future and to practice virtue.

Immoral habits are called ‘vices’ and good habits are called ‘virtues’. They are qualities in our personalities that affect in varying degrees our moral judgement and our moral choices. They predispose us to judge and act in a good or bad manner in particular situations. All habits, good and bad, are strengthened by repetition of acts; they are weakened by contrary acts. Habits, that are not actualised, tend to weaken and die.

We must never overlook God’s role in our lives. The Holy Spirit lives within us and helps us to judge correctly and empowers the human will to act virtuously. Without his aid we can do nothing. He meets us where we are on the spiritual journey and invites us to take the next step. If we perform virtuous acts we are merely co-operating

with the Holy Spirit who enables us to do so. Nevertheless, he will only sanctify us if we co-operate.

CLASSIFYING THE VIRTUES

Before we try to classify the virtues and their acts let us recall once again certain basic truths about human acts. Every fully human act involves the intellect and the will. Every human act is a free deliberate choice. Every fully human act has a moral dimension. If it is reasonable it is morally good; otherwise it is morally bad. Humans are bound to live rationally. In doing so they live morally and thereby implicitly or explicitly love God. It is possible to classify the virtues but often it is not clear under what virtue a particular act may fall. Classifying the virtues and defining them is helpful but often it can be more helpful simply to try and live rationally from moment to moment. It is not too difficult to do this most of the time. For a Christian reason always needs to be enlightened by the gospel.

The primary human act is a free deliberate desire or inner choice. This desire or choice may or may not lead to an external action. I simply wish to point out here that the primary human act is a free deliberate desire that leads to all other human acts. Hence it is most important to morally discern our desires before we embrace them. This is arguably the most fundamental discipline of the spiritual life.

THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

The theologians distinguish theological, intellectual and moral virtues. The theological virtues have God, our ultimate end, as their object. The other virtues deal with the means to the ultimate end. Aquinas teaches that by faith, hope and love we reach out to God in himself. That is why they are given the name ‘theological.’ They are concerned with ‘*theos*’ (God). By these virtues we believe in God, we hope in him and we love him.

We believe in God because he is truth itself. As a consequence we believe all that he has revealed. We hope in him because he is good to us and will grant us eternal life and the means to reach our

heavenly kingdom, provided we co-operate. Finally, we love him because he is infinitely good. This love leads us to praise him and rejoice in his goodness. It also leads us to practice the moral virtues so as to please him. Affective charity leads to effective charity.

Charity is the greatest of all the virtues. Faith, hope, the intellectual virtues and the moral virtues are so many means to the end of charity, which is the purpose of our existence. Aquinas sees all the other virtues as contributing to the ultimate end of charity or love of God. All the moral virtues and their acts have immediate ends but the ultimate end must always be the love of God.

We have already pointed out how charity commands all the virtues. If one loves God one will want to be prudent, just, courageous and temperate. One will desire to practice all the virtues so as to please God. If one is in love one will desire to practice love, and this is done mainly by practising the moral virtues. When they are practised so as to please God they are more an exercise of charity than of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance etc.

There is, therefore, a certain circular movement in the practice of the virtues. On the one hand we can see all the moral virtues as means for achieving our ultimate end. Aquinas often reminds us that the moral virtues deal with the means to the end while the theological virtues deal with the end itself. On the other hand, Aquinas constantly reminds us that charity commands all the other virtues. If one is realising the end by the practice of an ardent love of God, this love will produce a harvest of virtues. 'Love is patient, kind, does not seek its own advantage etc.' (I Cor. 13). Affective charity will produce effective charity. Charity will be internal and external. Both dimensions are necessary and they complement each other.

In my contact with Christians as a priest I find that their consciences are not fully formed. Most will feel guilty about committing certain sins, e. g. impatience, stealing, sins against chastity, uncharitable gossip etc. This sense of guilt is certainly commendable but most people feel no sense of guilt about sins of omission. They are not worried if they fail to use their talents, if they fail to help the poor, if they miss opportunities for doing good etc. If charity is strong in

our hearts it will command us to do good whenever the opportunity arises. It will command us to use our talents, our money and time for the promotion of God's kingdom. Is it because our charity is very weak that we are content with going to mass on Sundays and steering clear of mortal sin? In a word we are called, not just to avoid sin, but to do good.

THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECT AND THE WILL IN VIRTUE

We have already pointed out that both the intellect and the will are involved in the practice of all the virtues. Here I will give some examples of how these two faculties operate in some of the virtues.

An act of faith, which is essentially an intellectual act, is also a voluntary decision. The will commands the intellect to make the act of faith. In charity, which is essentially an act of the will, the intellect also plays a role. The intellect by faith judges God to be good and thus motivates the will to love him.

Prudence is an intellectual virtue. When I act prudently I follow the last practical judgement of the intellect but it is the will that determines what is the last practical judgement. Prudence is always prescriptive. Here again intellect and will are both involved.

In justice, fortitude and temperance I exercise my will in various ways. But the will is a blind faculty and can only operate when motivated by an intellectual judgement. The intellect must judge an act to be good before the will can act.

The purpose of this section is to remind the reader that the intellect and the will co-operate in all human choices and in acts of all the virtues and the vices. Hence it is very important for self-understanding to be aware of how these two faculties operate within us and constantly interact with each other.

Both intellect and will can be influenced by many factors, such as emotions, habits, culture, education, personality type etc. A saint will probably view the world very differently from a person immersed in modern secular culture. It is worth noting also that it is the judgement of the intellect that mainly distinguishes the virtues

from one another. An example may help. To obey the rule, because I judge it pleasing to God, is more an act of charity than of obedience. To obey because, I judge that I must obey authority, is obedience in the strict sense. To obey because I judge that the superior has a right to my obedience is mainly an act of justice.

I think that it is important to stress the interior dimension of virtue in today's church. Many modern people are no longer in touch with their inner life because Thomist psychology is no longer studied. Hence many are not very clear about how intellect, will and emotions interact. Many tend to identify virtue with external actions and often overlook its more important interior dimension.

INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

The main function of the intellect is to get insight into objects and these insights are expressed in judgements. But there are many kinds of insights and judgements. Philosophers and theologians have abstract insights and express them abstractly. They may not always be practical. Others have practical insights. Others again are good at reasoning. Education is often a matter of developing insight and judgement in a specific area. A doctor will have good judgement in medical matters. A lawyer will have legal insights etc.

Aquinas speaks of a number of intellectual habits and virtues, but we will confine ourselves here to art and prudence. By 'art' is meant good practical judgement and skill in some special kind of work. A cook will have the art of cooking and will have good practical judgement on how to cook, while a philosopher may be utterly lacking in this area.

Prudence is a very important virtue. It is an intellectual practical virtue that enables us to judge correctly about the morality of our choice. Prudence is concerned with morality. Art is concerned with practicality. One could be an excellent cook but he might do his work for a sinful motive. He has the art of cooking but lacks supernatural prudence.

Prudence, as understood here, is a necessary dimension of every human act so that it may be a morally good act. All the moral virtues

and their acts presuppose a prudent act of the intellect that judges, at least implicitly, that this choice is morally good and reasonable. As we shall see below, it is called a ‘cardinal virtue’ because it is pre-required for all the moral virtues.

Prudence is also prescriptive. It prescribes the implementation of its moral judgement. It would be possible to have good moral judgement without putting it into effect. This would not be prudence because prudence should be prescriptive.

CARDINAL VIRTUES

We can only treat briefly here of the cardinal virtues and their various ‘sub-virtues’. It is worth noting that there are five hundred pages of the *Summa* devoted to them. We don’t hear much in modern books about the cardinal virtues. Indeed in modern theology and spirituality there seems to be no scientific organised understanding of the human person and one’s vocation to perfect love. Few writers today base their spirituality on an understanding of the human intellect and will. When I read modern books I am often left wondering what writers mean by such basic terms as ‘faith’, ‘love’, ‘humility’, ‘transparency’, ‘integrity’, ‘risk’ etc. Terms are seldom defined or analysed. Words, such as ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ can have many meanings and it is not always easy to know precisely what a writer or preacher means by these terms. What then are the ‘cardinal virtues?’

As we saw above human choices must be according to right reason so as to be morally good. We need virtuous habits so as to make it easier for us to act habitually in a morally good manner. These virtues have been divided into theological, intellectual and moral. The cardinal virtues are an effort to classify all moral virtues under four headings.

It was the ancient Greek philosophers who first classified the virtues in this way. This division was accepted by the Church Fathers and by Aquinas. The four cardinal virtues are four ‘hinge’ (*cardo*) virtues on which the other virtues hang. These four virtues are subdivided into many other virtues.

Aquinas (S.Th. 2da, 2dae, q. 123, Art 1, ad corp.) explains the cardinal virtues as follows: “Virtue is what makes a human being and his/her choices good. But virtue consists in living according to reason. A human being and his/her acts are good in so far as they are according to reason. Three conditions are required so as to live according to reason. Firstly, we must cultivate the intellectual virtues (wisdom, science, prudence). Secondly we must act reasonably in human affairs. Justice enables us to do this. We encounter obstacles to acting reasonably within ourselves. One obstacle is that we are attracted strongly to pleasure. This can undermine right reason. The virtue of temperance regulates this attraction according to right reason. The second obstacle within us is that we sometimes encounter a difficulty that repels us from acting reasonably. We are often afraid to act reasonably. The virtue of fortitude helps us to overcome this obstacle. It enables us to act reasonably when faced with difficulty.”

The four cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. In this book we can only deal briefly with them.

PRUDENCE

I have already said something about prudence. I wish to treat of it more fully at this point. It is not really a moral virtue but an intellectual virtue since it resides in the intellect. We have already pointed out how all the virtues presuppose good moral practical judgement. Prudence is right moral judgement about a specific moral act. All the other moral virtues presuppose prudence so that their acts may be in accord with the moral law.

It is the prudent judgement of the intellect that constitutes the motive that underlies every good moral choice. The intellect moves the will by its prudent judgement. Without prudence there can be no virtuous act. Our spiritual and moral formation should help us to judge prudently.

Aquinas points out that there is more to prudence than mere judgement. Prudence is also prescriptive. The will, enlightened

and motivated by prudence, prescribes the implementation of the prudent judgement.

Associated with prudence is the Holy Spirit's gift of counsel, which makes one more disposed to receive the practical inspirations of the Holy Spirit who teaches us all things.

THE SUBJECTIVE PARTS OF PRUDENCE

These are different types of prudence that preserve the full nature of the virtue. Under this heading Aquinas puts, governing prudence; political prudence guides citizens in their obedience to the government. Economic prudence guides the head of the house in managing the house. We also have military prudence, which is needed by military commanders. Probably other divisions could be added, which serve to show how many types of prudence there are.

INTEGRAL PARTS OF PRUDENCE: These are virtues that complement prudence. Aquinas mentions five virtues that will help us to be more prudent, namely, having a good memory, reason, insight, docility and experience. These help us to make a good moral judgement. Three other virtues help the prescriptive function of prudence, namely, foresight, circumspection and caution.

POTENTIAL PARTS OF PRUDENCE: these are parts of the virtue that do not preserve the full nature of the virtue. Aquinas mentions three virtues, which he calls *euboulia*, *gnome* and *synesis*. They are all different kinds of practical moral judgement but they are not prescriptive. Hence they lack the full nature of prudence, which is always prescriptive.

VICES CONTRARY TO PRUDENCE: Aquinas lists the following vices as contrary to prudence - imprudence, excessive haste, lack of consideration and of caution, inconstancy, prudence of the flesh, fraud and deceit. There are probably many others, such as failure to ask advice etc.

JUSTICE

In today's world we are constantly being reminded of social justice. Papal encyclicals over the last hundred years have dealt with it repeatedly. Here we will mention it in the context of justice in all its dimensions. What is 'justice'?

The easiest way to understand justice is to remember that it always concerns '*ius*', which is the Latin word for a 'right'. Justice is the virtue that inclines individuals and communities to grant people their rights. It urges us above all to give God and neighbour what is due to them from us. Obviously we cannot give God all that we owe him but we are obliged to do the best we can. Some today even speak of the rights of animals. This concept can be questioned, something that I do not wish to do here.

There are various divisions of justice, which we will not discuss here. But in a later chapter we will deal with social justice. Furthermore, there are many other virtues, included under justice. Religion and obedience are among the more important. But we will not discuss these virtues here.

FORTITUDE

As we already pointed out justice inclines us to give God and neighbour their due. Fortitude and temperance are concerned, not with others but with ourselves. Often we encounter difficulty in doing what is morally right and we experience fear, or we audaciously attempt what is beyond our strength. Fortitude is the virtue that helps us to act according to right reason in dealing with our audacity and our fears.

Fortitude is not just a virtue that enables us to overcome fear. It is basically a virtue that helps us to cope with all the temptations associated with striving for a difficult good. It regulates the emotions in the irascible appetite, which are fear, sorrow, hope, despair and anger. Fear and sorrow lead us to discouragement, despair, depression and suicide. Fortitude helps us to cope with present evils according to right reason. Hence patience and perseverance are

parts of fortitude. We need much fortitude to take up our cross daily and follow Jesus. This is an ‘arduous good’ that implies suffering. Fortitude is needed to overcome our discouragement, sorrow and repugnance. We need fortitude to cope with depression even if it comes from physical or psychological causes.

TEMPERANCE

But we also experience another problem in ourselves. The strong desire for personal pleasure often hinders us from acting according to right reason. This desire for pleasure is regulated by the virtue of temperance. The virtue of humility is included under temperance because it regulates according to right reason our desire for self-exaltation or self-promotion.

These few words on the virtues are very skimpy. If we need a full treatment we should study the *Summa*. If I treated them as adequately as they deserve this book would get too long.

CHAPTER 10

SIN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In this book I am trying to offer a spirituality and morality that takes account of our situation in the 21st century. It seems to me that in our day there is a lot of confusion about sin. Recent popes, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, tell us that the world has lost the sense of sin. How far do the Popes' words apply to us? Many in our society have difficulty in distinguishing right from wrong. I confess that I myself am frequently unsure regarding moral issues. Assuming that the Popes are right in their diagnosis, the time is surely ripe for reflecting on what constitutes sin. Indeed I might add that it is a long time since I have heard a sermon or a talk about sin. Indeed the term 'sin' is not often used today. In my preaching I have tended to avoid it, mainly out of fear. Indeed the secular media simply laugh at the Church's teaching on sin, as happened recently in regard to the so called 'seven deadly sins.'

It might help to give some examples where confusion reigns. There is wide acceptance among modern people of sexual intercourse outside of marriage and of homosexuality. Some argue that people must be allowed to follow their conscience. It is 'narrow minded' to condemn the conduct of others. Even devout Catholics feel no sense of guilt about consumerism and waste. People spend large sums of money on self-indulgence and feel no sense of guilt about it. Even though the Church teaches that all property has a universal destination, very few take this teaching seriously. Nearly everyone assumes in practice that one's property is one's own and that one is morally free to use it as one likes. We are guilty of many sins of omission and we feel no sense of guilt about them. There is confusion between secular law and God's law. We too easily assume that all that the civil law approves is morally acceptable. We can pollute the environment and contribute to global warming without feeling any sense of guilt. Is smoking sinful? Is waste sinful?

There is also a lot of confusion about the Eucharist. What dispositions are required for receiving the Eucharist? Should every Tom, Dick and Harry, who turn up at mass, be encouraged to go to communion? How seriously do we take Church laws about attending Sunday mass, about confession before communion if we have fallen into serious sin? What are we to say about Catholics who haven't been at reconciliation for years and yet go to communion regularly?

We could add other examples but we have said sufficient to show that our world has in many areas lost the sense of sin. We live in a very tolerant church in which all kinds of behaviour seem to be acceptable. The boundaries between right and wrong have become very blurred. In some areas the official Church has given excellent guidance but we haven't listened to her teaching. This is especially true in regard to social justice, human rights and the use of property and money. The Church has wonderful teaching in these areas but very few Catholics have taken her teaching seriously. In our world God's word is often not heard because it has to compete with many other secular words. Proclaiming God's word in the modern world is like sowing seed among thorns; the thorns grow up and choke it. Often we cannot hear God's word and Church teaching because we are locked into our culture. We are affectively trapped.

In this kind of situation we need to ask ourselves some basic questions regarding sin. What is sin? Have some sins ceased to exist? Are there new sins? Am I myself a sinner? If so, what are my sins? Can people decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong? Can we follow our conscience, no matter how erroneous it is? Are we too tolerant in our modern world? Is the voice of sanity being smothered by all the other voices? Some of the questions just raised will be answered, at least implicitly, if we can explain the nature of sin.

WHAT IS SIN?

I will give a number of definitions of sin that complement each other-

Sin is a free deliberate choice of the will that is contrary to God's law.

Sin is a disorderly act of the will.

Sin is disobedience to God and one's conscience.

Augustine defines sin as - 'a deliberate desire, word or action contrary to God's law.'

Sin is contrary to human nature.

Sin is contrary to the purpose of my existence.

Sin is contrary to love of God, neighbour and self.

Sin is contrary to my primary vocation in life.

Sin is a turning away from God, explicit or implicit.

Sin is the worship of a false god or idol.

Sin involves making a creature my ultimate end.

Sin means loving a creature in preference to God.

Sin means loving a created good more than the Supreme Good.

Sin is contrary to my own true wellbeing

Sin is a choice of the will contrary to right reason.

SIN IS CONTRARY TO RIGHT REASON

I have given many definitions of sin but I choose to deal more fully with only the last one, which defines sin as a deliberate choice of the will contrary to right reason. I myself find this definition very helpful in trying to live my day to day life. In order to live united to God we have only got to live constantly according to right reason and perform no acts contrary to right reason. We shall explain more fully below what we mean by 'right reason.'

In trying to understand sin let us say first of all that sin is always a free deliberate choice of the human will. I will not develop this aspect of sin any further at this point. But let us look at the fact that every unreasonable choice of the human will is sinful. It is morally wrong. If an unreasonable choice is sinful I have the moral responsibility to always act according to right reason. Otherwise I sin. Looked at positively, we can say that it is God's will that we act reasonably. He has given us reason to guide us and when we act according to reason we fulfil his will.

But one will ask, when is an act of the will unreasonable? A human act is unreasonable when it is contrary to the purpose for which God created me. I was created to love God in this world and in the next, and to love my neighbour and myself in God. If I make a choice that conflicts with this divine vocation I act unreasonably and I sin.

Lists of sins have been drawn up in the past. We must realise that the lists are not exhaustive. Many of our sins do not have names and they are not on the list. All unreasonable choices are sins, whether they have names or not. Human acts are sinful when they are unreasonable and contradict God's purposes in creating us. If they are contrary to God's will they are highly unreasonable.

Pope Benedict, following Augustine and Aquinas, often tells us that we must live by reason. All three authorities, just mentioned will agree that there are two levels to reason. As we pointed out elsewhere Augustine and Aquinas use the terms 'low reason' and 'high reason.' When reason operates without taking account of God and revelation it can be called 'low reason.' Reason at this level can help us to discover a certain amount of moral truth. We can see this in our world when we observe the widespread respect for human rights, even among people who ignore God. 'Low reason' can carry us a certain distance; God sometimes works through reason at this level, even if he is ignored.

However, 'low reason' is very inadequate since it operates outside of revelation. If we leave God out of the picture it is impossible to distinguish right from wrong, sin from virtue. God's plan for the world and for human beings is the indispensable foundation for all moral theory and practice. As Christians we have the light of the gospel, of Church teaching and revelation to enlighten our reason. When free deliberate acts of the will are made in the light of revelation we are guided, not by low reason, but by high reason.

As Christians we know that we are called to love God and that all our choices must harmonise with this call. If they are contrary to this vocation they are sinful. Indeed it is difficult to distinguish right from wrong unless our human acts are evaluated in the light of our vocation to love God. Our voluntary choices will have to be judged ultimately from this viewpoint. We need to be guided habitually by

‘high reason’ and not by ‘low reason.’ The secular world is guided mainly by ‘low reason.’ Christians must embrace whatever is good in ‘low reason’ and complement it when it conflicts with ‘high reason.’

CIRCUMSTANCES

A free deliberate choice can be unreasonable and sinful, not only in itself on account of the act performed, but also on account of a bad intention or inappropriate circumstances. We all know that a bad intention can render a good act sinful. But inappropriate circumstances can also render a good act sinful.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan the priest and the Levite were probably going off to do some good work. Their sin was that they ignored the wounded man on the roadside. In the circumstances they acted unreasonably. Their priorities were wrong. They should have attended to the needs of the wounded man.

In our global village circumstances challenge us as never before. Nowadays we are constantly aware of dire needs in every part of the world and those of us who live in the affluent world have the resources to meet these needs at least in some measure. Are we morally justified in ignoring the cry of the poor in our globalised world? Can we, like the priest and the Levite, walk by on the other side and turn a blind eye to the millions of people who desperately need our help? If we do are we acting unreasonably and thereby sinning? Can we lawfully immerse ourselves in pleasure like the rich man when there are millions of ‘Lazaruses’ lying at our gate? Do we act unreasonably and sin when we waste God’s gifts and when we pollute the environment unnecessarily and thereby endanger the earth and the lives of countless millions of people in this generation and in generations to come? I must confess that these questions worry me. I struggle with them habitually and I do not know how to answer them. I feel a moral obligation to do what I can, which is very little, to solve these problems.

SINS OF OMISSION

I have been a priest for more than fifty years and I have discussed sin with people innumerable times. Indeed one of the main duties of a priest is to discuss sin and virtue with his clients. He should encourage people to love God and neighbour and to avoid all sins against love.

In Church teaching and practice we find the positive and the negative, the 'do's' and the 'don'ts'; we must practice virtue and avoid sin. These two dimensions occur everywhere in the bible; they are present in our prayers, in the liturgical seasons and in the sacramental system. In both the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary' sin is mentioned. In the liturgical seasons Lent especially, stresses repentance for sin. In the sacramental system a special sacrament is devoted to forgiveness of sin. Hence the struggle against sin is central to our faith.

However, despite all this emphasis on sin in our prayers most people, who try to identify their sins, focus on sins of commission. They will list the wrong things that they did. Few will say, 'I didn't do what I should have done.' Very few mention sins of omission. They seem to think that omissions are not sins. We often feel no sense of guilt for not helping the poor, for not praying and for not reaching out to those in need. These and many other sins are sins of omission. Many of us fail to do the good that we could easily do and feel no sense of guilt for our omission.

Yet in the gospel there is a strong repeated emphasis on sins of omission. Some examples may help. The man, who hid the talent in the ground, is severely punished. Those, who are condemned to hell at the last judgement (Mt. 25), are condemned for sins of omission. They failed to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick etc. Likewise, the rich man failed to help the wretched Lazarus, and for his neglect he was punished in hell fire. In the parable of the good Samaritan the priest and the Levite neglected to help the wounded traveller.

All the above were guilty of sins of omission. They failed in different ways to make the most of their opportunities. They were

not responsible. They sinned by doing nothing when they ought to have taken action. Most of them probably did not realise that they were sinning by failing to do good when the situation called for it.

Why is it so hard to respond morally to some new challenge? Why do we so often remain passive? Why are we so often irresponsible? In asking these questions I myself realise that I am as guilty as anybody else. Only God knows all the good that I have failed to do in the course of my life. If we can pinpoint the causes of our failures we may be able to do better in the future. The following may be some of the causes.

I find that I tend to follow a fixed routine and I am comfortable doing a set of things that do not change much from day to day. However, if some new challenge pops up it upsets my whole routine, and it can demand a real effort to put my work aside for the sake of some more urgent task. I don't want to be uprooted from my comfort zone. Sometimes I even experience a feeling of false guilt when I have to omit some good work so as to attend to someone's needs. It is so much easier to stick with my usual routine.

There is also the question of priorities. What are our priorities? Even when we are disposed to take on some good work the question arises - does God want me to do this? God doesn't want me, or anyone else, to do everything. We can spend a lot of time and energy doing things that would be omitted if we were absent. Probably much of what we were doing was unnecessary in the first place. We can kill ourselves trying to achieve temporal goals while we neglect union with God.

Sins of commission can usually be named and they are also external and are easily perceived. This applies to sins such as murder, adultery, lust, stealing, calumny etc. All these sins have names; they are external and we can easily recognise them. But sins of omission usually have no names. We may have to use a whole sentence to describe them e. g. 'this official didn't carry out his duties.' When we omit to do good there are no external acts that can easily be perceived. Frequently, there can be good reasons for failure to do good. Sin seems to arise when I fail to avail of the opportunity to

do good from the wrong motives. In this case my negligence is culpable.

Omitting to use our money and property according to the gospel seems almost universal. We assume that our wealth and our property are our own and that we can use them as we please. Our culture and the media affirm us in this erroneous assumption. We fail to hear the gospel and Church teaching on the universal destination of all material goods. We do not have absolute ownership of anything, even if everyone assumes that we can do as we please with our money and our property.

Another aspect of sins of omission is the wide variety of possible good works that we could undertake. Their number is limitless, e.g. if I have \$100 - I could use it for a wide variety of good purposes. Since no one is called to accomplish every possible good work and since it is not always easy to know what good work we should do, we often end up by doing nothing at all.

When we are in a situation where we can choose between a number of possible good works, the advice of St. Francis de Sales is helpful. He asks the question - when God's will is not obvious in a given situation, and when I am free of definite duties, how do I know God's will for me? How do I know what God desires of me? He answers this question as follows.

In a situation like this, when God's will is not obvious, let us ask ourselves what will please God most? Having asked ourselves this question and reflected on it for a short time let us choose some good work and carry it out. It is God's will that we make an intelligent choice and implement it. God doesn't want us to worry too much about the smaller choices of daily life. It is God's will that we do something useful for his sake and not worry excessively. We may choose to pray or visit a sick person, phone a lonely person or even rest, so as to please God. What is important about our choice is that we are sincerely trying to discover God's will and implement it. We are not following our natural inclinations.

It should be noted that St. Francis de Sales presupposes that our lives are governed by the desire to please God or by the love of God,

and not by a disorderly love of self. If we consistently search for God's will in our lives we are not likely to fall into sins of omission.

One might object that those, who omit to do good, do not realise that they are sinning. They do not realise that they are morally obliged to use their talents and opportunities for God's glory. How can they sin if they do not know that they are sinning? Isn't the knowledge that we are sinning necessary in order that there be sin?

To answer this objection let us remember what Jesus says in Matthew (25). At the last judgement when the 'goats' ask Jesus, 'when did we see you sick, naked, in prison etc. and did not help you,' the king will say. 'So long as you did it not to the least of my brothers and sisters you did it not to me. Depart from me into eternal fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.'

It should be noted that ignorance and blindness are often culpable; they can be sinful. Often we don't want to know our obligations and we deliberately neglect to do the necessary study or make the necessary enquiries lest we might discover duties we do not want to fulfil. We don't want to be uprooted from our comfort zone. Like Paul, for one reason or another we kick against the goad (Acts 26). Basically we are affectively ensnared by the *status quo* and we do not want to change. Disorderly affections are at the root of most sins. These affections make us blind to our obligations and deaf to God's call. In every sin there is some degree of culpable blindness in the intellect and affective disorder in the will.

REMEDY FOR SINS OF OMISSION

We need to be 'conscientised' in regard to sins of omission. All of us need to wake up from sleep. Often we live in a state of insensitivity in regard to some of our moral obligations. The whole gospel has failed to grip us. Often we have unconsciously embraced the assumptions of a secular society, even when they conflict with the gospel. We too easily assume that behaviour is morally acceptable if it is practised by the majority around us. Most of us love God with a conditional love, while Jesus consistently asks for unconditional

love in the gospel. We have been brainwashed by values that are only half-true and often false.

We need to be re-educated; we need to be formed in gospel values. A whole process of moral formation is necessary. We will be morally re-educated by the Holy Spirit, prayer, spiritual reading, self-denial, by affective and effective love of God and neighbour. Urged on by these means we must rise from sleep and give ourselves to God without reserve.

To avoid sins of omission we have to use time well. We need to discern correctly the good actions that God requires of us in our situation. This will usually mean making reasonable choices and getting our priorities right. If we want to live in constant union with God, which is what the gospel asks of us, we need to discern from moment to moment what is true and good. Both our interior dispositions and our exterior actions need to be in order. They are in order when they are compatible with love of God and neighbour.

Christianity and moral behaviour must be rooted in the love of God. Like the apostles we are called to leave all things and follow Jesus. Jesus also says, 'you cannot be my disciple unless you give up all that you possess' (Lk. 14). I take this to mean that we must avoid all selfishness. The fullness of Christianity is above all concerned with personal unconditional commitment to Jesus. Avoiding sins, and this includes sins of omission, is simply our way of pleasing him. As long as we live in moral slumber, being morally insensitive to what Jesus asks of us, we are not leaving all things and following Jesus.

'Leaving all things for Jesus' can sound threatening; these words could discourage many would-be seekers. However, we might summon up the courage to face the challenge if we remember that we have only to follow Jesus in the present moment. We have only to take the next step. Our journey is accomplished step by step. Furthermore, we do not have to rely on our own strength but on God's help. Jesus will be with us every step of the way. Finally, perseverance on this journey will bring us the highest fulfilment in this world and in the next.

Sins of omission are often accompanied by a certain ignorance of our obligations. Unfortunately, this ignorance can be culpable. Through negligence we fail to do the reading and study that would alert us to our moral duties. Some examples may help. We pointed out already how many in our society are unaware that their superfluous wealth belongs to the poor. They do not realise that it is a sin to pollute the planet by unnecessary carbon emissions. They fail to realise the sinfulness in wasting the earth's resources. Unhealthy eating, drinking and smoking are not perceived as sins. Discarding food, clothes, tools machinery and even buildings, that could be used for years to come, are not perceived as sins. Indeed most of these practises are seen as good and practised by the majority in the affluent world. In some cities the poor try to live on what the rich have thrown on the garbage dump.

Those who wish to love God as fully as possible will also have to use time well. Time, like money, gives us the opportunity for doing good, or for practising self-indulgence. We cannot use it as we please; we must use it in a way that pleases God.

Most of us need to be 'conscientised' in the areas mentioned above. Perhaps we are culpably insensitive to our obligations in these matters. Will the Lord condemn us for failure to do good as he condemned the 'goats' in the gospel? (Mt.25).

THE SENSE OF SIN

Pope John Paul II often remarked that in the modern world we have lost the sense of sin. During the early part of the 20th century before Vatican II, the formation of the clergy and consequently of the laity was very sin-centred. Priests had to study a type of moral theology that emphasised very strongly what actions were mortal sins and what actions were venial sins or no sin at all. To die in mortal sin meant eternal punishment in hell fire - something that every good Catholic wished to avoid at all costs. This formation in moral theology inevitably flowed over into the teaching and preaching of the clergy so that the laity were also very sin conscious.

Doubtless spiritual books stressed virtue and love more than sin. But most of the laity did very little spiritual reading and they often lived a Christianity that was focused mainly on avoiding sin and hell. In a word Catholics were very sin conscious before Vatican II. As we said already we were very conscious of sins of commission but often blind to sins of omission. Nowadays we often also lack a sense of sin regarding sins of commission.

After the Council moral theology was renewed. Henceforward, the emphasis was on virtue and love, and sin receded into the background. Human acts were no longer classified as ‘sins’. Other words began to be used, such as ‘immoral’, ‘wrong’, ‘irresponsible’ etc. The problem with these words is that they never made the same impact on people as the word ‘sin’. Furthermore, hell is now seldom mentioned. When writers, teachers and preachers ceased to use the words ‘sin’ and ‘hell’, the reality of sin and hell tended to become obscure. What is not spoken of is soon forgotten. Because the word ‘sin’ has been largely dropped from our vocabulary we are no longer aware of the many sins we commit. ‘We love God and do what we like’ in the wrong sense.

The sense of sin has also been undermined by our culture. The values and practises of our culture are often opposed to the gospel. We tend to form our consciences according to the unexamined assumptions and values of our culture, rather than in accordance with the gospel. An example may help. I remember meeting a young man who felt guilty about homosexual activity but felt no guilt about fornication. He had indulged in both. According to his conscience the former was sinful while the latter was acceptable. This was at a time when homosexuality was frowned upon by most people, while fornication was culturally accepted, probably because the secular law allows it. Therefore, he considered it O.K. Recently I met a young man who remarked - ‘everyone today considers sexual intercourse acceptable.’ Obviously, people who think in this way have been brainwashed by a secular culture, and have failed to interiorise the message of the Bible and the Church.

Many peoples’ consciences are formed by civil law, rather than by Church teaching. They assume without question that an action

is ethically acceptable if the civil law allows it. They consider it morally wrong to violate the secular law and this is the only law that they have for distinguishing right and wrong. We pointed out already that a Christian should be guided in his or her moral decisions by ‘high reason.’

Those of us, who take Church teaching seriously, realise that secular laws are sometimes immoral and should not be obeyed. In addition secular law will never cover many sins of omission to which we are especially prone. If we are dependent solely on civil law and the culture to form our consciences our formation will be very inadequate. Indeed we have to exercise constant discernment in regard to the civil law and cultural values and practises so that we reject what is evil and embrace what is good. Since secular society takes little account of God its legislation and its values are inevitably flawed. God is the indispensable foundation for evaluating the values, practises and laws of our society.

SOCIAL SIN

Note: The following ideas are taken largely from the teaching of John Paul II “Reconciliation and Penance’, n.16 - (1984).

The terms ‘social sin’ and ‘structures of sin’ are often used today in the social teaching of the Church. What do these terms mean?

In trying to understand these terms it is important in the first place to remember that ‘sin’ in the strict sense, is always the personal choice of an individual. A person’s sinful choice may be influenced by internal and external pressures, which lessen one’s freedom. Nevertheless one usually retains one’s freedom and is responsible for one’s choices. It is not helpful to blame others or society for our sins. The first step in reconciliation is to confess - ‘I have sinned’.

‘Social sin’ can refer to the collective behaviour of groups or nations. Sometimes all the members of a group can co-operate in a sin, e. g. gang rape. Even when this happens, each member bears responsibility for his own particular role and perhaps for influencing others to sin. Having said that sin in the strict sense is always a

personal choice, let us now examine some of the other meanings of the term ‘social sin’.

1: ‘Social sin’ can refer to the fact that in some way every sin injures the whole community, and all humankind, just as a good deed ‘raises up the world’. This is due to the solidarity of all human beings. Sin is like dropping a stone into the ocean; it affects the whole ocean.

2: ‘Social sin’ can refer to the fact that some sins affect one’s neighbour directly. Hence all sins against justice are ‘social sins’ because they affect our neighbours directly. If I fail to respect the neighbour’s rights I injure the common good. I can sin against the neighbour both by omission (Mt. 25) and commission.

3: ‘Social sin’ can refer to strife between communities and nations.

The above three meanings come from ‘Reconciliation and Penance’, n.16’

4: This is my own contribution. ‘Social sin’ can refer to the sinfulness of any society. Every person and every society, culture and subculture are in some way sinful. The expression ‘*ecclesia semper reformanda*’ refers to the fact that the Church is always in need of renewal. This is only because she needs to be purified more and more from her sinfulness. Surely this is even truer of all other societies. Every society operates out of a set of assumed values. Some of these values are good, some indifferent and some false.

When we speak about a ‘sinful Church’ we are speaking about the false assumptions and the behaviour that comes from these values. Many of us in the Church unconsciously embrace false secular values. We are often evangelised and brainwashed by the surrounding culture, and often do not realise it. This inevitably leads to sinful choices that we do not always recognise as sinful. There is often very little to distinguish Christians from atheists. Both live in an affluent manner that is governed by the surrounding culture. This sinful situation that leads many into sinful choices surely deserves to be called ‘social sin’.

However, while pointing out social influences we must point out once again that sin is a personal choice, and each member of society must take responsibility for one's own personal choices. Each member and all members must also take responsibility for the renewal of society. All of us are co-responsible for the evangelisation of all the societies to which we belong. 'All are responsible for all.'

SINFUL SITUATIONS AND STRUCTURES OF SIN

Ref: "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*", n.35+ by John Paul II

Sinful situations and structures of sin are all caused by the personal sins of individuals. Furthermore, these structures of sin can only be changed by the moral conversion of individuals. Undoubtedly, the government can help by enacting just laws, e. g. by establishing a just wage. But unless there is personal conversion 'sin' will raise its ugly head again in some other form.

Structures of sin are not only created by personal sinful choices but they also generate many other sins for the whole time that they continue to exist. It could be said that structures of sin do not cause people to sin but they are occasions of sin for many people. Sin is caused by personal choice but structures of sin exercise a lot of pressure on people to sin, e. g. the structures that cause extreme poverty can force women into prostitution.

LOVE OF MONEY (GREED) AND LOVE OF POWER

John Paul II singles out greed and love of power as the two sinful dispositions most responsible for creating sinful structures. Doubtless other sins also play a part. Influenced by greed and love of power politicians can often enact laws that are unjust. Abortion is legalised in most countries; taxation often favours the rich above the poor. The government can also turn a blind eye to industries that are highly immoral, such as the arms industry, the sex industry etc. In many countries just wages do not exist. Workers are at the mercy of their employers.

Even ordinary citizens are conditioned to wrongly believe that they can do as they please with their resources. They live in a sinful milieu that imparts this message to them. When there is question of spending money the real owner, God, is seldom consulted. The culture supports this false illusion that we have absolute dominion over our money and property. These are just a few examples of structures of sin. There are many others.

It is worth noting also that the civil law is often opposed to the natural law. By natural law God gave the world to all people. By natural law each one has a right to sufficient material goods to live one's vocation in life. It seems that by natural law they have a right to no more than that. That is why the Fathers of the Church (Sts. Basil, Gregory and Aquinas) teach that the poor own the superfluous wealth of the rich. The rich have more than they need to live their vocation while the poor haven't got sufficient.

Civil law is not in accord with natural law when it allows the wealthy to accumulate billions while the poor are often neglected. The government is not fulfilling its role of justly distributing the wealth among the citizens. Many wealthy people resemble the rich man who allowed Lazarus to die of hunger at his doorstep.

Love of power and greed are causes of much unjust government legislation and the failure to make just laws. If they make just laws they may lose the next election. This fear prevents them from courageously doing what is right. Obviously, the voters who selfishly exercise pressure on the politicians to maintain structures of sin are also culpable. They too are governed by greed. When multinationals donate millions to the government to maintain laws favourable to themselves, both they, and the politicians who yield to them, are ruled by greed and love of power. Greed and love of power are inextricably intertwined in the modern world. They can create structures of sin that endure indefinitely.

Ordinary citizens can also be infected by greed. God is often left out as people pursue their own dreams. They may set their heart on a new house, a bigger car, new clothes that are not needed - the list is endless. One fears that in deciding how to use money people seldom

sit down and ask themselves, ‘how does God want me to use this money? What will please him most?’

Both individuals and nations can be guilty of greed, over attachment to power, the desire for pleasure, consumerism and super-security.

We should never forget that all material resources are intended by God for the total integral development of each person and all people. Both politics and economy are intended to promote this development. Sin and the structures of sin prevent this development. The goods of the world are not intended for what the Popes call ‘super-development’. This is not true development but the idolatry of material things. ‘Super-development’ is one of the fruits of the structures of sin.

CO-OPERATING IN SOCIAL SIN

As we have said social sin is due to the accumulation of personal sins. Personal sins may cause evil, support it or exploit it. All of us can contribute to social sin if we are in a position to eliminate it or at least limit it and fail to do so. Failure to take action can be motivated by fear, laziness, the conspiracy of silence, secret complicity or indifference. We can use sinful structures for our own advantage e.g. by investing money in sinful industries just because such investments are profitable for us.

In this context let us mention the fact that a few industries control nearly all the seeds necessary for growing crops. So as to maintain their monopoly and impose their own prices they have treated the seeds so that the seeds cannot reproduce themselves. Hence the poor cannot produce their own seeds but are forced to buy the treated seeds. Surely this is a structure of sin that needs to be dismantled. Buyers should boycott the seeds of such companies even if they have to pay a higher price for other seeds.

Others fail to do battle with social sin on the excuse that it is impossible to change the world. Their problem is that they are too selfish to sacrifice themselves in the interests of justice. The real responsibility for eliminating sin and the structures of sin lies with the individual. A society, an institution, a situation or a structure

does not perform moral acts. Hence in itself it cannot be morally good or bad. However, a situation can occasion many evils.

The words of Edmond Burke are relevant to the silent acceptance of evil: ‘All that is necessary for evil to prosper is the silence of good men.’

REMEDIES FOR SOCIAL SIN AND THE STRUCTURES OF SIN

We have already mentioned some remedies in the last paragraph and in the preceding pages. In describing the sins that cause social evil and create the structures of sin we have implicitly given the general remedies for these evils. Social sin, structural sin and sinful situations are all caused, as we said, by personal sins. Hence the elimination of these ‘sins’ can only come about by the conversion of all concerned. The business tycoons need to be converted, but so also do all of us. Before buying goods we do well to ask ourselves, am I supporting a sinful firm by buying this article? It is not enough to say, ‘this article is very cheap, so let us buy it.’ If we have a social conscience we will make sure that in our purchases we are not accomplices in social sin. This may mean paying a little more for something in order to support a worthy enterprise. By acting in this way we can make some small contribution to dismantling the structures of sin by refusing to support them.

In the modern world each responsible citizen must ask themselves, ‘how do I contribute to global warming? How can I reduce my carbon footprint?’ All of us have the duty to do the little we can.

Overcoming the structures of sin in the world is a long difficult complex journey. John Paul, however, urges us to have the courage to face up to the challenge and do the little we can. The virtue of solidarity is very important in undertaking this work. This virtue urges us in a practical way to be concerned for the development of each and every human being.

All of us must undergo conversion, turning away from greed, the love of power, disorderly pleasure and security. We need to fix our eyes on the universal common good. Both individual and

community selfishness need to be addressed. The Church stresses the 'preferential option for the poor'. It is they especially who are the victims of injustice, structures of sin, poor government and economic greed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF SIN

1: LIVING WHOLLY FOR ONESELF:

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the rich man lived totally for his own selfish comfort. He failed to help Lazarus; he made a god out of pleasure. He was given the Holy Spirit like all of us so that he might live not for himself but for God. He did the opposite. Similarly, the prodigal son also lived wholly for his own selfish pleasure before his conversion.

In our secular world there is a danger that people will orient their lives wholly to some temporal good and that God will be forgotten. If this happens they are worshipping a false god. It is possible to devote all our energy to the pursuit of power, making money, to climbing up the corporate ladder, to politics, sport, drugs, sex etc. All our intelligence and affective energy can be directed towards a temporal good or god. As Aquinas would say, we make some creature our 'ultimate end.' Instead of loving God with our whole being we love ourselves with all our energy, as we relentlessly pursue some earthly good, while we totally forget God.

In general it can be said that this is the big sin in a secular society, where God is sidelined and temporal goods are worshipped in his place. This is surely a sinful state in which many of our contemporaries may be trapped. We can be locked into the love of temporal goods in varying degrees, and God can be sidelined in varying degrees.

But this sin has no name. Furthermore, it is not a crime against the civil law. For both these reasons it is not always recognised as sinful. It is a matter of falling in love with the world rather than with God. When we live in this manner we are living in a manner contrary to the purpose for which we were created.

2: AN HABITUAL SINFUL WILL:

In the last section I was referring mainly to the whole orientation of one's life. This obviously involved a sinful will since all sin is in the will. In this section I am more concerned with a particular area in one's affective life. I am concerned mainly with an interior disposition of the will, which is not always externalised in action.

The will can be habitually in love with some particular evil. We may be living good lives except for one area. The following are examples of a sinful will - the ongoing refusal to forgive another; the unchanging determination to do some sinful act in the future; not being sorry for sin committed but rather being glad over what we have done; refusal to pay our debts when we are able to do so; various forms of ongoing injustice to others, such as failure to help the poor when we are in a position to do so. Many other examples could be given. Indeed every sin is in the will, and every sin is interior long before it is exteriorly manifested.

There is a danger that we do not recognise sin that is purely interior and not exteriorly manifested. That is why I consider it helpful to draw attention to a sinful will. I am referring in this section to a habitual disposition of the will rather than to a passing act of choice.

It can happen that externally we are very religious and seemingly perfect while our wills are enslaved by an evil affection for something. We may not even be fully aware of our condition.

Knowledge of my sins and sinfulness can take four different forms-

- 1: There are the sins that I know and others know.
- 2: There are those that I alone know; others do not know.
- 3: There are the sins that others see but I am too blind to see them.
- 4: There are sins that neither I nor others know; only God knows them.

The expression 'living in sin' is taken over from the old theologians. The term was often applied to practising homosexuals, to unmarried couples who lived together and had frequent sexual

relations, to a drug addict and to other external public sins such as habitual injustice. 'Living in sin' must be understood objectively; we do not judge the subjective guilt of such people. The Church and all Christians should uphold objective standards. We must not act as God and judge their subjective guilt.

3: MORTAL AND VENIAL SIN

Traditionally we have distinguished mortal and venial sin. Augustine, Aquinas and the Church have accepted this distinction. They explain the distinction as follows. Just as some bodily diseases do not kill us and are easily remedied, so some sins do not kill the soul and can easily be put right. These are called 'venial' sins. But some bodily diseases are mortal and bring on death. So some sins are mortal because they kill the soul.

The life of the soul is found in charity (love of God and of neighbour and self in God), which is our ultimate end. Sins that are totally opposed to charity are mortal, such as blasphemy, hatred of God, murder, abortion etc. All these destroy charity and thus 'kill' the soul.

The gravity of a sin is measured primarily from the object of a sinful act. But the agent's intention and other circumstances also play a major role. I will deal with all these more fully below.

Both mortal and venial sins admit of many degrees. Murder is more serious than stealing even though both may be mortal. In physical illnesses it is often relatively easy to distinguish a mortal illness from a non-mortal one. In evaluating the morality of a human choice it can often be quite difficult to judge what is mortal and what is not.

Objectively certain actions can be classified as 'mortal' sins, such as hatred of God and murder. When actions are classified as 'mortal' sins we are usually talking about objective actions. We are not talking about the agent's intention and other circumstances that might change the morality of an act in practice. Again we are not talking about the subjective dispositions of the agent. The agent may not be sane. He may be acting under the influence of uncontrollable emotion, invincible ignorance etc. He may have an erroneous conscience.

There are many degrees of injustice, cowardice, intemperance etc. We are not dealing with black and white distinctions. There are many degrees between a light venial sin and a grave mortal sin.

The gravity of one's sin is not determined solely by the objective act that one performs. Subjective factors also play an important role. In order to sin we must have the use of reason and be fully free; we must act in a fully deliberate way. If we lack reason or our reason is impaired the guilt of our choice is lessened or may even be eliminated. Again having the use of reason is not a black and white state. All of us have some degree of reason. All of us occasionally lack reason and freedom in varying degrees when making choices. Insanity exists in all of us in varying degrees. The power of reason is possessed by nearly all human beings in some degree. These statements can also be made regarding freedom of choice.

The freedom of all of us is limited because our reasoning is limited and subject to a great deal of conditioning by a decadent culture. Our emotions, habits, prejudices etc. undermine our reason and freedom in varying degrees. We see this process at work in Catholics who in good faith, it seems, are pro-abortion; in suicide bombers, in the Church's support for slavery for centuries etc. Are those who do or did these things in good faith? following their conscience? It seems to me that only God can judge the subjective dispositions of human beings. The Church can and should judge objective acts and should uphold objective values. She can also require her members to respect these objective values.

Having said all this we must point out that human beings are created with a capacity for rationality and freedom. They have the vocation to perfect their reason and freedom as they go through life. This is involved in the vocation that we all have to love God fully. The reason and freedom of all of us are imperfect in varying degrees but they can be improved and we have a duty to develop them. We must co-operate with the Holy Spirit who is leading us to the fullness of love. Such love can only be realised by leading a full moral life or a life according to right reason. When we live by reason we grow in freedom and in the love of God. This growth can

increase indefinitely. Growing in right reason and in freedom is the work of a lifetime.

THE OBJECT, INTENTION AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF A MORAL ACT

In the heading to this section I highlight three aspects of a moral act, the OBJECT, the INTENTION of the agent and the CIRCUMSTANCES. All these three elements must be according to right reason so that a choice may be morally good. If any one of the three elements is out of order our choice will be morally evil.

What do we mean by the OBJECT of a choice? The object of a choice is the immediate effect of the choice. The object of murder is killing someone. This is the immediate effect of murder. If I murder someone I may have also a second intention such as to safeguard my own interests. I do evil (murder) so that good may come. The object of my act is evil; hence the whole act is evil. A woman may intend both abortion and to avoid the inconvenience of rearing a child. But if the object of her act is sinful, namely abortion, circumstances or a good intention will not justify it. It is hard to think of any circumstances that would justify abortion.

A BAD INTENTION is never justified. If I give alms to a poor woman so as to seduce her, my good action (almsgiving) will be rendered morally evil due to my bad intention.

CIRCUMSTANCES can also affect the morality of a choice. Usually fornication is a grave sin. But if a woman sells her body so as to feed her children because she has no other way of obtaining food, does she sin? I do not know. Many African women are faced with this dilemma. Let us give a more simple example. To steal \$10- would usually be a venial sin. But if I take it from a starving person I could be guilty of serious sin. If I murder someone under the influence of uncontrollable anger, how serious is my sin? Subjective factors play a big role in determining the extent of one's guilt. Suicide bombers sin seriously objectively but subjectively they are under the illusion that they are doing an heroic act.

I have already pointed out that the reason and freedom of all of us are imperfect. Only God can judge accurately a person's subjective guilt. However, public order demands that people be prevented from following their 'conscience' when they are intent on harming the common good. We have a right to follow our conscience but if one's conscience is erroneous, and if following it will harm innocent people, surely those charged with maintaining public order must step in and prevent us from following our 'conscience'.

We should remember that in our world circumstances are far more complicated than might appear at first sight. My choices can have effects far beyond my immediate environment. Indeed my actions and omissions can have global repercussions. They can contribute to pollution of the atmosphere, to global warming, world poverty, hunger, injustice towards poor workers in far away countries etc.

Circumstances concern such factors as WHY I act, HOW I act, WHEN and WHERE I act, What MEANS do I use, what are the EFFECTS of my actions etc. All these different circumstances can affect the morality of a human act.

SINS OF WEAKNESS AND SINS OF MALICE

We refer to a sin as a 'sin of weakness' when it is committed under the influence of very strong emotion, which the sinner is unable to resist or can only resist with great difficulty. A sin of weakness is usually repented of very quickly when the emotion that has caused it has subsided.

A sin of MALICE is a fully deliberate choice of evil. It is usually pre-meditated and one chooses to do evil in a cold calculated manner. Probably after one has committed this kind of sin they are not sorry. Obviously, with the help of God's grace they can soften their hearts and repent. Psychopaths seem to sin without having any sorrow for their sin. Only God can judge their subjective guilt.

Finally there can be various degrees of weakness and malice in our sinful choices.

REMEDY FOR SIN

With a view to providing a remedy for sin let us first of all see sin in the context of the human vocation. Human beings are called to love God affectively and effectively, to seek his will and to commit themselves to him with their whole being. This is the purpose of their existence, loving union with God, whether this is felt emotionally or is purely in the will.

Sin arises when, instead of seeking God affectively and effectively we inordinately seek our own pleasure in various temporal goods. We are tempted to various forms of self-seeking during the whole of our lives. We can easily forget about God and the search for his will as we immerse ourselves in worldly pleasures. Selfishness can take all kinds of forms, such as the lust for power, wealth, over indulgence in bodily pleasures, the inordinate desire to surpass others, to display oneself, inordinate love of sport, travel etc. Any of these loves can in varying degrees become the ultimate purpose of our lives. Thus a false god replaces the true God in our affections. Our will is trapped in love of a created good.

We are called to live not inordinately for ourselves but for God. Hence our search for pleasure must always be in accordance with right reason and God's will. We discover his will usually by acting according to right reason, which needs to be enlightened by revelation. If we are habitually seeking God's will, we will only seek pleasure in so far as it is in accordance with his will. Thus seeking pleasure will be an expression of our love for God.

What then is the remedy for sin? This question can be answered with a single word. **CONVERSION** is the remedy for sin. There is question of changing our affections. Instead of loving what is sinful we must love God and what is good. Sin is always an abuse of our affections. Either we love what is evil, or we love a good thing excessively, or we scatter our affections in all directions so that God is forgotten. All sin is in the will, which is the source of our love and affections. In order to get rid of sin our affections must be regulated according to right reason. In other words our affections

must be converted; they must be changed. Setting our affections in order is the work of a lifetime. This ongoing conversion can only be achieved with God's help. The Church has various rites to obtain God's help in bringing about ongoing conversion.

CONVERSION RITES IN THE CHURCH

The chief conversion rite is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It could be called the 'sacrament of conversion.'

It is worth noting also that the Church sets aside certain seasons and days when she wishes us to devote ourselves to conversion in a special way. Lent is one such season. To a lesser extent Advent is also a time of conversion. Within each week Friday is set aside as a special day of penance or conversion.

During mass we confess our sins frequently, explicitly during the 'Confiteor', and implicitly when we frequently pray for God's mercy. We do this at the 'Lord, have mercy', at the 'Lamb of God' and at other times. Asking for mercy implies that we recognise that we are sinners, and wish to turn away from sin and come back to God.

In public and private prayers we often confess that we are sinners and ask for mercy, thus admitting our need of God's grace. These prayers should develop in us a habit of continual conversion. Furthermore, every time we overcome a temptation we strengthen our habit of conversion.

Examination of conscience or consciousness is also oriented to conversion. Indeed those who truly seek God will exercise constant vigilance over their hearts and thoughts. They examine their thoughts and desires at all times and try to bring them into conformity with God's will. They try to live continually, not for themselves but for God (4th Eucharistic Prayer). This is conversion at its best.

BOOK THREE

SPECIFIC MORAL ISSUES

CHAPTER 11

SOCIAL JUSTICE

In this chapter I wish to offer the main principles of the Church's teaching in regard to social justice. It was mainly in the last hundred years that the Church developed a theology of society. It is above all a moral theology that integrates revelation, reason and natural law.

All moral theology is the practical application of dogmatic truth and revelation. Hence it is necessary to say something about the doctrine from which the practical moral principles of social justice are derived. Much of what I write here is taken from the 'Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church', published in 2005. I S B N I-57455- 692-4

DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The root from which all the social doctrine of the Church derives is the dignity of the human person. Hence it is necessary as a basis for our teaching on social justice to recall briefly the value and dignity of every human being.

The Book of Genesis tells us that every human being is made to the image of God. Human beings are special. The Fathers of the Church loved to reflect on the significance of this teaching of Genesis. In what way are we the image of God? How do we transcend the rest of material creation? Or do we transcend it?

The Church has always taught that we human beings transcend material creation. A human being is a unity of body and soul. He/she is both material and spiritual. This is not true of any other material being. We have a special dignity that surpasses that of all other material things and the animal world.

Being spiritual we are capable of relating to God in a way that is impossible for all other material creatures. Indeed we are made for God and our heart will not rest until it rests in God. The human heart (will) is an ‘infinite capacity for God’ (John of the Cross).

Not only do we want God but God also desires to give himself to us. ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock’ (Rev. 3, 20). We humans alone have the power to freely love God or refrain from doing so. This is our dignity. We are called to freely prefer Christ to all things. God desires our love and he wants us to give it freely. This capacity we have for loving union with God gives us a dignity and value that surpasses all other created material things. Indeed God’s whole purpose in creating the world was that the world might bring forth human beings, who would love and worship him here and hereafter. All creation is geared to this.

This dignity belongs to all people, young and old; black and white; Asians, Africans and Europeans. This dignity belongs to every human being from the moment of conception onwards. Therefore, each one is worthy of respect at every point in his/her life. The Church never ceases to teach the sacredness of human life in every person from the moment of conception until death. Hence abortion is a crime against God and humanity.

Every human being is called to love and praise God here and hereafter with one’s whole being, body, mind and spirit (external acts, intellect and will). Our dignity and our vocation confer on us certain rights. It is necessary that these rights be acknowledged and respected so that we may fulfil God’s purposes in our lives.

HUMANS ARE SOCIAL BEINGS

Man and woman are intended by the Creator to form the basic society of the human community. Man and woman are necessary to propagate the race and in order to do so they enter into the marriage covenant. Into this society children are born. The family is the primary society from which all of us have come. We have been dependent on the family for our development. The family itself needs the help of the wider community. It needs both Church

and state. The Creator made us social beings and at all stages of our development we are socially connected to other human beings, indeed to all human beings, whether we realise it or not.

This interconnectedness is very complex in our day. Due to the communications media, computer technology, travel, TV. etc. a global awareness has grown so that we now speak of the 'global village', wherein all of us are aware of important events in every part of the world. Phenomena, such as wars, natural disasters, hunger, extreme poverty in many countries, are widely known in our affluent part of the world. The fact that we know about these different disasters surely means that we should try, as best we can, to give a Christian response. When we hear of misery in some other part of the world what are our moral obligations to help our brothers and sisters, who may be suffering?

Being social beings carries with it a duty to be responsible for the societies to which we belong. The fact is that each of us belongs to many societies. At the secular level we may be part of a family, we may belong to a town or city, to a nation and to the international community. Furthermore we may be members of voluntary secular societies such as the 'Sports' Club', the 'Womens' League' etc. Ultimately we belong to the whole human race and we are responsible for its wellbeing. All this makes life rather complicated.

In general we can say that when we belong to a group there are always reciprocal rights and duties of the members in relation to the society, and of the society, operating through its leaders, in relation to the members. The society exists for the welfare of the members, but the members must also make a contribution to the wellbeing of the society. Both individual members and the society exist ultimately to bring each and everyone, in their integrity, to union with God here and hereafter. Even secular societies, that may have secular values as their immediate goal, are intended to prepare the way that ultimately leads people to divine union. The church and its sub-groups are more immediately concerned with the worship of God.

Just as there are reciprocal rights and duties that bind a society and its members, this also applies to the relation of different societies

among themselves. Even nations have rights and duties in regard to other nations.

Nevertheless, all this interconnectedness between the peoples of the world should lead to the full development of every human person at every level of his/her personality - body, intellect, moral, technical, religious etc.

HUMAN RIGHTS

We have already said that human beings transcend material creation and that they have a special dignity and a special vocation. They are called as spiritual beings to loving union with God. Because of their dignity and vocation they have certain rights. Unless these rights are respected they cannot fulfil their vocation.

Each human being is also a member of many interlocking societies. Both individuals and societies have reciprocal rights and duties in their relations with one another. An individual has rights that must be respected by the society and vice versa. The society often operates in these matters through its leaders. Social justice is largely concerned with the reciprocal rights and duties of individuals and societies.

History and experience remind us that states often pass laws and make decisions that are injurious to the dignity of the human person. States can promote abortion, killing of infants, genocide, torture, religious persecution etc. In this way people are prevented from living out their vocation in life. Totalitarian states are notorious for oppressing the people.

On the other hand the members of a society do not always make a proper contribution to the society. They may be guilty of violating just laws or they may be passive members of the group. If we behave in this fashion we do not respect the rights of the society. Most people feel little sense of guilt when they neglect doing the good that is possible.

In the light of these abuses and many others, not mentioned, civil authorities and the Church have tried to draw up lists of human rights and obligations. In 1948 the United Nations drew up a

‘Charter of Human Rights’ as an international basis for recognising the dignity of the human person, which had been seriously violated in World War II. The Church also in her social teaching has listed many human rights. During the last fifty years about eight social encyclicals give various lists of human rights. The church must consider social justice very important for our times since it has issued so many major documents on the subject.

John XXIII tells us that human rights are ‘universal, inviolable and inalienable’. (My comment: this statement needs many qualifications). They derive from human nature, they belong to all people and no one can deprive us of them. It is in the interests of society and the individual person that these rights be protected and promoted. This should be done by suitable legislation

LIST OF HUMAN RIGHTS

At the root of all other rights is the RIGHT TO LIFE from conception to natural death. Next comes those rights that are essential for life, such as the right to food, drink. Other rights are necessary for a full human life such as the right to clothes, shelter, health care, education, right to private property. Rights flow from the natural law. Positive law should tease out more fully the implications of the natural law but never contradict it.

There are innumerable rights mentioned in the Compendium. See page 132, where there is a list of workers’ rights. Elsewhere many other rights are mentioned e.g. on pp. 68, 182. Religious Freedom is an important right. If two rights conflict, the lesser right ceases.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

If people have rights there is a duty on the part of all others to acknowledge and respect these rights. It is also important that people who insist on their rights be faithful in fulfilling their duties to society. Rights and duties are complementary.

RIGHTS ARE NOT ABSOLUTE

Where two rights collide the lesser right ceases. I think that this is an important principle. An example may help. We have a right to follow our conscience. Does this give a suicide bomber the right to kill himself and others indiscriminately? Obviously, the state has a greater right to protect people from the bomber's 'conscience'. Indeed the bomber's right ceases in the circumstances. In addition there is a hierarchy of rights. The right to life is more fundamental than the right to a just wage.

THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE

The Church's social teaching involves both principles and their application. There is theory and practice. All her doctrine derives from the dignity of the human person who is called to love God with his/her whole being - body, mind and spirit. This doctrine constitutes a doctrinal unity flowing from our human dignity and vocation. There are a number of basic principles drawn from revelation and reason and serve together to throw light on how human beings should live in society. These principles apply to all societies from the smallest, which is the human family, to the greatest, which is the international community.

The Church sees her social doctrine as a unified corpus. The principles are complementary and interconnected. Hence we could err if we acted in the light of one principle only without taking account of complementary principles. These principles are not mere theory; they are practical and point the way to a renewal of social relations at every level. They have moral implications for individuals and also for those who draft laws for the members of a society.

THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

We have already seen that the dignity of the human person gives him/her inviolable rights. We do not have to repeat here what has been said above about human dignity. The following principles

have their source in the human person and also their end. Labour, economy, politics and the Church are all geared to the integral growth of each person and all people.

1: THE COMMON GOOD

The common good is defined as the ‘sum total of social conditions that allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily’ (The Church Today). The common good is shared in by everyone. Only together do we attain it and preserve it. It is the community dimension of the moral good.

The common good envisages the good of the whole person and of every person. One can only fulfil oneself ‘with’ others and being ‘for’ others. Every society from the family to the community of peoples and nations must seek the common good of all.

Everyone is responsible for the common good. It is achieved mainly by respecting the rights of others. Working for the common good demands that we transcend our selfishness and greed, and sacrifice ourselves for the good of others.

Our concept of the common good should not be reductionist. This can happen if we only think of the material needs of people, or we are only concerned with the good of our own community, forgetting about the universal common good. The common good above all envisages the love and worship of God, which is the ultimate vocation of everyone.

It is the function of the State to promote the temporal good of the citizens by means of suitable laws, public services, pensions etc. But we must remember that our temporal good is not the ultimate good. However, it is essential so that each one may realise one’s ultimate end. The State has also responsibility for the common good of all peoples. Each person and each State has this responsibility.

Hence to view a country’s common good solely in terms of material benefits and wellbeing is a very inadequate concept of the common good. Unfortunately, many politicians seem only interested in the material welfare of themselves and the people who elected them.

I think that communities and societies tend to err in two directions. (a): They attend excessively to temporal goods, while forgetting the

ultimate end of all communities. (b): They can also fall into a kind of community selfishness. Societies often spend all their resources on themselves and forget in varying degrees the poor of the world for whom they are responsible.

2: THE UNIVERSAL DESTINATION OF MATERIAL GOODS

“God destined the earth and all it contains for all people so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity’ (*Gaudium et Spes*). ‘God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members without excluding or favouring anyone’ (John Paul II). The human person cannot do without material things. They are essential so that one may achieve a full human life.

Since there is a universal destination of material goods it logically follows that there is also a universal right to use these goods. Each person has this right. ‘This is the first principle of the whole ethical and social order’ (John Paul II). This is a natural inalienable right prior to all other property rights. Other rights are subordinate to the right of every human being to use material goods. Other rights must serve the universal destination of goods. It is a serious social obligation to make secondary rights serve their original purpose.

IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT TO USE MATERIAL THINGS. Even though each one has a right to use material things, this doesn’t mean that each one can appropriate what he/she likes. So that the right to use material things may be exercised in an equitable and orderly manner regulated interventions are necessary. There is need of a juridical order that specifies the use of this right (laws, courts, judges etc.).

The principle of the universal destination of goods is a challenge to all of us to develop an economic vision inspired by moral values. All owners of property need to keep before their eyes the primary purpose of all material goods so that they will use them for all, especially for the poor. This applies to most of us in the affluent world, and not just to billionaires. All of us are tempted by the desire to possess more than we need to fulfil our vocation. Yielding to

this temptation violates social justice, because we are holding on to superfluous possessions, which belong to the poor. Jesus had no possessions; he had nowhere to lay his head.

THE RIGHT TO PRIVATE PROPERTY. The Church has consistently upheld the right to private property. Ownership gives a person or a group a necessary autonomy that allows them to develop themselves at every level. It gives them a minimum of necessary security to follow their vocation.

The church has never considered the right to private property absolute. It must be understood in the wider context of the universal destination of goods. The right to private property is subordinate to the right of common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everybody (John Paul II). God is complete Lord over all goods and he intends them for all people.

While we have a right to private property there is a need to regulate it. Indeed private property is not an end in itself but a means to insuring that property serves the whole person and all people (Pius XI). The right to private property is part of the juridic structure that is oriented to providing material goods for all people.

We should regard what we legitimately own, not only as our own, but also as common in the sense that our goods should benefit not only us but also others (*Gaudium et Spes*). Nor should we forget that God is the primary owner of all goods. Owners have obligations to use their goods, not only for their own good but also that of others. Above all they must not use their wealth in a way that injures others.

There is also an obligation to use our resources for others' benefit and not bury them in the ground. We can fulfil this duty if we get others to manage our affairs.

Property can be a danger when people imagine that their ownership is absolute or when they are enslaved by love of money and possessions. In this case they fall into the 'bitterest type of slavery' (Compendium p. 79).

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR. The universal destination of goods requires that the poor and needy have need of special concern. In the modern world there are billions of poor. Financial poverty begets many other kinds of poverty, such as

sickness, crime, despair, hunger etc. Given the immensity of the problem the Church is justified in reminding us habitually to reach out to these helpless members of Christ. All these poor have a right to a share in the earth's material resources. There should be an international juridic system in place that insures that all people have their fair share of earthly goods. International law is needed to regulate the just distribution of the earth's wealth.

But all of us are obliged to contribute to the universal common good. This means that sincere Christians and all people of good will should deny themselves so that others may have the basic necessities of life. In the absence of suitable international legislation we, as individuals, have the moral duty to do what we can to overcome this huge world-wide problem. There is a moral obligation to share our superfluities with the poor. 'When we attend to the needs of those in want we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing a work of mercy we are paying a debt of justice' (St. Gregory the Great). P.80; (St. Basil and Aquinas also teach this).

3: SUBSIDIARITY

Subsidiarity and participation (see below) are concerned mainly with work rather than with the ownership of property. They are concerned with how societies function, with decision-making and the exercise of power.

Subsidiarity is concerned especially with the relation of authority to those who are in some way subject to it. Different levels of authority can exist in both civil and in church life. Those in authority should practice subsidiarity in regard to those under them. Pius XI explains what is meant. 'Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice...and grave evil... to assign to a ... higher association what lesser organisations ... can do... since activity of its nature ought to help the members of the group and never destroy or absorb them' (Compendium p.81).

The Compendium seems to stress the fact that higher authority should not intervene. Obviously there is a time to intervene and try and help those subject to authority and a time to refrain from

intervening. Whether higher authority intervenes or not, it should be helpful, and not destroy the personality of the subject or the group. If the subject is obviously injuring the common good, the higher authority must take action. If the subject is doing a good job it would be wrong for superiors to intervene, unless some other values are involved. In a word circumstances will often determine when and when not it is right to intervene.

4: PARTICIPATION

The Compendium applies these principles mainly to secular life - economics, politics etc. But the principles have also been adopted in large measure by ecclesial communities since Vatican II. They are also applicable to the church and the various communities within it.

Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility, and with a view to the common good' (Compendium p.83). Presumably this is a moral duty. Often in societies we tend to leave everything to those in authority, and do not realise that we are bound to make a contribution. Participation is important also for human growth. It should extend to work, the economy, culture, information, life in society and politics. Participation of the disadvantaged should be strongly encouraged.

Participation is one of the pillars of democracy. The Compendium encourages 'shared responsibility of each individual for the common good'. In a democracy it is the people who confer power on the leaders and the leaders act in their name. The Compendium disapproves of apathy, which leads some citizens even to refrain from voting.

The Compendium is concerned mainly with secular life. It seems to me that most of the same principles apply to the Church. All church members are responsible for the mission of the Church, and all church members are called to participate in their own way in the Church's work.

Excessive bureaucracy and over centralisation in Church and state can interfere with subsidiarity and can stifle participation. Apathy and indifference can also prevent participation. I think that sins of omission are very common and often we feel no guilt about them.

Perhaps we could say that Jesus' description of the last judgement (Mt. 25, 31+) is about participation and the lack of it.

5: SOLIDARITY

The word 'solidarity' can have two meanings. 'Solidarity' can mean communion with other people. 'Solidarity' is also a virtue. The virtue of solidarity is defined as 'a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is to say the good of all and each individual because we are all really responsible for all' (John Paul II. Compendium. P.85)

Solidarity highlights the social nature of human beings. All are equal in dignity and in rights. All people are growing into unity because we are all interdependent. Modern communications media put us in touch with people all over the planet. This unification of the world raises innumerable complex moral and social problems. There are huge differences between individuals and nations in regard to wealth. Some are billionaires; others are dying of hunger and of diseases related to poverty.

The virtue of solidarity aims at overcoming the 'structures of sin' that at present prevail in business and in world politics. The goal of solidarity would be to provide for the basic needs of all. Solidarity is a fundamental social virtue directed especially to the common good. It involves a 'commitment to the good of one's neighbour, being ready to lose oneself...for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him/her' (John Paul II).

Solidarity is linked to the common good, to the universal destination of goods, to communion and equality among people and to peace in the world (Compendium p.86). Solidarity means laying down one's life for one's neighbour. Solidarity tries to unite people in communion and build up co-operation in all sectors.

We can speak of solidarity both from a justice viewpoint and from that of charity. As we have said frequently, charity turns silver into gold. It transforms and elevates to a higher level a just solidarity. The just solidarity becomes through charity a loving solidarity.

However, we need to be careful in speaking of love. Many of us think that we love everyone. But are we ready to sacrifice our

wealth and possessions for the sake of the billions of poor people in our world? Perhaps our love is often an illusion? Jesus is the great exemplar and model of solidarity. He laid down his life out of love for all people. He is the model that all Christians are called to follow.

6: VALUES OF SOCIAL LIFE

The principles, already mentioned, can only operate properly when we preserve the four following values - truth, freedom, justice and love.

TRUTH: Communion and solidarity must be founded on the truth. Social problems must be solved in accordance with truth and objective morality. All need to seek after truth. A majority vote is not necessarily the truth. The unscrupulous use of money must give way to transparency and honesty. The media and politicians must not distort the truth for their own selfish ends. The dignity of the person and the common good can only be preserved when social relationships are based on truth.

FREEDOM: ‘The right to exercise freedom is an inalienable right of the human person, especially in moral and religious matters’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church N1738). Freedom is not the arbitrary exercise of one’s own will. Freedom must be governed by truth and justice. The Compendium mentions freedom to fulfil one’s personal vocation, to seek the truth, to profess religious and political ideas, to express opinions, to choose a state of life, to choose work, to take initiative etc. All this must take place in the context of a ‘strong juridical framework’ (John Paul II), being responsible and preserving public order.

True freedom involves seeking one’s own good in the context of the common good.

JUSTICE: Justice is a virtue by which we give their due to God and neighbour. Justice is concerned with meeting the RIGHTS of others. Justice is a virtue that gives us moral norms in interpersonal relations and in the social sphere.

Justice includes commutative, distributive, legal and social justice. Social justice is a new development in our understanding of justice and today it is world-wide in its implications. It concerns the social,

economic and political aspects of life. Above all it is concerned with the structural dimensions of problems and their solution. Papal documents speak of ‘structures of sin.’ Social justice urges us to change the structures of sin in our world.

CHARITY: Charity, if it is authentic, generates all the other virtues. Hence authentic charity should make us just people. I was fairly complacent about my degree of charity until I discovered that I was not practising social justice. If I fail to practise social justice my charity is very defective. Let us listen to St. John (I Jn. 3, 16-18).

‘This is the proof of love that he laid down his life for us and we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If we are well off in worldly possessions and see our brothers and sisters in need but close our hearts to them, how can the love of God remain in us? Our love of God must not be mere talk.’

It seems to me that this quote is applicable to most of us in the affluent world. We have ample ‘worldly possessions’ while we know that two billion people must live on two dollars per day. But we are locked into our affluent lifestyle and we close our hearts to the poor. Do not John’s words apply to us? ‘How can the love of God remain in us if we close our hearts to the poor?’ Are we deluding ourselves when we imagine that we love God?

CHAPTER 12

CONSUMERISM

John Paul II once suggested in a Lenten homily that we fast from consumerism during Lent. The word ‘consumerism’ occurs very frequently in the papal encyclicals on social justice. Consumerism is condemned repeatedly by the popes. What exactly do we mean by ‘consumerism’ and ‘consumer goods’?

The reality is that we are all consumers. We cannot survive without using or consuming the goods of creation. However, in modern times the term ‘consumerism’ is used to designate excessive consumption, namely, a consumption that exceeds our real needs. ‘Consumer goods’ are goods that we do not need.

We have the duty as human beings to cultivate the earth in a sustainable way. The earth’s resources are limited and must not be wasted in the pursuit of selfish pleasure. According to the environmentalist, Shaun McDonagh, we would need three planets like planet earth if all the world’s population lived in the same way as North Americans, Europeans and Australians. If this is true they are guilty of immoral consumerism on a big scale.

‘Consumerism’ arises when we use the world’s resources for purposes that do not harmonise with our ultimate end as human beings. But to make choices that are contrary to our ultimate end is morally wrong. ‘Consumerism’ is another word for waste. Consumerism in varying degrees, makes possessions and pleasure into one’s ultimate end. Thus we worship a false god.

God created human beings to love him here and hereafter. We are called to love him with our whole potential (Mk. 12, 30). The Bible expresses the human vocation as ‘loving God with one’s whole heart, one’s whole soul, one’s whole mind and one’s whole strength’. We cannot do this unless our human potential is fully realised. ‘A human being fully alive is the glory of God’ (Irenaeus). One is only fully alive when the physical, psychological, spiritual, moral and

religious dimensions of one's personality are harmoniously cooperating together in loving God and neighbour.

The moral and religious levels of human existence cannot be realised unless the physical basis is taken care of. Sufficient material goods are necessary, especially food, drink, health care, shelter etc., so that one may grow up into a mature human being. Since God intends the development of each person, above all the moral and religious development, each human being has a natural right to enough material goods to realise one's total human growth. But one does not have a natural right to more material goods than are necessary for living one's particular vocation.

In practice each one has a unique vocation and this will determine one's natural right to the possession of private property. A person's vocation may involve responsibility for many other human beings. A businessman may have responsibility for hundreds of employees. He has a right to enough material possessions to meet all his responsibilities. He may need assets worth millions of dollars with cash on hand to pay wages etc. A single retired person, on the other hand may need very little to maintain himself. However, both the businessman and the retired man are bound to give their superfluous wealth to the poor. Both are bound to avoid wasting their resources on consumer goods. All material goods are intended by God to serve the ultimate end of the one, who possesses them, and also the ultimate end of the wider community. All property has a universal destination and is not merely intended to satisfy one's own inordinate desires. We are not morally free to use our resources according to our whims. Unfortunately, most of us wrongly assume that we can use our resources as we please. We do not feel accountable to God for not alleviating world poverty. We have taken on board the illusion of the culture in which we live that we have unrestricted ownership of our possessions.

As we said above we are guilty of consumerism when we use the world's resources for purposes that do not harmonise with our own ultimate end and that of others. In a consumerist society property is often accumulated and possession becomes an end in itself rather than a means to serving humankind's ultimate end. People consume

the world's resources solely to satisfy their own disorderly desires for pleasure. Their consumption bears no relation to their own ultimate end and the true needs of other people. By worshipping the means to the end we are alienated from God and his love. Many in the affluent world make pleasure and enjoyment the purpose of life rather than the love of God. Pleasure in one form or another has become the main false god that is worshipped almost universally. We seek pleasure or fulfilment inordinately in wealth, in bodily pleasures, in power, in surpassing others and in many forms of self-promotion and in purchasing consumer goods.

Values are frequently distorted in a consumerist society. 'Having' is more important than 'being'. People tend to value wealth and the pleasure and security that it brings above the gospel values of holiness, justice, morality and love.

It is also important to realise that we live in a culture of consumerism. If we do not spend money and consume goods and services the economy suffers. There is a slowing down of the economy. If we all gave up buying consumer goods those who produce and manufacture these goods would be unemployed. A consumerist culture encourages people to purchase consumer goods. We work hard and then spend our earnings on such goods. It is our culture, our lifestyle. All have a moral duty to try and regulate consumption in an ethical manner. In addition we have a duty not to support by our consumption companies that produce their goods in an unethical way. However, almost all goods are in some way produced unethically. This doesn't dispense us from doing the best we can to reduce unethical economic practices. This can be achieved in some degree by producing our own food and by purchasing goods produced locally.

As we said above 'consumerism' involves wasting the world's goods generally for one's pleasure. It makes one a slave of wealth and pleasure and alienates one from one's ultimate end. Consumer goods abound everywhere in the affluent world. The wealthy often waste their money on big houses, flash cars, undisciplined travel and extravagant life styles. Even the less wealthy have huge wardrobes, superfluous books and magazines, endless gadgets all

over the house, that often serve no purpose. Others waste God's resources on drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Perhaps worst of all is the international arms industry that is worth billions of dollars - what waste of the earth's resources! Furthermore, the money that we spend on superfluities does not belong to us. The Church Fathers teach us that our superfluous wealth belongs to the poor.

Perhaps some of us in the church can also be adversely influenced by the dominant culture. How far do the following help people to love God - big libraries with countless volumes, huge churches and travelling overseas at the drop of a hat?

How far do we have to take on board the expectations of a consumer society? At what stage do we have to discard buildings, cars, clothes, boots etc? How much food can be lawfully discarded? I once heard a superior general of a religious order remark. 'The nuns of our order could live on what the male religious throw away'. How far is our value system determined by the dominant culture and how far by the gospel? Are we acting immorally when we use great sums of money to replace buildings that could serve for another hundred years? Are we using the money that belongs to the poor by undertaking such building? After all, the poor own the superfluous wealth of the rich? In the modern global village there are billions of 'Lazaruses' lying at the doors of all of us in the wealthy nations. Do we deserve hell as did the rich man who let Lazarus die of hunger at his door? These questions have worried me all my life. I myself feel guilty for not having had the courage to do something about these problems during my lifetime.

Consumerism is not recognised for the sin and disorder that it is. Most people in the affluent world will not hesitate to spend money on consumer goods if they can afford to buy them. They do this without any sense of guilt. They do not realise that they are doing wrong. Under the influence of the prevailing culture they have imbibed unconsciously consumerist values. Thus even Christians are guided not by the gospel but by the expectations of the culture. The culture and the advertising media promote consumerism as something of value and we allow ourselves to be brainwashed. We fail to recognise that consumerism, objectively speaking, can be

a very serious sin. Objectively, the extent of its sinfulness will be determined by the amount that we waste. Consumerism is morally wrong because it is opposed to right reason. Right reason demands that material goods serve one's ultimate end and that of others. It is contrary to right reason and immoral to use God's goods for other purposes.

Almost everybody uses consumer goods sometimes, mainly in the search for pleasure. The search for pleasure is morally acceptable if it accords with right reason. Unfortunately, we often just desire pleasure and we do not worry whether it is reasonable or not. Much of what we eat and drink does not contribute to our health but injures it in time. Devouring such unhealthy food would be an example of consumerism. Surely John Paul II was 'spot-on' when, as we said above, he recommended that we fast from consumerism during Lent.

All property is given by God to bring the owner and all people to the fullness of their humanity. The owner has to use it for realising his own total vocation, especially his moral and religious wellbeing. All property is intended not just for the owner, but to help all humankind to attain their ultimate end. Hence the owner has the obligation to use it for his/her own full realisation and that of other human beings. An owner has no right to use material possessions on consumer goods. One is misusing one's property when one uses it on such goods. In addition one is also enslaving oneself to the god of pleasure and implicitly turning one's back on the true God.

Let us call a spade a spade. Consumerism, as understood here, can be a serious sin if we are guilty of wasting to a notable degree the goods of the earth. Unfortunately, we seldom use the term 'sin' today. We speak instead of moral evil, or we say that an action is 'wrong' or that we shouldn't do it etc. We tend to avoid the word 'sin'. These other words have not got the same power to rouse our conscience; they do not evoke the same fear in us, as does the word 'mortal sin'. One of the reasons for the loss of the sense of sin in the modern world is that we have ceased, in large measure, to classify certain actions as 'sin'. Unless we put a name on an object we have difficulty in identifying it. So let us say that consumerism is

objectively often a mortal sin. I hope that the reader will not reject this old label.

Another reason why people do not perceive consumerism as a mortal sin is because nearly every one in the affluent society is guilty of it. Since everyone is a 'consumerist' it has come to be regarded as normal and acceptable. Indeed instead of calling consumerism a 'mortal sin' we call it 'progress', 'development', 'being up to standard', 'being up-to-date' etc. The advertising media brainwash us into accepting it as a highly desirable way of life. One young man told me recently that he was laughed at by his friends for his lack of ambition, because he had decided to live a simple lifestyle and be content with what was necessary, avoiding superfluities. In affluent consumerist societies one's status and personal worth is often measured by what one possesses rather than by the values of Christ. Should we be guided by the gospel or by the false values of the culture?

One of the great evils of our time is that people sin objectively all the time but feel no sense of healthy guilt about it. Hence they experience no need to change their bad habits. Often they don't know the difference between moral good and moral evil. Under cultural influence good is called evil, and evil good. Let us repeat again that a choice is morally good when it harmonises with the purpose of my existence, which is to love God here and hereafter. It is evil when it is contrary to this purpose. In this case it is contrary to right reason.

Consumerism is incompatible with the love of God because it implies using God's gifts for a purpose not intended by God. It usually implies seeking to please myself rather than to please God. It is a sin also against the neighbour because, according to the Fathers of the Church, the poor own the superfluous wealth of the rich. The 'consumerist' spends the money of the poor on disorderly self-indulgence. It is a sin also against one's own true wellbeing, because we become enslaved by false needs and harmful pleasures.

TEACHING OF JOHN PAUL II ON CONSUMERISM

John Paul points out the following effects of consumerism.

1: It produces a new form of ‘alienation’. It ensnares people ‘in a web of false and superficial gratifications’. ‘Consumerism makes people ‘the slaves of possessions and immediate gratification’, rather than helping them to ‘experience their personhood in an authentic and concrete way’.

2: Consumerism also plunders the earth’s resources ‘in an excessive and disordered way’.

3: The social fabric is weakened when the production of goods and services becomes over stressed. ‘Human ecology’ is upset. ‘Having’ is more important than ‘being’. Possessions are not used for moral and religious purposes. Materialism erodes faith. We seek an earthly paradise. Consumerism creates an environment wherein faith, moral and religious values evaporate from one’s consciousness. ‘Human ecology’ is badly disordered.

The economy should serve the whole human person and not just our base instincts. The market economy needs a strong juridic framework so that it will serve authentic freedom and genuine human growth. (Encyclicals of John Paul II by Millar, p.577)

CONCLUSION

One of the reasons for writing this book has been to clarify my own thinking in regard to spirituality and morality. If I am to lead a spiritual life, something that I desire to do, I must clearly understand what it is all about.

In fact I have been pondering for a lifetime on how to lead a spiritual life. But times have changed. Vatican Two ushered in new orientations in spirituality. But we have moved on since Vatican Two and we are now in the 21st century. At this point in time there are many new challenges that weren't present in 1962 when the Council was held. I have tried to touch on some of these problems in this book. As I conclude the book I would like to recall once again some of the challenges that I find myself facing in today's world.

1: MULTIPLICITY: There are multiple books and articles on spirituality. Indeed there are multiple spiritualities. There are many methods of prayer and many types of work. Above all we are exposed unceasingly to multiple sensations coming from the mass media and innumerable books and publications, travel, city life etc. Affected by these sensations our affectivity tends to be scattered in innumerable directions so that love of any one thing or person tends to be weak. There is a danger that our love for God will become weak and diluted. Multiplicity tends to scatter our affective energy too widely and we can get de-focused from God and what is important. We can confuse accidentals with essentials. Then life can lose its meaning and direction. Multiple sensations lead to multiple options so that our young people hesitate to commit themselves to any one definite vocation.

2: DISCARDING THOMIST PSYCHOLOGY.

In modern books I'm constantly puzzled about what writers and preachers mean when they use certain words, especially words that refer to our interior life. No distinction is made between different levels of affectivity. Love, heart etc. are often identified with feeling and emotion. Do we understand what pure acts of the will are, acts devoid of all feeling? Do we have words for such acts? Yet such acts

are being performed continually by all human beings, in their daily activities and in their spiritual lives. I am concerned about what people understand by such basic words as 'love', 'humility', 'fear', 'sorrow for sin' etc. Because we do not understand our inner life clearly there is a tendency to identify virtue with exterior actions.

Part of the problem is the poverty of the English language. We use the same word 'love' for an emotion, for a pure act of the will devoid of emotion and for an act that is a combination of emotion and will. Indeed all the words that we use to describe our affective experiences can have any of the three meanings just described.

Furthermore the same word can mean one thing in daily usage and something different in spirituality. We need a scientific approach to spirituality in which terms are clearly defined. In recent times we have ceased to define our terms. Perhaps we have over-reacted against definitions and what has been called 'essentialism'. The result is confusion.

Much clarification about one's inner life would be restored if we understood what was best in the Thomist understanding of the interior life. We do not have to cling to the irrelevancies of Thomism but I ask whether we haven't thrown out the baby with the bath water in recent decades? Unless we explain our inner life in terms of intellect, will and emotions, as understood by Aquinas, we will be confused as to what other words mean because they can have many meanings. What do we mean by 'mind', 'thought', 'love' etc.? So as to understand the inner dimension of the spiritual life it is necessary to thoroughly understand how our faculties of intellect, will and emotions operate.

Aquinas points out that we are called to love God and that our whole life should be oriented in this direction. This orientation is predominantly interior. It is hard in the modern Church to pursue this orientation because we do not always understand our inner life. We lack a suitable psychology as a basis for our spirituality. The English language does not provide suitable words to explain fully our inner life.

When I read spiritual books I find that, in order to understand them, I must often interpret them in terms of emotions, intellect and will.

3: SECULARIZATION:

Multiplicity can lead us to get over interested in too many secular values. In the process God can get sidelined and often he is replaced in peoples' affections by pleasure, power, money, travel, sport etc. Many who claim to believe in God are totally immersed in secular values. They live, not for God, but for themselves.

Perhaps secularisation leads to individualism. When we exclude God from our lives we live for our own pleasure. The undisciplined search for one's own pleasure, for power, for money and for self-promotion in every area of life becomes the purpose of our existence instead of union with God who is largely forgotten. Our whole culture provides us with endless entertainment - pleasure, pleasure, and pleasure without end.

We no longer know how to deny ourselves so as to follow Christ. We preach love without sacrifice and Christianity without a cross. Our secular culture begets in us an excessive love of sport, big cars, expensive houses etc. Having is more important than being. Having 10 changes of clothes and 10 pairs of shoes is quite normal in our affluent society. Many other forms of consumerism add to our sins.

4: FREEDOM:

Formerly many rules were drawn up in order to lead us to God. In modern times many of these rules have been swept away. To a large extent we have been given the freedom to regulate our own spiritual lives. The question arises whether we are able to use this freedom responsibly. The Church can hand us freedom on a plate but are we able to use it in the way that God desires? So as to use freedom in the way that pleases God we need to be constantly motivated to keep on following Christ and not allow ourselves to be distracted by the pleasures of the modern world.

So as not to abuse freedom and use it for self-indulgence I have found it necessary to draw up a flexible rule of life for myself. This helps to keep me on track. Such a rule has to be oriented to the love

of God and neighbour for God's sake. Obviously, such a rule avails little unless we faithfully observe it.

5: THE USE OF TIME AND MONEY

Before concluding the book I would like to draw attention to two very important areas in our lives, which need to be approached from a spiritual viewpoint. I am referring to our use and abuse of time and money.

Let us try and examine them in the context of our vocation to love God. All our resources, including time and money (possessions), must be used to help us to love God more and lead others to a similar love. I draw special attention to time and money because I fear that we do not always use them for the purposes for which God gave them to us. They are not given for our own selfish pleasure but they are God-given opportunities for exercising true love. What I say of money applies to all possessions.

Aquinas teaches that all human acts should harmonise with our ultimate end, that is, with loving God. Hence we are expected to use time and money to promote the love of God in ourselves and in others. They are not given us for self-indulgence.

We are drawing attention here to time and money because most of us assume without serious questioning that we can use these two resources as we please. This is obviously a false assumption.

In the use of both time and money we would do well to follow the counsel of Francis de Sales, which I mentioned elsewhere in this book. He writes: "when you have time on your hands and you desire to know how to use it, ask yourself, what will please God most? Then, without excessive worrying, choose some good act and implement it. This is God's will for you."

I am not treating time and money here as extensively as I would like, because I do not want the book to be too long. But I have no doubt that anyone, living in an affluent culture, who desires to live a life of love, will have to face up to the challenge of the responsible use of time and money. I personally have found the use of time to be one of my greatest challenges. Love alone will urge us to use both time and money in the way that pleases God most.

REMEDY FOR ALL OUR PROBLEMS
FALL IN LOVE AND STAY IN LOVE;
IT WILL SOLVE ALL OUR PROBLEMS.
(Fr. Arrupe S.J.)