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Blueprint for Holiness

The Christian Mentality

by

Denis Mooney, O.F.M.



A Grail Publication

St. Meinrad, Indiana



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by Denis Mooney, O.F.M.

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THE CHRISTIAN MENTALITY

EVERY living creature tends to grow towards its perfection, for life as we know it, is characterized by growth. Thus parents, having given life to a child, look for it to develop in body and mind, and should the child be retarded, they are grieved.

By Baptism, a Christian receives from God a new life—the divine life of Grace. This life, too, is given precisely that it may grow and God watches for His children to develop in grace and holiness. Any signs of arrested spiritual growth are displeasing to Him.

For a Christian, then, advance in age should also find some growth in holiness, some progress in love for God. But the question presents itself: How shall a person know if he is growing spiritually? Physical growth can be seen, and intellectual growth, though unseen, can be known by one's ability and accomplishments. But what are the indications of spiritual development?

St. Paul comes to our aid and enumerates the signs of growth in love for God. "Charity,"¹ he says, "is patient, is kind, does not envy . . . endures all things" (I Cor. 13: 4-7). In this way

¹ By *Charity* St. Paul here means the soul's subjective, personal love for God. He does not mean sanctifying grace as such. In *The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine* version of the New Testament a footnote to this text says: "Charity is the will's choice of God based on the knowledge of God."

St. Paul brings the lofty question of holiness down to the level of ordinary, every day virtues and tells us we may know whether we are growing in holiness or love for God by asking ourselves the simple, practical question: *Am I more patient, more kind, more humble NOW than I used to be?*

If we must admit from the evidence of our habitual conduct, that the passing of time has brought no appreciable improvement in these ordinary virtues, then the most important task of our life is to look for the CAUSE of our spiritual backwardness; to find and apply the REMEDY.

If, on the other hand, we feel that there has been some improvement in virtue, this need not be an occasion for pride, anymore than to see that we have developed physically and intellectually should injure humility. We are *supposed* to grow! But we should profit by a study of the analysis suggested by St. Paul to make greater progress.

It is not to be taken for granted that frequent recitation of prayers and reception of Holy Communion should somehow guarantee spiritual progress, for some may detect no appreciable improvement in virtue after years of daily Mass, Holy Communion and other religious practices. Spiritual growth results rather from the will's cooperation with grace, whereby we so dispose the mind and heart as to allow the divine energy of grace to act unimpeded by self-will.

This subjective disposition, which is to be formed by our own efforts aided by grace, is the habit of acting-to-please-God. The infusion of grace into the soul at Baptism does not *of itself* change nature's inborn tendency of acting-to-please-self. Our spiritual task is to work for this inner transformation. Failure to do so is a failure in charity and is the cause of continued faults—the chief reason for a lack of spiritual growth.

COOPERATION WITH GRACE

We may illustrate the state of the soul before and after Baptism by the following simple diagram of two concentric circles.



The outer circle represents a human nature, body and soul, in the actual condition in which human life comes into existence after the Fall of our first parents, that is, deprived of grace, weakened and "prone to evil" (Gen. 8:21). At the moment of baptism, a new life is introduced; it is the divine life of grace restored, but only in its initial, undeveloped or, we might say, embryonic state (the inner circle).

Infused with grace are the three divine virtues of faith, hope and charity (the arrows). It is the will of God that by the exercise of these three virtues grace should "expand" or grow in us unto maturity: "to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). The inner circle should increase until it correspond to the outer circle, so that

all the powers of human nature are freely willed over to the purifying and perfecting influence of grace.

SELF MUST DECREASE

By reason of our first birth we have the disposition to act under the influence of our nature, that is, to *please ourselves*; but by reason of our second birth in Baptism we are obliged to change that disposition and form a new habit of acting under the influence of grace, that is, to *please God*. "We ought not to please ourselves," say St. Paul, "for Christ did not please Himself" (Rom. 15:1). As self is made to recede, the love of God can grow in us.

When St. John the Baptist was told that Christ had begun His ministry in the world, he exclaimed, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). So when we become conscious of Christ's presence in the soul, we must give place to Him; we must "die to ourselves," that we may "live to Christ." Our Savior said to St. Margaret of Cortona, "Every soul in a state of grace loses ground if she does not incessantly endeavor to develop that grace within her."

It is evident that the degree of spiritual development differs with each soul. Some, by earnest endeavor in the practice of purity of intention, may have gone far in overcoming their natural disposition of self-seeking, so that, though still imperfect, the habit of pleasing God predominates in their lives. A saint is one who, through self-annihilation, has allowed grace (the inner circle) to grow until it corresponds with nature (the outer circle), thereby fulfilling the Commandment to love God with the *whole* heart. Others may have made but little progress in this interior transformation, so that the tendency to please self continues to predominate in their activity. Still others may

have made no progress at all, and grace, thus hemmed in by self-love, is easily and often stifled by grievous sin.

The varying degrees of progress in grace may be graphically represented as follows:



Nature, although substantially sound and good, is nevertheless weakened, tainted, wounded, or infected with selfishness, through original and actual sin. In the diagram this condition is indicated by the shaded area of the outer circle. It is obvious that the more one acts under the influence of nature, that is, to please self, the more weakened the disposition becomes; hence the shading is in inverse proportion to the growth of grace. Conversely, the more one acts under the influence of grace, or to please God, the more nature is purified.

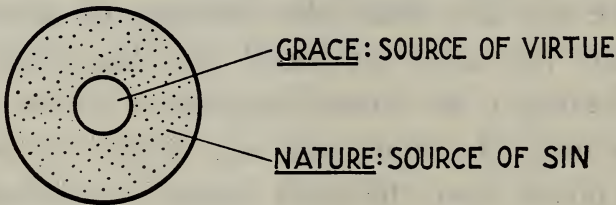
THE SOURCE OF ACTIVITY

The normal round of our routine actions proceeds from our habitual disposition. We do not, and in fact we could not, advert to every action in order to apply to it a supernatural and purifying motive; nor are we conscious, as a rule, of the selfishness that may be motivating our actions. Our ordinary and habitual actions proceed from our subjective disposition or *mentality*, in the way that pails of water are drawn from a well. If the water in the well is clear, the water in the pails is clear; in the degree that the water in the well is muddy, the water in the pails is muddy. Our actions for the most part, even when

good in themselves, are muddled with self-love. Whatever virtue is found in them has its source in grace, the divine life, the charity in us; whatever selfishness infects our good actions, and, of course, whatever sins we commit, take their rise in our self-seeking disposition, our *natural mentality*.

From the diagrams it should be clear that one increases in virtuous actions in proportion as one increases in the subjective disposition of charity, or what may be called "the Christian Mentality."

The diagram of the two concentric circles illustrates the inner cause of virtues and faults.



THE NATURAL MENTALITY IS THE CAUSE OF SIN

By developing this simple diagram we may now demonstrate *how* the natural mentality, the habit of pleasing self, is the cause of all our sins. But first let us see where the cause is NOT.

Suppose that on seeing a friend impatient you should ask the reason. In all probability he would put the blame on some annoying person or some troublesome incident. But the cause must, in fact, be sought elsewhere. That person or incident was only the *occasion* of the anger, and should have been, according to God's plan for sanctifying souls, the occasion for an act of virtue—the virtue of patience. If trying persons or incidents were the CAUSE of impatience, then Our Lord should have been impatient very frequently. But, on the contrary, the difficulties and hardships; the injustice, malice and cruelty of people around Him, were for Him occasions to manifest virtue. The only true answer to the question is this (but how many of us would admit it?): *I am impatient because I want my own way and I cannot have it. In this contradiction I ought to see and accept the will of God, Who ordains or permits it for my sanctification.*

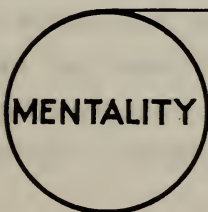
TWO TYPES OF SIN

We may divide sins into two classes, namely sins of *rebellion* and sins of *excess* or indulgence. The CAUSE of all the faults in both categories is this: *We desire to have our own way; we want persons and events to conform in all things to our own good pleasure.* When this natural mentality encounters something disagreeable to self, the normal result is a sin of rebellion—impatience, unkindness, disobedience, complaint. When this natural mentality on the other hand meets with some circumstance that is agreeable to self, there is the probability of a sin of excess—pride, greed, lust, sloth.

To illustrate this reaction, let us again make use of the circle, to represent the mentality. As already explained, our mentality is usually a mixture of the two influences of grace and nature, of love for God and love for self—like water that is in some degree muddy. For the purpose, however, of demonstrating and of studying the different reactions of nature and grace² we must separate the two mentalities, as represented by the two circles.

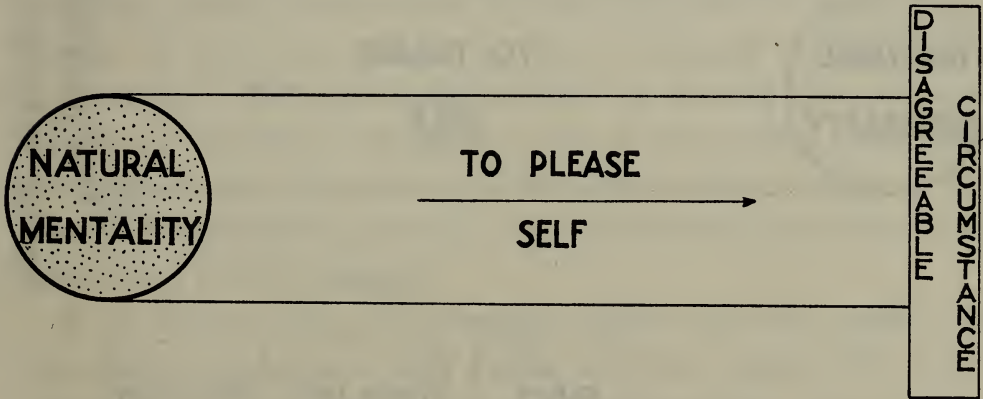
Our mentality or interior disposition is not something that we take off and put on and change like a suit. Whether at home, at school, at work, in church or at play, our mentality is with us—it IS us—and spontaneously, even if unconsciously,

² See *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III, chap. 54, "The Diverse Motions of Nature and Grace."



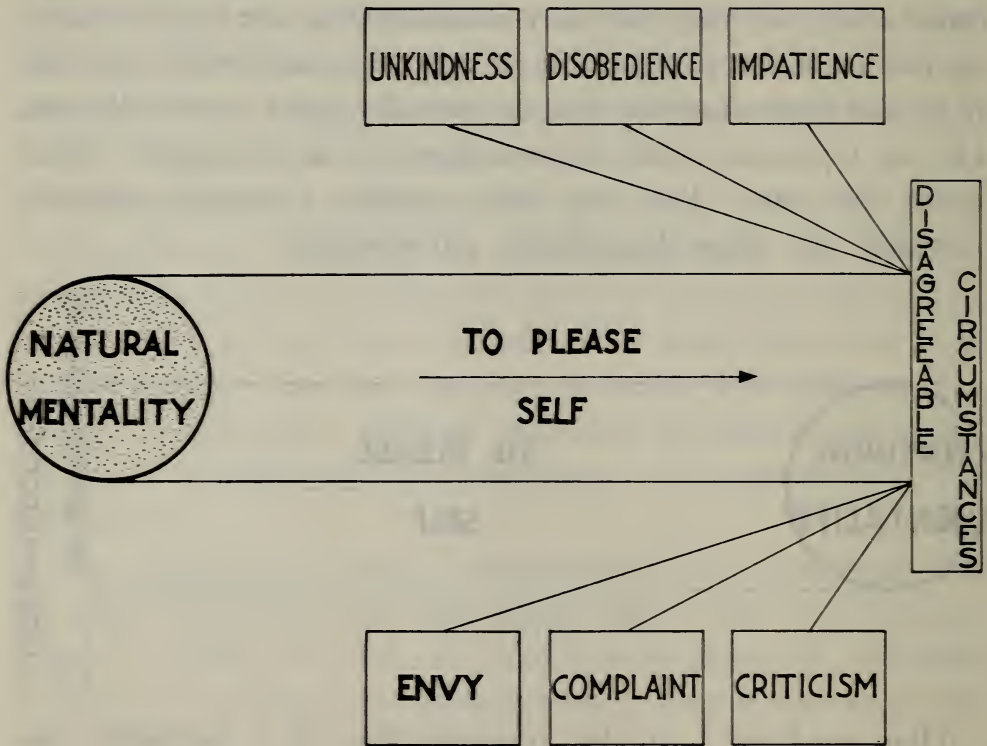
it provides the motive for what we do. The "path" of daily life along which our mentality travels with us we shall represent by two parallel lines.

As we follow the path of daily life we meet continuously with changing circumstances. For the most part these circumstances are routine or neutral, and therefore elicit no special reaction from us. But from time to time, and usually many times a day, we meet with circumstances that are not neutral to us, but are either disagreeable or agreeable, and which are likely to call forth reactions that are morally good or morally bad. Let us represent these circumstances by a rectangular block across our path. First we shall consider a natural mentality "crossed" by some disagreeable circumstance.



Here we have a graphic representation of a mentality, predominantly disposed to please self, meeting with a circumstance which is displeasing to it. The scene is set for a "collision"; for an unfavorable reaction, or, as we have called it, a *sin of rebellion*. The specific kind of sin depends on the nature of the disagreeable circumstance, but the cause of the sin is the same in every case—it is the *natural mentality*. When, for example, the circumstance is some annoyance, the result is

impatience; when it is a difficult or "unreasonable" command, the reaction is disobedience; when it is the unkindness of another, the reaction is to repay with unkindness. These and all such sins of rebellion are the EFFECTS produced from the CAUSE of the natural mentality meeting the CONDITION of a disagreeable circumstance. Here is the situation in graphic form.



In order to change the effects, that is, to overcome our sins, it is necessary to change the cause. It is usually not in our power to change or to control the condition—the circumstance we meet. Whatever happens to us outside of our own will or responsibility represents for us the will of God and has its place in God's plan for our sanctification. We cannot change *that*. But we can by degrees change our minds and hearts, and God

expects us to, so that we shall recognize His will and meet it with a favorable reaction—an act of virtue. “Be transformed in the newness of your mind,” says St. Paul, “that you may discern what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

DIG OUT THE ROOTS!

Spiritual writers liken the soul to a garden in which God seeks the flowers of virtue, while He despises the weeds of sin. The same soil will nourish either flowers or weeds. The difference depends on the *roots*. The roots are the CAUSE; the soil is the CONDITION; the flowers or the weeds are the EFFECTS. If a man is cultivating a flower garden and finds it becoming choked with weeds, he must dig out the roots of the weeds. It would be useless for him to change the soil, even if he could; and it is equally futile to cut off the offensive weeds at the surface, leaving the roots in the ground. They will grow again, since the same CAUSE (the roots) remains in the same CONDITION (the soil) and therefore the same EFFECTS (the weeds) will reappear.

If an examination of conscience reveals that the garden of our soul is overgrown with faults, we must attack the cause, which, as we have seen, is our *natural mentality*. It is useless to try to “change the soil,” that is, to escape from our circumstances, for the same or similar ones will occur again. The Will of God will always surround us to sanctify us. Neither does it solve the problem merely to “cut down the weeds” of sin in the Sacrament of Penance. With proper contrition the sins are forgiven in Confession, but unless there is an effort to “pull out the roots,” to remove the CAUSE of our sins, the sins will simply reappear week after week, month after month.

Just as weeds grow more abundantly by being cut, so perhaps our faults, with their roots left undisturbed, will be even greater and more numerous with the passing of time. We may have wondered at this phenomenon in our own lives, but not knowing the cause we have regarded as inevitable the continued repetition of our faults.

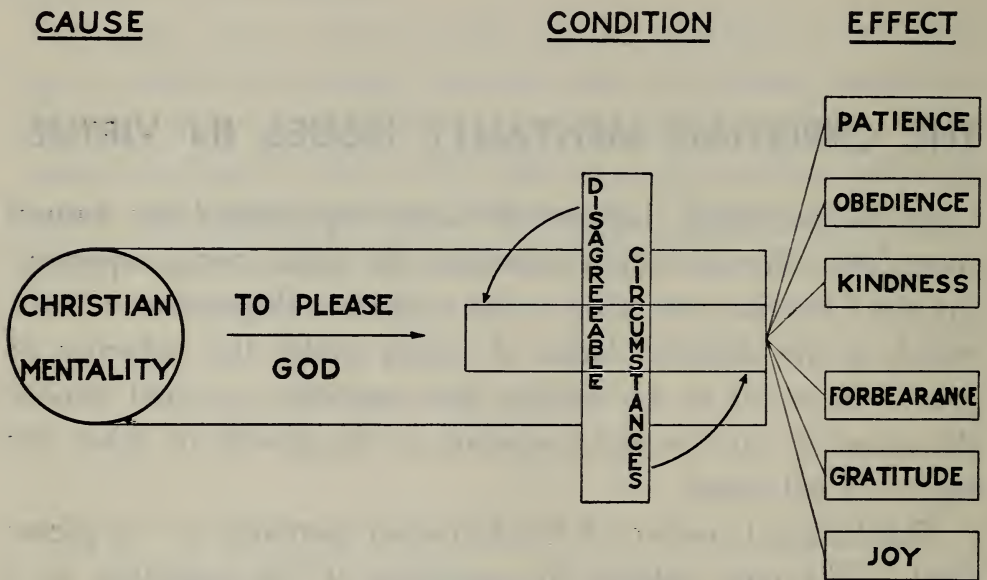
We must set to work to root out the tendency to self-seeking, the habit of wanting our own way, of pleasing ourselves, or what we have called the *natural mentality*, and learn to be "rooted in Christ" (Col. 2:7), that is, to put on the "mind of Christ"—to acquire a *Christian Mentality*. "If the root is holy," says St. Paul, "so also are the branches" (Rom. 11:16).

THE CHRISTIAN MENTALITY ISSUES IN VIRTUE

In the preceding diagram the circle represented the natural mentality. Now we shall substitute the inner circle, representing the Christian mentality or the subjective disposition of love, which is the acquired habit of acting under the influence of grace. In so far as we develop this mentality we shall remove the cause of our sins and cooperate in the growth of grace, the source of all virtue.

The habitual motive of the Christian mentality is "to please God." We now indicate the reactions of this mentality as it meets the same *disagreeable circumstances*. Trained to live by faith, it recognizes that every disagreeable event is a purifying *cross*—God's holy will cutting down across man's unholy will, as shown in the diagram. Desiring habitually to please God, it sees and accepts the cross as an *opportunity* to do so; it does not regard it as an *obstacle* to pleasing self, as it appeared to the natural mentality. Seen as the will of God, the cross of a displeasing incident is turned and "carried on the shoulder" of the Christian mentality, evoking spontaneously the favorable effect of an act of virtue, or, to use the other metaphor, the roots of love for God nourished in the soil of trials produce the flowers of Christ-like deeds.

The change from the faults enumerated in the preceding diagram to their contrary virtues shown in the following diagram is brought about only by a change of the CAUSE, the uprooting of self-love, of the natural mentality, and the substitution of the roots of love-for-God—the *Christian Mentality*.



To complete this diagram we shall now deal with the opposite reactions of the natural and supernatural mentalities when confronted by the other set of circumstances, which we call "agreeable." We have spoken of both these sets of circumstances as manifesting the will of God in our regard, for, as the author of the *Imitation of Christ* explains, God's will is made known to us in tribulations (disagreeable circumstances) and consolations (agreeable circumstances).

The natural mentality, habitually intent on pleasing self, when confronted with something pleasing to the senses, welcomes and accepts it as an opportunity to enjoy itself, and then unre-

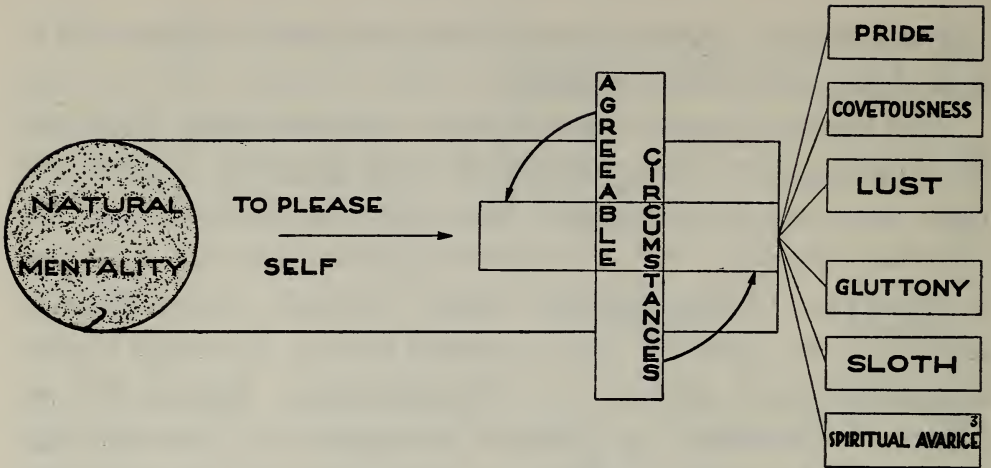
strained nature, "prone to evil from its youth" (Gen. 3:21), is in danger of sinful indulgence.

This analysis throws some light on the psychology of sin, on the mental process that precedes sin, and therefore suggests the right approach to conversion from sin—the formation of the Christian mentality. Sin is an offense against God, and is likened to crucifying Christ again. A sinner, however, unless he is a diabolical one, does not *want* to offend God or to crucify Christ; he simply wants pleasure or self-satisfaction. Because his resistance is weakened by habitual indulgence in pleasures that are lawful he easily succumbs to pleasures that are unlawful, perhaps genuinely regretting that he cannot have the pleasures without offending God.

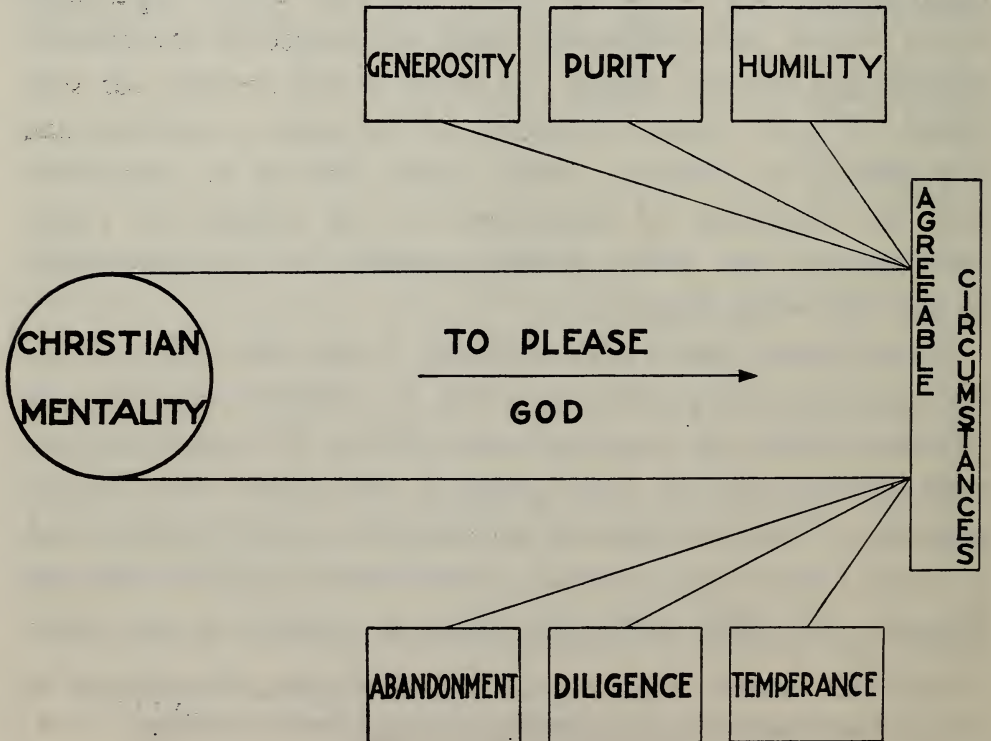
An appeal to human sympathy for the sufferings of Christ, or to fear of the Justice of God, may well inspire repentance in the sinner, but will hardly touch the source of the trouble, namely, his habitual hunger for pleasure and aversion for self-denial. It is the natural mentality of the sinner, nourished and strengthened by pleasure, which carries him by its momentum over the borderline of temperance in the excesses of vanity, covetousness, lust, sloth, spiritual avarice,³ etc., as represented in the following diagram.

To overcome these faults of excess, it does not suffice to confess them, nor is it possible, as a rule, to avoid the circumstances. We must attack the root and cause, that is, we must cooperate with grace to put on a new heart, a new spirit, the *Christian mentality*. Then, in virtue of the habit of acting to please God, we shall become spontaneously alert to the danger of misusing pleasure. We shall apply the brake, as it were, to our nature

³ *Spiritual Avarice*: a fault of attachment to spiritual consolations. It betrays the presence, in some degree, of the natural mentality.



by the practice of self-denial, using pleasure according to Christian moderation, with the motive of love for God. Then, in the same agreeable circumstances, virtues will begin to replace our faults, as illustrated in the following diagram.



LOVE IS THE WHOLE LAW

What is represented in the diagram by the circle, namely, the heart, spirit, disposition or mentality, is the realm or sphere of the Great Commandment of Love, by which God would have us love Him with our "whole heart, whole soul, and whole mind." It is there that the transformation must take place. We must allow the love of God, introduced into the soul by the grace of Baptism, to come to full growth, by withdrawing the obstacle of self-seeking.

What is represented in the diagram by the "boxes," that is, the effects or reactions to circumstances, are the realm or sphere of the Ten Commandments. The diagram illustrates the principle that the observance of the Ten Commandments depends on the observance of the Great Commandment, just as flowers depend on the roots from which they grow. Thus, Our Lord said that on the Commandment of Love "depends the whole law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40). He expressed the same thought many times in different words: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me" (John 14:21), and "If you love Me keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Sometimes these words are invoked to support the wrong notion that a Christian need only try to avoid breaking the Ten Commandments, and that supernatural motivation and progressive purity of intention are not necessary. But it is a self-evident contradiction to say that we shall try to avoid sin while at the same time we keep and nourish the very root and cause of sin, namely, the infected natural mentality, the habitual motive of pleasing self. We shall make little progress in keeping the Ten Commandments, with all their implications, unless we are making progress in fulfilling the Great Commandment.

THE REVELATION OF HEARTS

Love is not an action, but a disposition. An action, whether of thought, word, or deed, can be recognized and known for what it is, but a disposition cannot. *We* cannot read our hearts to see whether love for God or love for self predominates in them, But God can. He is "the Searcher of Hearts" (Ps. 7:10). He sees the roots of selfishness hidden in our hearts before they issue into the noxious weeds of sin. God wants *us* to know that they are there, and that they need to be eradicated, and so He allows us to be tried by our circumstances. These are the soil in which the roots of love are nourished, and our reactions reveal whether love for God or love for self prevails in our lives, just as flowers or weeds reveal the kind of roots in the soil. The following text from St. Paul seems to express this thought: "I press on towards the goal (of love for God). Let us then . . . be of this mind (the Christian mentality); and if in any point you are minded otherwise (the natural mentality), this also God (by your circumstances) will reveal to you (by the effects, your sins)" (Phil. 3:14-15).

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

In the light of the foregoing diagrams, the significance of the following texts is perhaps more evident.

a) Regarding the Natural Mentality.

"Out of the heart (natural mentality) come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, immortality, thefts, false witness, blasphemies . . ." (Matt. 15:19).

"The bad tree (natural mentality) bears bad fruit" (Matt. 7:17).

"As they have resolved against possessing the knowledge of God (Christian Mentality), God has given them up to a reprobate sense (natural mentality), so that they do what is not

fitting; being filled with all iniquity, malice, immorality, avarice . . . proud . . . disobedient . . ." (Rom. 1:28-29).

"Now the works of the flesh (natural mentality) are manifest, which are immorality . . . enmities, contentions, jealousies, anger . . . and suchlike" (Gal. 5:19).

"Men will be lovers of self (natural mentality), covetous, haughty, proud, disobedient . . . unkind . . . loving pleasure more than God; having a semblance indeed of piety, but disowning its power (Christian mentality)" (II Tim. 3:2-5).

b) Regarding the Christian Mentality.

"I have run the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my heart" (Ps. 118:32).

"Thou hast proved my heart (by circumstances) . . . and iniquity has not been found in me" (Ps. 16:3).

"The good tree (Christian mentality) cannot bear bad fruit" (Matt. 7:18).

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man from his good treasure (Christian mentality) brings forth good things (acts of virtue)" (Matt. 12:34-35).

"If the root (Christian mentality) is holy, so also are the branches" (Rom. 11:16).

"Charity (Christian mentality) is patient, is kind, does not envy . . ." (I Cor. 13:4).

"Put on therefore . . . a heart (Christian mentality) of mercy; kindness, humility, meekness, patience . . ." (Col. 3:13).

"But the fruit of the spirit (Christian mentality) is: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness . . ." (Gal. 5:22-23).

LOVE UNIFIES SPIRITUAL EFFORT

The preceding diagrams serve also to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of striving to acquire virtues separately (as is

recommended, for example, in the Particular Examen of Conscience) without *first* laying the foundation—the Christian Mentality. The virtues grow with and from charity or love for God, and they grow together, like the fingers of the hand. The words of Our Lord, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:29), implicitly include all the virtues.

When the spiritual life is regarded from the aspect of acquiring numerous virtues one at a time, it appears very complicated and discouraging, as indeed it is. Without the solid foundation of the Christian Mentality, when attention is turned to building another wall of virtue, the wall raised by previous efforts easily collapses under the pressure of trials.

The formation of the habit of acting to please God unifies and simplifies spiritual effort. This simplification is illustrated by the foregoing diagrams. Imagine that the circle, with its extension of two parallel lines, represents a piece of rope—a single unit, yet made of numerous strands woven together. Regarded as a piece of rope, it is a unit and a simple thing, but when unraveled into its component strands (the various virtues) it is very complex. We complicate the spiritual life when we ignore its unifying principle. “As the many branches on the tree all spring from the same root,” writes St. Gregory the Great, “so from the love of God do all other virtues spring.” We must simplify spiritual development by striving to acquire that supernatural habit of mind and heart from which the virtues will issue more or less spontaneously in the varying circumstances of daily life. We must put on what St. Paul calls “a *heart* of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience” (Col. 3:12).

Before studying a method of cultivating this habit of pleasing God, let us first consider the nature of a habit and the steps involved in its formation.

THE NATURE OF HABIT

A habit may be defined as: *a practical facility of doing something*; or: *a disposition to act made easy by repetition*. We have formed many habits during life, physical, intellectual and moral. We have learned to walk, to talk, to be polite, etc. We may have learned to typewrite, to play a musical instrument, or to drive a car. All these are examples of acquired habits. An analysis of the process involved in forming such habits will aid us in forming the spiritual habit of acting to please God.

These are three distinguishable steps or stages in the formation of a habit, namely, the Intention, the Practice and the Foundation.

1. *The Intention*. No good habit is ever acquired unless one intends and decides to form it. Bad habits are easily acquired because fallen human nature is prone to evil rather than to good.

2. *The Practice*. This is the deliberate doing of something repeatedly and systematically.

3. *The Foundation*. This is the first degree of facility, by which one may be said to have acquired the habit. It is imperfect, but it is at least the beginning or basis of the perfection of the habit.

To illustrate these three steps we may use the example of learning to play the piano. The first step is to make the *intention* and decide to learn; without this one would never begin. Then one enters upon a period of methodical and painstaking *practice*, and with perseverance, arrives after some time at the stage when one may honestly and humbly claim to be able to play the piano, meaning that one has achieved a certain facility which is, however, only the beginning of one's career as a pianist. It is the necessary, though elementary, *foundation* of future development towards perfection of the acquired art.

We may also use the example of learning to drive a car. This is more apt, because it involves progressive movement towards a destination, like the soul's progress in holiness towards heaven. Suppose I go to a driving school and ask for lessons. An instructor gives me a manual explaining the essential mechanism of the car and the rules of the road, and tells me to study it. Soon after, I return to the instructor, able to recite the rules perfectly, whereupon he congratulates me, tells me I am now qualified to drive, and sends me off on the road! True, I have all the rules in my mind, but I do not know how to drive, because I have not yet had the practice needed to form the habit. If I attempt to drive in traffic I shall meet with difficulties and accidents at every turn, even though my head is filled with rules and regulations.

HOW TO AVOID SPIRITUAL ACCIDENTS

Now let us apply the analogy. The Christian life is a journey on the path of love for God. God has given me the "car," that is, my body and soul with all its powers of nature and grace. My book of rules is the Catechism, and the Sacraments supply the "fuel and servicing." All that God asks of me is that I *practice* and learn how to drive the car according to the rules, and so make progress on my spiritual journey.

(Might we not find in this analogy the reason why some people see no need of receiving the Sacraments frequently? A person who is not going anywhere cannot be persuaded to buy fuel for his car. But one who is about to make a long journey realizes the need of supplying his car with sufficient fuel, and of stopping for a periodic check of the motor. Only one who is intent on making progress in holiness will realize the need of frequent Confession and Holy Communion.)

In order to make progress on the way, to avoid collisions with disagreeable circumstances, and to apply the brake of restraint in temptations, it is not enough that I study the "rules" of religion—the Ten Commandments and the Liturgy. I might know the Catechism by heart from cover to cover, but that knowledge of itself would not qualify me to meet life's circumstances with the proper supernatural attitude, any more than the *knowledge* of the traffic rules would qualify me to drive a car in such a manner as to avoid accidents and violations of the law. Unless I form by practice the habit of living for God, I shall continue in my native habit of living for myself, with its progeny of faults, notwithstanding all my religious knowledge and my church-going. Such a manner of life is what is known as religious externalism or *pious naturalism*. Even though *afterwards* I recognize my faults, realizing it was wrong to rebel against circumstances that were disagreeable to me, and wrong to cross the line of moderation when things were agreeable. Sorrow afterwards, always and only afterwards provides no remedy. If I am truly sorry I shall try to remove the cause of the trouble. The judge in a traffic court does not acquit a man accused of traffic violations who pleads that he knows all the rules perfectly, who promises he will apologize after every accident, but who shows no intention of learning to drive properly!

SIGNPOSTS POINTING TO HEAVEN

Let us exploit the example further. For the benefit of drivers and to help them to reach their destination, the government erects signposts at road-forks for direction, and traffic lights at crossroads for safety. To one who knows how to drive, these are most helpful, but to one attempting to drive without hav-

ing learned, they are hazards rather than helps, obstacles on the path of an ill-controlled car.

In order to direct us on the path of holiness to heaven, God places the "signposts" of His will in the conditions which surround us. The "cross" of some disagreeable person or event will read "Patience!" or "Kindness!" or "Obedience!" and point the way to greater love and to heaven; but to one who loves self rather than God, these manifestations of His will are only obstacles in his way, and he "collides" with them by impatience, unkindness, disobedience, blaming the person or event as the cause of his fault. How absurd it would be for a man whose car had collided with a signpost because he did not know how to drive, to blame the signpost for "being in his way!" It is equally unreasonable for us to lay the blame for our faults on our circumstances.

DANGER SIGNALS

When a driver approaches a stop-light he must react spontaneously and promptly. It is too late then to *look for* the brake and the clutch and try to recall what the book of rules says about them. If he has not the *habit* of reacting promptly, the rules in his mind, as yet uncoordinated with his feet and hands, will not help him, and he will pass the red light. So when temptation arises it is of little help simply to know that conscience or the catechism says it is sinful not to resist. If one has not built up a certain spontaneity in recognizing the opportunity to please God by preferring Him to the "agreeable circumstance" of temptation, the habitual impulse of pleasing self will be the momentum to carry one past the "red light" into some sin of indulgence.

Even a good driver might sometimes have an accident, through momentary inadvertence, perhaps even a serious one—but not frequently or continuously. St. Peter sinned seriously, in a moment of fear and confusion, but it was surely not through lack of a disposition of love for Our Lord. And it is unlikely that he ever offended again.

APPLICATION TO THE CHRISTIAN MENTALITY

Let us now apply the process of forming a habit to the spiritual habit of living to please God; of acquiring the disposition of acting habitually under the influence of grace rather than of nature; of "putting on the mind of Christ," as St. Paul expresses it, or of forming what we here call "the Christian mentality."

THE THREE STAGES

1. THE INTENTION

We shall never form the Christian mentality unless we first determine to do so. The first and essential step for every Christian, therefore, is to *decide* to love God with his whole heart, whole mind, and whole soul. He must make the intention of cooperating with grace so as to acquire the habit of *doing all things to please God*. This is a principle of primary importance.

A person is free to choose whether or not he will learn to play the piano, or to form any such physical or mental habit, but no Christian is free to choose whether or not he will learn to love God with his whole heart. This is a commandment, "the greatest and the first Commandment," on which all other

commandments depend. So it is evident that EVERY CHRISTIAN IS BOUND TO HAVE THE INTENTION TO STRIVE FOR PERFECTION, TO BECOME A SAINT, no matter what his state of life. Although this obligation is clearly expressed in the Gospel, and by the Saints and spiritual writers, it would seem that many Christians are not aware of it. They labor under the false impression that only the effort to avoid sin is required of them. The obligation of forming and perfecting the habit of love for God (without which, as we have seen before, it is a virtual impossibility to avoid sin) may never have entered their mind. Any practical exhortation to sanctity they dismiss as applying only to priests, nuns and the like. To remove the popular misconception regarding this obligation, and to convince *all* Christians of its necessity, the Church has spoken in unmistakable terms. Here are the words of Pope Pius XI:

“Christ has constituted the Church holy and the source of sanctity, and all those who take her for guide and teacher must by the Divine Will tend to holiness of life. ‘This is the will of God, your sanctification,’ says St. Paul. What kind of sanctity? The Lord Himself declared it when He said: ‘You, therefore, are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.’ Let no one think that this is addressed to a select few and that others are permitted to remain in an inferior degree of virtue. The law obliges, as is clear, absolutely everyone in the world without exception.” (Encyclical on *The Third Centenary of the Death of St. Francis de Sales.*)

In the light of this explicit declaration, a Catholic should ask himself: *Have I the intention to love God with my whole heart; to strive in all things to please God; to become perfect; to be a saint?* A sincere answer to this soul-searching question might be very revealing! This does not mean, of course, that a

person is expected to be perfect here and now, any more than one is an accomplished and finished pianist as soon as he makes up his mind to play; nor does it mean that actual perfection will be attained. Nevertheless the sincere *intention* is the necessary preliminary step. The *execution* of the intention follows gradually, just as a plant takes time to grow. If we sincerely wish and effectively strive for perfection, God will help us now, and in the end will accept our imperfect achievement; but if we refuse or neglect to aim at the goal of perfection which He has set for us, what help may we expect during life and what excuse shall we make at the Judgment?

2. THE PRACTICE

The second stage in the formation of any good habit is the actual and deliberate doing of something repeatedly and in a systematic way. The effort is necessarily a conscious one until such time as it comes spontaneously from the habit.

To put into execution the intention to learn to play the piano, one must determine to devote sufficient time to practice, and preferably to choose some method to follow. Various methods may be recommended by different teachers; each method may have its own particular merits, but the important thing is that *some* method be followed, and, as is usually the case, under the guidance of a teacher.

The question now presents itself: *How much practice is necessary to make progress in forming a habit?* There may be too little, and also there may be too much. To practice the piano for two minutes each day would be useless; and to practice twelve hours a day would overtax both mind and muscles. The answer is: *Sufficient drill or exercise is required that some impression remain from one practice to the next.* Obviously,

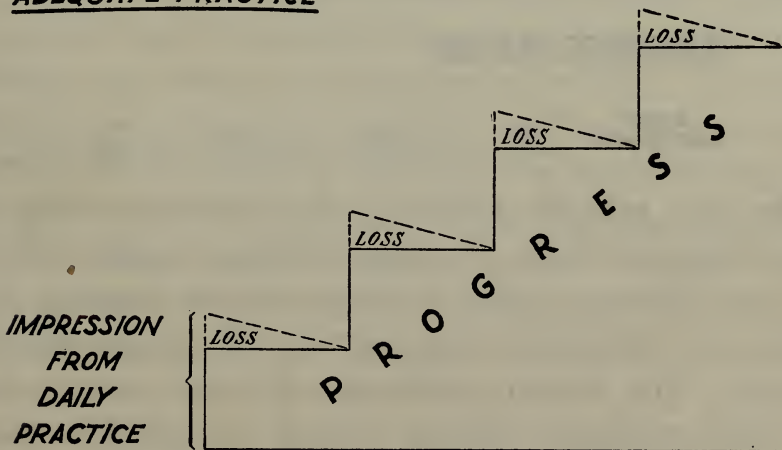
the greater the impression made, within reasonable limits, the more will remain, and the sooner the habit will be formed.

The purpose of each session of practice is to make an ever-increasing impression on the faculties. In the case of piano practice, it is to coordinate more and more the mind and the muscular response. Some of the impression or coordination is lost between practices because the former condition reasserts itself. If the session of practice is insufficient to build up enough facility, or to leave enough impression, so that something remains for the next practice, then no progress can be made. One would always be beginning and never progressing.

This analysis of the forming of a habit is important in its application to the necessary spiritual habit of living to please God; to the acquiring of a Christian mentality, as we shall see.

First let us use a diagram to illustrate the idea. Suppose that each step in the following diagram represents the impression left by each practice (for example, two hours' daily practice at the piano). During the course of the day, until the subsequent practice, some of the ability acquired, of the lesson learned, or

ADEQUATE PRACTICE

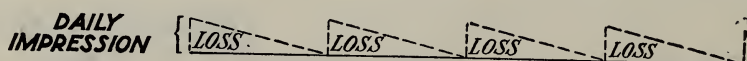


the impression made, is lost. When, however, the practice is long enough that some of the impression survives the inevitable loss, then the next practice has something on which to build, and each practice contributes to progress. The greater the surviving impression, the greater the progress.

If the time and application to the practice does not develop enough ability, nor make sufficient impression to survive, then there is no progress. (Let us keep in mind that we are concerned in this treatise precisely with the phenomenon of the *lack of progress* in the spiritual habit of the love of God, and with the search for its cause and remedy.)

Let us suppose that a pianoforte teacher, disappointed that a pupil showed no sign of progress since the previous lesson, inquired about the practice. But the pupil insisted that he had practiced *every day* as he was told. Then, on further questioning, the teacher learned that the "daily practice" lasted only two minutes! That would explain why, in spite of the daily practice, there was no progress whatever. Graphically the case may be illustrated by the following diagram, showing that the slight impression made by the very brief practice was dissipated in the course of the ensuing twenty-four hours.

INADEQUATE PRACTICE



The same principle applies to the formation of the spiritual habit of love for God; of doing all things to please God. There must be *sufficient* practice to ensure definite progress. It is important to understand this point in relation to the Morning Offering. The Morning Offering, of itself, merely as an upward and momentary glance to God, unapplied to the reality

of the day's actions, no matter what merit may derive from it, is as inadequate for progress in forming the Christian mentality, as the pupil's two-minute daily practice was insufficient for learning to play the piano. The existing natural disposition, unless progressively evicted from the mind and heart by substituting supernatural motivation in one's actions, will assert itself against the morning intention and dissipate its slight impression. The value and significance of the Morning Offering will be discussed in more detail when we consider some of the faulty notions which hinder spiritual development.

A SUGGESTED METHOD OF PRACTICE

We have said that *the practice*, which is the second stage in the formation of a habit, should be systematic, that is, there should be some method adopted and followed perseveringly until the foundation of the habit, the Christian mentality, is established. Very often, sincere resolutions and energetic efforts are made towards acquiring virtue, but from lack of method, the efforts are haphazard and ineffective, or at least, less effective than they might be if coordinated and directed into a definite plan. A person might conceivably learn to play the piano without following any method or engaging any teacher, and make some progress by persevering practice; but we may presume that he would do far better by adhering to systematic direction. This is equally true of the formation of the Christian mentality, and for this reason various spiritual authors suggest some method of practice. *Frequent* renewal of the intention is recommended by *all*, because the natural habit innate in us, prompting us to seek our own interests rather than God's good pleasure, will reassert itself in our actions *repeatedly* until the habit of

self-seeking is more or less supplanted by the habit of living for God.

St. Alphonsus and others recommend the renewal of the intention before the principal actions of the day, namely, prayer, meals, work and recreation, suggesting that we say always, at least mentally, "Lord, in this action I intend not my own pleasure, but only the accomplishment of Thy will." We shall now examine and exploit this method to see how helpful it can be.

THE INTENTION JOINED TO REALITY

The offering of an action to God has important and practical implications which must be recognized and included in the offering if it is to be something more than a pious formula. The offering means that the circumstances surrounding the ensuing action are accepted in advance as representing God's will and providing opportunities or tests by which the sincerity of the offering may be proved. For example, to say grace before eating, which means that one intends to eat for the glory of God, and then to grumble and complain because there is no flavor to the soup, suggests that the relationship has not been seen between the good intention and the acceptance of the very trials that would prove the practical value of the offering.

It does not suffice that an intention be a mere upward glance to God unrelated to the circumstances of the action offered. It must be a *forward* glance embracing in anticipation the will of God in whatever form it may manifest itself during the course of the action. With the intention thus brought down from the stratosphere of pious theory to the ground-level of reality, we begin to recognize and gradually to cooperate with the will of God in all our circumstances.

It is evident that an intention made just prior to an action

and projected over it, is more likely to retain some of its power to see God's will in the circumstances of that action than is an isolated, distant and practically unrelated Morning Offering. Moreover, such an intention repeated over a period of time is the practice needed to form the habit of love for God; of accepting His will and practicing the virtues implied in the love of God.

THE REWARD OF EFFORT

Because the practice of any worthwhile habit requires special concentration, and application to elementary exercises, it is usually rather repugnant to nature; but the repugnance must be overcome by perseverance. How many accomplished artists look back with gratitude to parents and teachers who once seemed heartless and tyrannical in their insistence on the tiresome repetition of seemingly trifling exercises! Until some facility is acquired, any practice may be unpleasant, but as the results appear we are encouraged to continue. The facility of action means that what was outside of us has by repetition been built up in us, and may now be produced from within.

Since the habit of living to please God is neither in us by nature nor infused into us with grace, it has to be established in us by practice. Then the acquired habit, under the influence of grace, will prompt us to act for God.

THE NEED OF EXTERNAL REMINDERS

In order to ensure the renewal of the intention before the principal actions of the day, it is important to use something to remind us. Since the reminder does not yet come from within, some external stimulus is needed—something deliberately placed to attract our attention. The more striking the reminder, the better. It is to tell us to offer the action to God and *there-*

fore to accept His will in the accompanying circumstances, whatever they may be. In material affairs when we wish to remember something we use external reminders, even to the proverbial "string around the finger." Should we not be equally practical in spiritual matters?

THE FOUR PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

1. *Prayer.*

Prayer is the first, and of course the most important, action of the day. For even so good an action we need to make the intention of performing it for the glory of God and of accepting His will during the course of it. A few examples of unfavorable but common reactions to circumstances, will serve to show that the acceptance of God's will is not to be taken for granted simply because the action, like prayer, is religious in character. Detailed examples would depend on one's state of life, but simply to illustrate the point let us consider the act of assisting at Mass. Certain inconveniences or annoyance are often associated with it. Perhaps a fellow-worshipper continually coughs, or mutters his prayers aloud, or rattles his rosary (an example mentioned by *The Little Flower*). The reaction to such trifling annoyances is all too often quite unfavorable. Even a holy person might fail in patience now and then, but when annoyance is felt and manifested habitually and as a matter of course by religious-minded people, it suggests that they are unaware of the relation between the *intention* of living for God and the actual fulfillment of the intention by accepting the crosses which surround the action.

Circumstances which are outside our responsibility or control, such as those mentioned above, represent for us the will of God. How else shall we prove that we act for God's glory

except by recognizing and taking up such daily crosses by patience, obedience and the other virtues? How can a student prove that he has studied his lessons unless he is able to pass a given test? These crosses are frequent tests given us by God to remind us of His presence; of His plan for our sanctification, and also to give us occasions to prove our love for Him.

Prayer has also its agreeable circumstances. Participation in functions and ceremonies can become an occasion for self-exaltation. May processions, for example, those beautiful tributes to the humble Virgin, can be occasions for a display of vanity—if the glory of God is forgotten.

God sometimes gives spiritual consolations in prayer. The natural mind has a tendency to "spiritual avarice," that is, to *seek* these consolations and to complain, or even abandon practices of prayer, if they are withdrawn and the soul left in aridity. The Christian mentality, seeking to please God and not self, prays independently of the circumstance of consolation or of dryness, and practices abandonment to God's good pleasure.

2. *Work.*

St. Alphonsus mentions work as the next principal action of the day, and St. Paul exhorts us, "Whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). It is an encouraging thought that our work, no matter what its nature, if it be honest labor, can and should give glory to God, by being offered to Him. "An action of the most trivial kind, as far as human estimation goes," writes Fr. Edward Leen, "may be wonderfully pleasing in God's eyes if it proceeds from a soul in which charity is great" (*In the Likeness of Christ*). But, as we have seen, charity according to St. Paul, "is patient, is kind, is not puffed up. . . ." Our work, therefore, is pleasing to

God if we recognize the circumstances which surround it as means of expressing charity through patience, kindness, humility, etc. Countless annoyances from persons and events may arise in our work. What great spiritual loss—to be blinded by natural mentality to such numerous opportunities of growing in grace! It is like walking through a gold mine and coming out empty-handed.

Work, too, is not without its agreeable aspects. There is the satisfaction of seeing one's work well done, the compliments and praise of others—things which can lead to pride. There is the pursuit of gain, which may lead to covetousness and avarice and neglect of duty. Only the Christian mentality will turn these things to the glory of God. To develop this mentality by the method suggested, we should use some external *reminder* to renew the intention to do this work for the glory of God, and to be on the alert to see and accept His will in whatever disagreeable or agreeable incidents arise during the course of it. Suggestions might be made, but since types and places of work are so varied, it is better left to the individual to choose his own reminders.

3. *Meals.*

The vital necessity of taking food makes *eating* one of the principal actions of the day, and St. Paul indicates its importance when he says, "Whether you eat or drink or do anything else, do all for the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). How many faults are committed in this necessary action! How much complaining there is in families about food, especially by children, who "do not like this" and "will not eat that!" In institutions how much grumbling about the food that is served! Usually it is not a question of the substantial quality or quantity of the food,

but of personal fads and fancies. The complaints are made simply because something is not quite suited to the taste. Our Lord surely reproved such complaining when He said, "Do not be anxious for . . . what you shall eat" (Matt. 6:25). These "lost opportunities" manifest the astonishing discrepancy between our intentions and our actions. We propose to eat for the glory of God, not merely to please ourselves, yet we fail to pass the tests that God gives occasionally to see whether we mean what we say. The cause of the failure is the natural mentality which remains entrenched in us despite our good intentions, until we apply ourselves to forming a Christian mentality, and view things supernaturally.

Since the act of eating is, generally speaking, agreeable to nature, it can easily be the occasion of sins of excess or indulgence. This was indicated graphically in the diagram showing how the natural mentality, when confronted by agreeable circumstances, is prone to excess. We know how true this is regarding food. The cause of intemperance, of lack of abstemiousness at table, of unwillingness to practice mortification, is not that food is pleasing to the taste; the cause is the habitual desire of pleasing self. To the Christian mentality, the good things of the table, after supplying the needs of the body, provide opportunities to offer gifts of love to God. Thus, St. Thomas, explaining the Cardinal Virtues, says, "Temperance abandons, as far as nature can bear it, what the body demands" (Ia, IIae, q. 61, a. 5).

To follow the suggested method of practice, some external *reminder* is probably necessary to evoke before meals the intention of eating to please God, and *therefore* to be ready for opportunities of expressing love for God in acts of virtue, for: "charity is patient . . . is not self-seeking and bears with all

things." The grace said before meals *should* be the reminder, but perhaps it has become routine.

4. *Recreation.*

The last of the four principal actions of the day mentioned by St. Alphonsus is recreation. Recreation being of its nature a pleasant occupation, the probability is that the agreeable circumstances will far outnumber the disagreeable, so that the dangers surrounding it are chiefly sins of excess—vanity, greed, intemperance, immodesty, sloth, etc.

Recreation is a good and necessary thing, but it is to be taken for the glory of God, and not loved and enjoyed merely for the sake of pleasure. We are not excused from the Great Commandment of love for God during the time of play.

If there does not yet exist in us the abiding habit of doing all things to please God, there is real danger of misusing our recreations. The vanity, intemperance and squandering of time, not to mention grosser offenses, which so often accompany the taking of recreation, are simply the evil fruit of the natural mentality. It seeks habitually to please self and is carried to excesses by the very momentum of its desires. The supernatural motive of pleasing God must be the rule for a Christian's amusements as for all his other actions. A little reflection will show how effectively this motive would regulate recreation; indeed it is the only bulwark against that vanity and worldliness which has invaded the Christian life under cover of the false maxim which ignores the obligation of doing all to please God and says: "Enjoy yourself, but keep out of sin!"

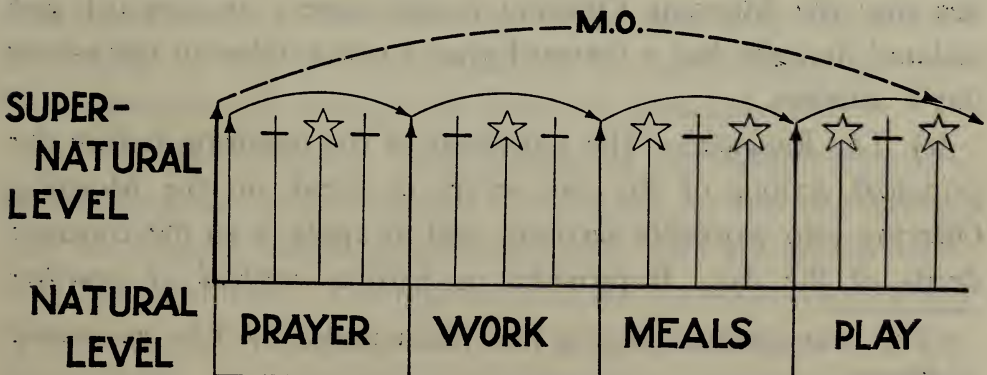
Recreation is not spared its disagreeable circumstances—delays occasioned by people, events, the weather; disappointments in expected joys; errors and defeats in games. One wonders

how many Christians realize that these are tests—opportunities of proving that one takes his recreation for the glory of God. A Christian mentality profits by these “opportunities” and at the same time gives spiritual value to all our amusements, preserves us from attachment to them and protects us from the dangers which surround them.

As with the other three principal actions, an external reminder is especially necessary before recreation, to adjust the mind to the glory of God.

THE SUGGESTED METHOD IN GRAPHIC FORM

Let us now illustrate this *method of practice* by means of a diagram showing a day's activity divided into the four principal actions mentioned above. Since these are our main occupations, if we can learn by means of them to form the habit of pleasing God, then the numerous incidental and less significant details of daily life will also be brought under the influence of the interior habit so formed. Each day is a life in miniature, so that to *live* for God, as we are bound to do, means to perform our daily actions for Him. Until the supernatural disposition is formed, our mentality remains more or less on the natural



level, with our actions infested by the selfishness of fallen nature. The diagram begins, therefore, with the actions of the day on the natural plane, and illustrates how they may be raised to the supernatural plane and sustained there.

MEANING OF SYMBOLS USED

1) The Arrows represent the renewal of the intention. The first and heaviest arrow is for the Morning Offering. The other four arrows indicate the renewal of intention before the principal actions. The projection over each action embraces the Will of God in whatever circumstances may accompany the action.

2) The Crosses signify the various disagreeable circumstances which may, and usually do, arise during the course of any action.

3) The Stars represent the agreeable circumstances.

INTERPRETATION OF THE DIAGRAM.

a) *The Morning Offering.* Every Christian should make the Morning Offering in some form or other.⁴ Whatever form is used, the meaning is substantially the same, namely, that one offers to God the activity of the new day, intending to live for His glory. The broken line extended over the entire day signifies that the Morning Offering is not merely an upward and isolated thought, but a forward glance which takes in the whole day's activity.

b) *The Renewals.* The repetition of the intention before the principal actions of the day serves to break up the Morning Offering into workable sections, and to apply it to the concrete deeds of the day. It provides us with a *method of practice*

⁴ The most common form is that recommended by *The Apostleship of Prayer.*

adequate to form the habit of pleasing God, for as we saw in the psychological analysis of the habit, it cannot be formed without such repetition as is sufficient to make and to deepen an impression on the faculties. The intention need not be formulated in words, but, to serve its purpose, it must be *an actual advertance* to the desire of performing the ensuing action to please God.

The arrows in the diagram represent also the external reminders employed for the period of practice. These are undoubtedly needed until the foundation of the habit is laid. Then the "reminders" will begin to come from the *inside*—the promptings of the interior disposition. A lover finds no difficulty on thinking of his beloved; on the contrary! So the Saints had an abiding consciousness of the presence of God; and we, too, the more we practice, the more we shall become aware of the need of pleasing God in all things and of seeing His will in our circumstances.

Even an intention so closely allied to an action, and projected over it, may soon be forgotten and fail us in the moment of trial, especially at the beginning of the period of practice; nevertheless, in a particular instance, it is more likely to adjust and prepare the mind to recognize God's will than is the remote Morning Offering. The extensions of the four arrows show how the actions of the day may gradually be linked up by the unifying principle of charity, the habit of pleasing God.

c) *The Circumstances.* The purpose of the method suggested by the diagram is to cooperate with grace so that our actions may be elevated to the supernatural level, and eventually maintained on that level. The repetition of the intention, represented by the arrows, is *our* part; but God also does *His* part. All the disagreeable and agreeable circumstances, represented by the

other two symbols, are very effective "reminders" sent or permitted by God, and serve as added supports for the intention. Gradually, by such practice, our activity is sustained more or less on the higher level. The diagram shows graphically how we may cooperate with grace and learn to live a supernatural life.

THE USE OF THE EXAMEN

In the formation of any habit, a periodic check on one's efforts and progress is helpful. In the practice of the method here suggested, this check might well be made during the daily examination of conscience, which, according to our prayer books and to Catholic tradition, should be made not only by religious but by every Catholic.

Religious usually have two examens a day, the particular and the general. For others the one examen, usually made during night prayers, might be divided into two parts, and used in the following manner. The first part, or particular examen, should be concerned with the *arrows* in our scheme, and the second part, or general examen, with the *crosses* and *stars*.

It is customary to use the particular examen to concentrate on the faults committed against one particular virtue, but since we are concerned for the present with the formation of that disposition which is the foundation of *all virtue*, it is preferable to use the particular examen during the period of practice to find out whether we have renewed the intention in the morning and before the principal actions. On finding that we have failed sometimes, we should determine to use some more effective reminders.

The general examination of conscience (or the second part) should be a review of the day, not so much from the negative

aspect of *sins committed*, as from the positive aspect of *opportunities lost*. This will reveal any discrepancies between the *intention* to please God and the actual *fulfillment* or *non-fulfillment* of that intention in the face of daily trials and joys. A show of impatience, for example, or of disobedience, was an opportunity lost. The same or similar circumstances will probably occur tomorrow and every day; therefore the resolution of the examen should be a determination not to lose the opportunity again, but to be ready for it, and to react favorably when the will of God manifests itself again under like circumstances. Any faults of greediness, of sloth, of impurity, etc., were likewise failures in the test of love for God, because of the self-seeking natural mentality. Such opportunities will come again, and we must pray for the grace to see such trials and temptations as so many means of making acts of love and preference for God.

Human nature being so weak, failures are sure to be frequent for most of us, but we need to preserve the ideal, the goal of perfection, which God sets before us, and with His grace to improve gradually by seeing and cooperating with His plan for our sanctification.

Father Edward Leen recommends the same positive approach in the use of the examen. He says:

“Making the love of God the sole object of the Christian endeavor, we should have *as the matter of our examen of conscience our real attitude or disposition of soul with regard to the demands of Divine Charity. Our vigilance over ourselves should be directed towards eliminating from our actions all the elements that tend to supplant, to corrupt, or to diminish the charity in them.* When seeking to purify our conscience, we should ask ourselves if our manner of living responds to the essential requirements of a real undivided love for God. Our

watchfulness over our interior, over our dispositions, our decisions, our judgments, should have as its aim not merely the flight from sin and its occasions—the obstacles to sanctity—but rather the direction of all our energies towards the development of the love of God in our souls.” (*Ibid.*)

APPLICATION TO THE MASS

There is a definite relationship between the *method* here suggested and the Sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is “*our sacrifice*,” as the priest says at the *Orate Fratres*. *We*, therefore, must bring our offering to the Mass. This offering is drawn from the treasury of the crosses and joys of daily life, or what we have called the disagreeable and agreeable circumstances. To the Christian mentality these are opportunities of making gifts of love to God. Only the crosses accepted and the pleasures renounced (either *directly* by giving them up, or *indirectly* by using them for the glory of God) can be united with the offering of Christ in the Mass. We cannot offer the crosses which self-love has cast away, nor the pleasures we have consumed merely for pleasure’s sake. As progress is made in developing the Christian mentality, the offering will become richer, our participation in the Mass more complete, and God’s gift of Himself in Holy Communion will be proportionately greater.⁵

3. THE FOUNDATION

Persevering and systematic practice sooner or later creates a certain facility of action by which one may be said to have formed a habit. There is, of course, no precise line which marks off the second phase of practice from the third phase of the

⁵ This subject has been treated in a booklet, *The Mass in My Life*, by Denis Mooney, O.F.M., Grail Publications, St. Meinrad, Ind. Price 35¢.

foundation, yet this third stage has a certain character. For example, a girl who graduates from a Commercial Course in Typewriting will be classified as a typist, but usually she is by no means an expert. She has *the foundation*, and will improve with the experience of using her ability. So with the supernatural habit. By the practice of renewing the intention one begins to be alert to the will of God, conscious, *as a rule*, that the crosses and joys of life are opportunities of pleasing God, even though through human frailty one may often fail to make use of the opportunities. At such a stage, despite many faults, one may be said to have a Christian mentality or outlook—the *foundation* for real spiritual progress by cooperating with grace in the actual experiences of life.

The Christian mentality promotes interior joy, by making one a spiritual optimist, ever on the watch for opportunities to express one's love for God. It also opens the soul to the sunlight of divine love to dispel the clouds of anxiety and scrupulosity which sometimes distress souls preoccupied with avoiding sin rather than with loving God.

THE TRAINING OF THE YOUNG

The education of children consists in directing and encouraging them to form good physical, intellectual and moral habits, and this is attained only by constant repetition. They learn to play by playing, to write by writing, etc., and methods are most carefully worked out and followed. Progress in these habits is tested and measured by contests and examinations. The most important habit for a Christian child is the spiritual habit of love for God, of learning to do only what pleases God. Progress in this habit can be measured, too, because it is tested every day by the circumstances a child meets with in school, at home, and wherever he is.

Let us ask the question: Do the tests of daily circumstances show that the average child, receiving a Christian education, is making as noticeable progress in the habit of love for God, as he is making in the other branches of study? Is the child becoming more patient, more kind, more obedient, as an indication that his Christian training is taking effect and that he is growing in charity, as God expects? Or let us put the question another way: Are scientific methods and detailed systems

worked out and followed as precisely for the formation of this habit as for the other arts and sciences?

Children are *obliged* to learn the art of pleasing God in everything. They should therefore be trained in the repetition of the intention to please God, and of accepting His will in all things. But are they so trained? Today, undoubtedly, children are taught Catechism by the most efficient methods developed by the science of pedagogy; they learn many prayers; they are able to follow intelligently the liturgy of the Mass, and are urged to receive the Sacraments frequently. All this is excellent and necessary, but while it aids and fosters, it does not *substitute for*, the formation and development of the psychological habit of praying, working, eating and playing to please God; of seeing and accepting His will in the ever changing pattern of activities. This spiritual habit, like any other, is formed and developed by the actual *practice* of praying, working, eating and playing with the supernatural motive of pleasing God, and it is far more easily formed in the young.

The Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on *The Christian Education of Youth*, expressing the Church's official attitude on the subject, says:

"In none of his actions . . . may a Christian neglect the good which is above nature; indeed he *must direct all things* to the highest good as to their last end, according to the prescriptions of Christian wisdom."

And again:

The specific and immediate purpose of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian; to express and *form Christ Himself* in those who have been regenerated by Baptism, according to the words of St. Paul: 'My little children, of whom I am in labor again,

until Christ be formed in you.' The true Christian has to live a supernatural life in Christ and *display that life in everything that he does.*" (Italics added)

Parents and teachers, responsible for the growth in charity of the children committed to their charge, should use the utmost ingenuity in devising methods of practice and training to achieve "the specific and immediate purpose of Christian education," namely, the forming of Christ or *the Christian mentality* in the baptized child, so that all his actions will be "above nature," and he display the supernatural life "in everything that he does."

Graduates from Catholic schools should, after their many years of training, be well-informed in charity, have a thoroughly supernatural outlook, and be fully aware that whatever they do in word, or work, or play, should be stripped of selfishness and worldliness, and worthy to be offered to God. If this supernatural habit has not been formed during the years of Christian education, then by all means it ought to be pursued when its absence is realized—for, as Christians, we are bound to strive for the fulfillment of the commandment to love God with our whole heart.

WRONG NOTIONS THAT PARALYZE GROWTH

In view of the clear teaching of the Gospel, of the Church and of the Saints, no one can deny that growth in holiness is normal and necessary to the Christian; but principles that are accepted *in theory* are sometimes impeded in their practical pursuit and realization by thoughtless adherence to notions and maxims which have the appearance of truth, but under scrutiny are found to be defective and to paralyze progress. Such harmful notions or "half-truths" are not uncommon in spiritual matters; they unhappily account for much of the spiritual mediocrity, the arrested growth of grace and charity, the spiritual dwarfdom of Christian souls, which our spiritual guardians deplore. Pope Pius XI lamented this sad condition with the words: "The habit of life which can be called really Christian has in great measure disappeared" (*Ubi Arcano Dei*).

"THE STATE OF GRACE SUFFICES"

First among these harmful notions is that which prompts us always to think and speak of the *state* of grace, to the neglect of the necessary *growth* of grace in the soul. Because of this wrong emphasis some Christians strive only to avoid losing the

state of grace, and, when they do lose it by mortal sin, to have it restored through Confession. They give little or no thought to the necessity of making *progress* in grace and love for God. Most would not admit that they live by such a negative and pagan rule of life as the mere effort to avoid sin, but an examination of their practical judgments might reveal that the positive and Christian rule of love for God is not the practical guide of their life. They will insist, for example, that one may use any legitimate pleasure as long as he avoids excess. No thought is given to the *motive* for using such pleasure; to the possibility of an attachment; to a love for pleasure for its own sake. They attribute no spiritual significance to selfish motivation. Their criterion is the avoidance of excessive use; but—the *excessive* use of any pleasure, no matter how lawful in itself, is in some degree sinful. The rule, therefore, of merely avoiding sin, which they disclaim in theory, they would seem to follow in practice.

ALL ATTACHMENTS ARE INORDINATE

As to the spiritual significance of attachments, the Saints speak very clearly; and they do not mean "*inordinate* attachments" in the sense of excessive, exaggerated and sinful use of pleasure. Every attachment to a created thing, in the terminology of the Saints, is inordinate, since an attachment is a natural love for a created thing instead of a supernatural love as it should be. This means that the use of the creature is directed to one's selfish desire for pleasure instead of being "ordained" or directed to God. The word "inordinate" applied to an attachment is redundant, and moreover, quite misleading when it gives the impression, as it usually does, that an attachment is permissible when not inordinate (!), that is, when not excessive or exaggerated, or in plain words—when it is not *sinful*.

From among the Saints⁶ who speak of "attachment," and that without any qualification, we quote St. Francis de Sales:

"Although it is lawful to amuse yourself, to dance, dress, hear good plays, and join in society, yet to be *attached* to such things, is contrary to devotion and extremely hurtful and dangerous."

Again:

"Especially avoid *attaching* yourself to them (games, music and such innocent amusements), for however allowable such things are as amusements, they become evils as soon as they absorb the heart." (*Introduction to a Devout Life*)

DETACHMENT FOR ALL

To be concerned only with preserving the life of grace in the soul, opens the way to any and every attachment, since attachments are not directly opposed to the state of grace. The harm is that they prevent its growth and endanger its presence. St. John of the Cross says:

"It is sad to see certain souls in this plight (having attachment to something); like rich vessels, they are laden with wealth and good works and spiritual exercises, but because they have not the courage to break with some whim or attachment or affection (which are all the same) they never make progress. . . . (*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*)

Dom Aelred Graham writes:

"Detachment is a condition *sine qua non* of advance in the love of God." (*The Love of God*)

The conclusion is evident. Since every Christian is bound to progress in love of God, every Christian is bound also to strive

⁶ Others: St. Alphonsus di Liguori, St. Bonaventure, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Louis Marie de Montfort, St. Margaret Mary, *et al.*

for complete detachment from created things, so as to use and enjoy them only in accordance with God's plan, that is, for His glory, not becoming solicitous for them, much less becoming slaves to them. In our pleasure-loving age this doctrine becomes all the more significant. It is also more difficult to accept and practice, but it is none the less true.

HOW IS YOUR HEALTH?

An example from the physical order will help us to understand the fallacy and harmfulness of thinking only of preserving grace rather than of growing in grace. We may liken the state of grace to physical life, and growth in grace to physical health. Our constant physical concern is with our health; we seldom think in terms of our life, for we know that if we take care of our health our life will, as we say, take care of itself. When we greet a friend we inquire about his health, not his life! In reflecting on our spiritual state we should likewise be concerned about its health, not merely about its life. What a precarious physical existence we should live if we took no precautions to safeguard and promote health, but only to avoid the stroke of death! Death would soon overtake us as the inevitable result of physical debility from the neglect of our health. Is not this paralleled by the precarious spiritual existence of those Catholics who *wish* indeed to preserve the life of grace, but failing to promote their spiritual health, frequently find themselves overtaken by spiritual death, through falls into grievous sin.

Physically, we are not satisfied merely to be alive; we take every means to promote vigorous and robust health. One might be able to remain alive for years on a small quantity of bread and water, but such life without health and strength is not our

ideal. A newborn infant has life, but nobody would wish to remain an infant, with a life so weak and undeveloped; yet, in the spiritual order, some would seem content to remain spiritual weaklings or dwarfs, making no progress in charity. A cancer patient on the brink of the grave has *life*, but on one would be satisfied with such poor health; yet Christians who make no effort to destroy the cancer of self-love live on the brink of spiritual death.

A doctor's interest in his patient goes beyond the effort to preserve the patient's life. He uses his skill and medicines to promote the best health possible. If called to a patient suffering from a serious malady, the doctor diagnoses the illness from the manifest symptoms, and then attacks the *cause* of the malady. How absurd it would be if the doctor, after an examination, would announce to the family: "Yes, the patient is seriously ill, but he is still alive; that is all that matters!" It seems equally absurd in the spiritual order for us to be concerned only with maintaining the state of grace, or restoring it through Confession, while ignoring the necessity of promoting our spiritual health; of destroying the germs of selfish motives; of removing the infection of our natural mentality, so that grace might enjoy vigorous growth.

MINIMIZED CHRISTIANITY

Catholics who imagine that their faith demands of them only the State of Grace, naturally tend to reduce their religious practices also to a minimum; but, as we have seen, such an attitude, although apparently very common, is vain and illusory, and finds no sanction in the teaching of the Church. Speaking to the students of the Roman University, His Holiness Pope Pius XII said:

"If therefore someone deemed it sufficient for his religious life to dedicate to the worship of God the small half-hour of Sunday Mass, how could he hope to avoid the decay and drying-up of his religious life?" (*Allocutio*, 15 June, 1952)

"THE MORNING OFFERING SUFFICES"

Another wrong notion that may paralyze the life of grace and impede real growth in charity concerns the Morning Offering. One cannot praise sufficiently the practice of making the Morning Offering; yet, on the other hand, one must not thoughtlessly attribute to it a power which it does not possess. It is an excellent start for the Christian's day, but it is only that—a *start*, for, being but an *intention*, it still has to be *lived* and carried out as one comes to grips with the realities of the day's activities. One has still to bear the day's crosses, and to be unselfish in its joys—all for the glory of God. One who SAYS he intends to live for God, but makes no effort to put the intention into practice, is like a lover who presents his beloved with a box of chocolates, but eats them all himself!

We are not concerned here with the merits which derive from the intention formulated by the Morning Offering, but only with its relationship to the formation of the necessary habit of love for God—the *Christian mentality*. For one who had already established such a supernatural disposition, the Morning Offering would suffice, no doubt, to keep the mind adjusted to God. Most of us, however, if we may judge from our selfish reactions to God's will in the crosses and joys of each day, are still under the influence of fallen nature rather than of grace.⁷

⁷ "Nature is still strong in you. . . . You must now make over your natural powers as slaves to right doing, till all is sanctified" (Rom. 6:19-21—Knox translation).

In studying the psychological analysis of a habit, we saw that if progress is to be made in forming a habit *sufficient practice* is required. It is, therefore, unrealistic and wrong to think that one isolated intention formulated before even entering into the rough and tumble of the day, is all that is necessary in the way of supernatural motivation, and that the need of forming the *habit* of acting for God may be ignored.

When speaking of the necessity of having a supernatural intention in our actions, one sometimes hears it said: "The Morning Offering is sufficient." But what it is sufficient for is not always clear. If it is properly made *with attention*, no doubt it is sufficient to gain some merit for the worthy actions of the day; but it is obviously not sufficient to form the important habit of love for God, the abiding disposition of seeing and cooperating with God's will during the day. One who would neglect to form this necessary habit of love, and would think only of gaining some merit, would be like a man putting his money into a bank which is gradually becoming insolvent—or pouring water into a pail that leaks! The natural disposition leads to sin, and unless it is checked, and the life of grace allowed to grow, sin will lead to more sin; and what good would be some "merit" previously gained, if the "law of the members" follows its course to "the law of sin" and one dies in his sins!

THE QUALITY OF THE MORNING OFFERING

To clarify the relationship between the Morning Offering and the Christian mentality, let us see what quality the Morning Offering *may* have and what it *should* have.

1) The saying of the Morning Offering, whether alone or in common with others, might conceivably be no more than a

mere mechanical or routine formula of words, recited in total distraction and without any advertance to or reflection on the meaning of the words. We must be honest and practical enough to admit that this is sometimes, if not often, the case. The less supernatural the disposition, the more likely is it to be the case.

2) The Morning Offering may be a real act of advertance, an upward and devoted glance to God. This is very good and meritorious, but being a single act of the will, it has little influence on the existing habit of the mind.

3) The Morning Offering can and should be the initial supernatural act of the day, pointing the direction which the mind intends to take as it comes to grips with life's joys and sorrows. It should be a determination to live for God and not for oneself—a FORWARD glance accepting in advance the will of God as expressed through the events of the day.

In view of these three possible qualities, let us now see what the Morning Offering is sufficient for.

Having the first quality, that of a routine or mechanical formula, it is sufficient for nothing at all—not even for any merit.

Having the second quality, of real even though momentary advertance, the Morning Offering is good, and by virtue of it any unselfish actions performed in the state of grace gain some merit. As an isolated offering, however, associated only remotely with the day's activities, it scarcely helps at all to "reform the spirit of the mind," or to "put off the old man and put on the new." The progressive formation of the habit of pleasing God in everything requires *sufficient* practice of the intentional direction of activity—but one isolated daily intention is obviously not sufficient to form the habit.

The Morning Offering made in the third manner, namely as

a supernatural beginning, a FORWARD glance over the day, intended to be joined with the reality of the day's activity and carried out in practice by frequent renewal if necessary, is not only meritorious, but is an essential element in forming the habit of love which will be as a "solvent bank" and a "sound receptacle" for all the merits gained.

Fr. Tissot, in his spiritual classic *The Interior Life*, has this to say on the subject of the Morning Offering:

"Do I not rectify my intention every morning by directing my actions to God's glory?—no doubt; and that is all very good. But what I thus do in the morning is an act. Now, an act does not destroy a habit; it may interrupt it momentarily, and produce some effect, until the habit regains the upper hand. This act does not destroy the habit I have formed of judging everything from my own point of view. And this all the more, because it is an act of the will, and an act of the will is not directly contrary to a habit of the mind. If I had no contrary habit, the morning intention would normally cover the whole of my day's doings with its virtue. But the habit of self-seeking is there, and in possession; and it is only momentarily interrupted by right acts, as long as the habit of piety has not succeeded in supplanting it.

"The fact remains that, in spite of this good morning intention, I continue habitually to look at my own interest primarily; the thought that practically inspires and directs my conduct is always too much that of my own interest, and so far the good intention has hardly corrected it; and it was all the less capable of correcting it, in that I did not see clearly enough the chief seat of the evil."

The "chief seat of the evil" is the natural mentality, and to eradicate the evil it is necessary to form, by constant repetition, a new mental habit. To this end the foregoing METHOD is suggested as a help. The intention needs to be *supported* on

the supernatural level until it becomes "second nature" to think and act to please God. Even though we wish and INTEND to live supernaturally, the downward drag of our fallen nature will soon overpower and cancel the good intention, unless and until a new habit is formed to counteract the downward pull.

THE REALISTIC VIEW

The two contrary tendencies of nature and grace have an explanatory counterpart in two physical laws, the Law of Gravitation and the Law of Inertia. The tendency of our nature to seek its own interest is like the Law of Gravitation by which all objects are drawn down to earth. The "tendency" of grace, by which God would have us act always on the supernatural level, is like the Law of Inertia, in virtue of which an object once set in motion continues moving always in the same direction until impeded by some other force.

Now suppose a man stands on the highest mountain and throws a stone horizontally. Theoretically, according to the Law of Inertia, the stone would continue in motion in the same direction around the world. In reality, however, there is another law to be reckoned with, the Law of Gravitation, which draws the stone to the earth about fifty yards away.

In spiritual matters we must be realistic, and take into account both of the impulses which influence our conduct—Nature and Grace. To expect the intention of doing all things to please God, made at the first moment of the day, to persevere and *actually* make every action pleasing to God, is to regard only the "Law of Inertia" and to ignore the "Law of Gravitation," called by St. Paul the "Law of the Members," which will in reality draw our actions down to the natural level, just as a stone is drawn to earth. This downward pull is a fact of

our existence, and unless it is counteracted by the force of a supernatural disposition it will bring our actions down to the selfish level in spite of the Morning Offering. An airplane overcomes the Law of Gravitation and stays aloft by the power of its engines; if the engines stop, it plunges to earth.

The drastic consequences of being unrealistic are not so evident to us in spiritual as in physical matters, but if we have a proper sense of values, a little reflection on our own experience will convince us that the Morning Offering, of itself, does little to prevent us from a "fall to earth" many times a day by impatience, unkindness and—worse!

THE HAND TO THE HELM

Many illustrations or examples might be given to prove this point. Suppose the captain of a ship sailing from New York to London, should set the helm due east each morning, and then leave the steering apparatus unattended for the rest of the day. Theoretically he should continue in the direction of England, but in reality he may soon be headed for the Cape of Good Hope! The ship, in the first place, being a human product, is not perfectly balanced; moreover it is influenced by currents and winds, and buffeted at times by storms, and so it would soon be carried off its course. To keep the ship on its course the captain (or the mate) remains on the bridge. He has learned by study and practice how to meet such conditions, and with a touch of his experienced hand, he keeps the prow to the east.

So might we set our intention towards God at the beginning of each day, but our nature is not perfectly balanced; it is "prone to evil"; we are subject to the currents and winds of the spirit of the world and our own passions, and at times we are

buffeted by the storms of trial and temptation. Thus we are soon thrown off our course, unless we form the habit of keeping the prow of our activity directed towards God. This is what is meant by the Christian mentality.

"BE TRANSFORMED IN MIND"

Another example . . . Suppose I have a cast or mold of Aristotle from which I have produced a number of images of the great pagan philosopher. Then I take the notion that instead of figures of Aristotle I should like to produce statues of Christ from the same mold. Thereupon I "make the intention" that henceforth the cast shall produce statues of the Savior. I pour plaster into the mold, I let it set, and what do I take out?—another image of Aristotle! How could it be otherwise, unless I first refashion the mold? I must take in hand the proper instruments and begin the delicate work of transforming the cast. If, after some remodeling, I produce a sample image, I shall find that it is losing resemblance to the Philosopher and beginning to resemble Christ. The more I work at the image the more will the former likeness disappear, and the more will the new statues take on the form of Christ. Finally I shall be able to produce any number of statues of the Savior from the same transformed cast.

It is an axiom in Psychology that "we act as we think," that is, our actions take the form or cast of our mentality. Being inclined to self-seeking by nature, if I retain my natural mentality, my normal round of actions will be predominantly selfish actions—like images from the mold of Aristotle. If I become aware of the necessity of living for God and not for myself, and then determine that my actions henceforth shall be supernatural in character (like statues from the mold of Christ), it

will not suffice merely to SAY that my actions will be different; I must set to work to refashion my disposition after the model of Christ in the Gospel, to reform the source of my actions. The special "instrument" for this task consists in the application of the intention to the actual doings of the day. The more I persevere in purifying my intention, the more will my actions lose their selfish character and the more will they resemble the actions of Christ. "Be not conformed to this world," says St. Paul, "but be transformed in the newness of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).

On this subject Fr. Edward Leen has this to say:

"Unless the motive of the love of God, or the desire to fulfill His good pleasure really influences the act of our will that we are at the moment eliciting, this act will not have the supernatural vitality that it ought to have. The act is vital only if it springs from charity—if it does not do so, it has no vitality as far as the supernatural life is concerned. It is not the outcome of life and it cannot minister to life. *No previous mechanical formulation of a right intention can rectify this.* To secure ourselves against the continual waste of our existence on earth we must bring the thought of God to bear on the details of our life as they develop themselves hour by hour. This ideal is not beyond us by God's grace. To live so that every act of ours is done under the influence of Charity it is not needed that the thought of God be always actually before us. It suffices that we have developed the spirit in which all our life is suspended to the Divine Will. This attitude abides in its effects even when we are not consciously advertent to it."
(In the Likeness of Christ)

WE MERIT FROM CHARITY

Sometimes one hears it said that if we are in the state of grace and make the Morning Offering, then all our actions of

the day that are not bad, are meritorious. In reply to this one might ask: "But what if I forget to make the Morning Offering, or what if I make it mechanically? Is there then no merit for my actions?" Some of us would fare badly if such were the conditions for merit. Surely we merit from our good actions in the degree that they spring from charity, and the Morning Offering fervently made as a special supernatural act contributes to charity. "Acts of patience and fortitude," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "are not meritorious unless a man does them out of charity according to I Cor. 13:3, 'If I deliver my body to be burned, yet do not have charity, it profits me nothing' (Ia IIae, q. 114, a. 4).

To confine the intentional direction of our actions to the Morning Offering could become a smokescreen behind which "self" could continue undisturbed on its natural course, and retain and indulge all its attachments "for the love of God." (!) But the Morning Offering is no such magic wand that it will turn the dross of selfish actions unto golden acts of virtue.

"THIS CALLS FOR AN ACTUAL INTENTION"

Another wrong impression that deters some souls from striving to grow in charity is expressed in such words as, "One cannot be thinking of God all the time." This, of course, is true. In speaking of the necessity of a Christian mentality it is in no way implied that one must be conscious of God at every moment, or make an actual intention before every action. We are concerned here with forming the *habit* of acting to please God, a subjective disposition of love for God. It is an attitude of soul which when established by grace and practice, and nourished by prayer and the Sacraments, spontaneously provides a certain awareness of God, which comes to the fore especially

when God's interests are involved in any action, as in the presence of any disagreeable or agreeable circumstance.

A person who has formed the habit of driving a car, as we have seen, does not need to concentrate on the position of the clutch and the brake, but whenever the necessity arises he spontaneously applies them. While he was still in the process of learning, it was necessary for him to keep his attention on the mechanism, but as the habit formed, the needed stimulus was supplied by the facility he had acquired by practice.

In this regard Fr. Tissot observes:

"Is it necessary to think ACTUALLY of God's glory in each one of my actions?" By no means; it is no more necessary than actually to see my own interest in everything in order to seek myself habitually nevertheless. Is it not true that, from the very fact of habit, I consider, love and seek my own interest with hardly any thought of it, unconsciously, as it were, and instinctively? It goes on its own accord. It is the property of any habit which is definitely set up in the soul to produce action without the soul's noticing its influence in any definite manner. . . . It is just such a strong habit that must be formed within me on behalf of God's glory. . . . The impulse of grace must take the place, the function, and the sway, now possessed by the impulse of nature; the divine must work within me in the same conditions as the human does now." (*Ibid.*)



If, in answer to the question proposed at the beginning of this booklet, we must acknowledge that, with the passing of time, we are *not* becoming more patient, more kind, more humble, more pure, then this analysis suggests the cause and the remedy. The *cause* is that we have not "put on the *mind* of

Christ," nor the "*heart* of mercy, kindness, patience . . ." We have not developed that habit of *charity* which "is patient, is kind, does not envy . . ." We have regarded our Catholic faith more or less exclusively in terms of the Holy Mass, the Sacraments, devotions and good works, neglecting to strive for that purification of motives and affections which would allow God's grace in the soul to effect our inner renewal. We have clung to our natural mentality, the innate tendency to please self, the desire to have our own way. We have not "put off the old man," and thus we have kept and nourished the roots of our sins, and we have failed to grow in virtue.

The remedy is: to be "renewed in the spirit of our mind," to form a *Christian mentality* by systematic and persevering practice in living for God. It was for this that God gave us the grace of Baptism, and it is for this He continues to give us the help of the Sacraments, that we might cooperate with grace to conform our mind and heart to our supernatural state, reciprocating His love for us by acquiring the habit of love for Him.

