

*a World*



*according to*  
*the Heart*  
*of God*

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Josefina Chacín Ducharne

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## PRESENTATION

Ever since May 1967, some writings are being published, under different titles, writings that treat of the same subject, though each discusses it from a different point of view. One of these writings is *A World according to the Heart of God*, which was originally published in Spanish in 1970, and in Italian in 1979.

The purpose of this writing is to call to mind and explain, starting from its deepest roots, a truth of which humanity today has great need. These writings are not, in fact, concerned with emotional and moral aspects of human life but come to shed light on the origin of man, the process of his development, the moment of evolution in which he finds himself, and his ultimate *Realization*, in which his existence takes on meaning.

These writings lead us to understand God's designs, removing the veils that impede a unitary vision of the one reality that the Scriptures announce throughout. They explain man's need to come to know himself and to identify with God's will for his Realization, because God's Kingdom will not come except through man's liberty, liberty which God always respects above all else.

The suitable word for presenting these writings would be "Message," but this word has become effete because there are many people who present themselves as bearers of messages from the Lord, and these are nothing more than pious yearnings, often well-meaning, but they are not "the truth," and they reveal nothing new.

Therefore, it isn't easy today to speak of a *DIVINE INTERVENTION*; yet, fidelity to *conscience* requires it. The person who has received the "Message" says: "*The Lord has made known to me that it is important and necessary that the world know that it is a matter of a Divine Intervention.*"

To a superficial vision, an intervention by the Lord, in order to make known something that – judging from its frequent appearance in verbal expressions – everybody already knows, could appear as unjustified, as not necessary. Nothing, in fact, is more common than expressions like the following: “Do God’s Will,” “May it be what God wants,” and so many other tantamount expressions. Yet the content of these expressions and concepts does not usually come to touch upon the truth.

God’s Will can be understood either as Permission of God—and this is the sense in which the expression is most frequently used—or as true and precise Will of God. In both cases, the energy, Active Force, is of God, it comes forth from God; but in the first case, it is man who acts with the Divine energy that God places at his disposal, that is, at the service of his liberty; and in the second case it is God, instead, who acts through man when man has turned over his liberty to Him.

To perceive this difference of meaning in expressions—which on the surface appear to be identical—is something very important; it entails a degree of evolution of the human being that not everyone has reached. The explanation of the intimate nature of this difference is what the Lord gives us with His intervention for the purpose of preparing for and triggering—if it can be said this way—a coming-to-consciousness. Of course, for one who has not reached this degree of evolution, all this will be impossible to understand but, as we have said, it is precisely for triggering this moment that the Lord intervenes.

Until this takes place, man is not able to identify with God’s Will and, consequently, cannot reach his full and true Realization. Without the knowledge of himself, man is unaware of the fact that he is in a process of evolution in the knowledge and the consciousness of good and evil, and

there is little that he can understand about the origin, development, and finality of man's presence on earth.

If this knowledge is lacking, it becomes impossible to understand how it is that there are still individuals who, when the circle of humanity's collective evolution is about to close, have not reached the degree of individual evolution that permits them to discern this closing moment, and that for this very reason they do not reach the goal of the human being's Realization which they are after, Realization that consists in identifying with God's Will, freely and consciously letting Him do. This is what Jesus referred to when he used to say: *"But woe to those who are with child, or have infants at the breast in those days. But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on the Sabbath"* (Mt 24:19-20).

Jesus wanted to say that those who may still find themselves in the process of gestation or of lactation (that is to say, in a state of incomplete evolution) and have not given birth to the "new creature" or, though having given birth to it, the creature has not attained the robustness that will permit it—when the circle of humanity's collective evolution closes—to walk by itself (what Jesus' word "flight" expresses), will remain in the state in which at that moment they find themselves: They have not come to understand the significance of the moment; they have not reached in their evolution the maturity that would have let them understand.

Therefore, this "Message" is not only a teaching but also an urgent and pressing "call" *"so that men may recognize the truth and prepare themselves to enter into His Mercy before His justice becomes manifested."*

Those in whom the evolution of which we are speaking has not been completed are to be found in the "Permission"; they are in the "doing"; they are unable to understand that what is being asked is that the Being be allowed to do; and



even those who because of their degree of evolution have been able to or can understand that their “Realization” does not consist in “doing,” if they are not willing to “deny themselves” and freely and consciously remain in themselves — in the “doing”—they remain in the “Permission.”

The crowds that asked John the Baptist, “*What then are we to do?*” were still in the “doing.” John answered them, “*Let him who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise*” (Lk 3:10-11). How many still today are like them and do not yet realize that it is not in the “doing” that we must realize ourselves!

John the Baptist found himself in the same condition. In fact, he suggested works that were to be done in order to prepare for understanding what was about to happen in that moment (to which our moment is similar), but he was not in a position to know that doing works was not what counted: He was awaiting Another, and this is why he has Jesus questioned: “*Art thou he who is to come, or shall we look for another?*” This is why Jesus says of him: “*Amen I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*” (Mt 11: 11).

When people asked Jesus the same question: “*What are we to do that we may perform the works of God?*”, he did not answer like John, but told them that it was not works they must do: “*This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent*” (Jn 6:28-29).

“*To believe in the word of God is not to want to give reality to this word we’ve heard but TO OBEY the Holy Spirit so that the power of the Most High may overshadow us and He Himself may give this ‘word’ the ‘form’ of His Will*” (*Peregrinación del Pueblo de Dios—Explicación de los grabados*, Madrid, 1971, p. 132). The Gospel says the

same thing in many places, but in a particularly explicit way with these words: *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father in heaven shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and work many miracles in thy name?’”* (Mt 7:21-22).

They have done all these things in His name, but it has not been He who has done them. Doing such great things as prophesying, casting out devils, and working miracles, and not only this but anything else, cannot be done by man without the Divine energy that God places at his disposal. Jesus considers all this done in the “power” of God, indeed, that is, in God’s “Permission” but not in His “Will”; for which reason those acting in the “Permission” will not enter into the Kingdom of God, since only those who do the Will of the Father will enter the Kingdom of God. The central teaching of Jesus’ life is this. *“Therefore in coming into the world, he says, ‘Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me: in holocausts and sin-offerings thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, “Behold, I come—(in the head of the book it is written of me)—to do thy will, O God”. ‘In saying in the first place, ‘Sacrifices and oblations and holocausts and sin-offerings thou wouldst not, neither hast thou had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the Law), and then saying, ‘Behold, I come to do thy will, O God,’ he annuls the first covenant in order to establish the second. It is in this ‘will’ that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Heb 10:5-10).

After Jesus, in the course of the centuries, a gradual dimming of this truth has developed in actual practice. Today the simple intent or the simple desire to want to follow the example of Jesus’ obedience to the Father in all

its radicality, as he with his life taught us, are considered in certain circles as foolhardiness, a fad, and even a scandal. It is not possible, they say. How could works be continued? And those who speak thus do not ask themselves—and the doubt never enters their mind—whether the so-called “works of God” are truly works wanted by God and not works that God only permits so that by exercising our liberty we may in those works come to consciousness of what God really wants.

Nonetheless, in some individuals, the foregoing doctrine has been present.

St. Theresa summarizes in simple words the whole tradition, since its origin, by saying: *“The only endeavor of one who begins a life of prayer (and let this not be forgotten, for it is highly important) should be to work toward resolving and applying oneself—with as much diligence as one can—to conform one’s will to God’s Will; and, as I will say later, you can be sure that the greatest perfection that can be reached on the spiritual path consists in this conformity. Whoever should most perfectly possess this, will receive the most from the Lord, and the further along he is on the path. Do not think that this is about something abstruse and novel or things not known or understood; for in this perfect conformity to God’s will lies all our good.”* (St. Theresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, “2nd Dwelling Place,” No. 8).

St. John of the Cross, along with many others, affirms the same thing, even though his words seem to be the answer to a difficulty or an objection: *“However difficult it may be,”* he says, *“to find a soul **entirely** impelled by the Lord and enriched by the continuous union, during which the faculties are divinely engaged, quite frequently, however, some souls can be found who are moved by Him in their actions and do not move on their own”* (St. John of the Cross, *Life*, I. III,

ch. I).

A recent author—of this century—who summarizes the teachings of several authors on the subject, and from whom I take these data (Dom Vital Lehodey, *El santo abandono*, Barcelona, 1968, pp. 606-620), after having said the foregoing with the words of St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, as though fearing that these words said too much, hastens to attenuate their sense by adding: “*But in such delicate matters, one should shrink from self-deceptions.*” Without a doubt there have been self-deceptions, and this has probably all but justified the almost general attitude that has gradually come about.

This same author to whom we refer, as if to reassure us in this respect, continues to cite the testimony of learned and saintly people who, in order to protect themselves against these dangers, recommended resorting to directors, confessors, superiors, spiritual teachers, etc.—in short, returning to the creatures. This is not to say that this is wrong: If their conscience was asking this of them, it was all they could do; but that does not mean that this should be made a rule for all, and it does not mean that it is not true that God calls us to a direct intimacy and without intermediaries, at that.

In support of the foregoing teaching, very often even the authority of St. Theresa is appealed to. But it is very likely that, far from denying or placing in doubt what she on another occasion affirms so explicitly, the Saint in those cases addresses people who find themselves in a different state which does not yet permit them to understand. On the other hand, the situation that existed in her day, in this regard, is known to all. In order to understand her true thought, it is very important to keep in mind what in her relationship with the Lord she says she understood, namely, that it would not be pleasing to Him for the creatures to

oppose what He Himself wants to indicate directly to the soul.

But a typical case that makes us see that a real dimming has set in over this point is that of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. One of her biographers relates that on a certain occasion, the Lord had to say to her: *“From now on, I will adapt my graces to the spirit of the rule, to the will of your superior and to your feebleness. Be suspicious of anything that could deviate you from the perfect fulfillment of all this. I desire that this be what you prefer to everything else, including the will of your superiors to mine”* (Mgr. Gauthey, *Life of the Blessed Margaret Mary*, nos. 72, 179, and 180). This indicates what the almost general understanding of the teaching was in the 17th and 18th centuries, understanding that since then until now has done nothing else than to become impoverished, even to transforming the words of the Sacred Heart to the Saint into an instrument for keeping religious souls bound to the “Permission,” thus blocking or severing their longing for liberation.

Yet the lesson of the foregoing is very clear: how necessary it is for man—in order to please God—to act in His Will, and not in His Permission. Since the Saint, because of the incomprehension of all this in her environment and because of the insufficiency of her personal evolution, could not act in the Will or even know it in order to fulfill it, the Lord Himself gives her a command by virtue of which, without her going through the creatures, she accomplishes what God orders of her—His Will. God cannot be pleased in anything that is not His Will. In that which the creatures order the Saint to do, she fulfills the Will of the Lord and not that of the creatures, even in the case where they order her something that is opposed to what He had directly requested of her.

While the will of the human being is oriented to the

creatures (rules, constitutions, superiors, etc.), he is obeying the creatures and, through them, God. The human being, in this state, is not free. This is not to say that this is bad; but his evolution has not yet taken him to the liberty. While the will of the human being continues to be in the creatures, not even God can liberate him, because God always respects the will of His free creatures. The command that the Sacred Heart gives to the Saint removes her from the creatures and places her above them. Without neglecting to comply with what the creatures ask of her, she does the Will of God, who has let her know His Will directly—what she should do.

The exigence of this liberty would seem to leave the door open to all kinds of aberrations of one's judgment—to a subjectivism without limits—but there is no other way. And, understanding that this is the true teaching of Jesus, while we still find ourselves in a real condition of dimness about this, we can ask ourselves: Can God's Will be known directly? No one can make it known; we cannot know it; it is, in fact, free and superior to us. A clarification in this regard, consistent with Jesus' teaching, would be that which an author gives on this point: *"The Christian asks if God's Will can be known. Let him first of all watch for the signs given to him; let him bow his head with love before the circumstances that shatter the plans in his life; let him keep the commandments, lend an ear to the counsels of Jesus, and it won't be long before the signs multiply around him. But let him also remember that they are only signs. May his desire impel him forward. Let him repeat the prayer of the psalmist: 'Lord, show me the way in which I should walk; teach me to do your will' (Ps 143), and then his love will recognize God's very love. 'Whoever does the will of my Father is brother, sister, mother to me' (Mt 12:50; Mk 3:35)."* (Francois Louvel, O.P., "Peut-on connaître la volonté de Dieu?", *La vie Spirituelle*, Janvier 1962, no. 479, pp. 72-

81).

Therefore, the great Revelation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to the world through the feebleness of His instrument, St. Margaret Mary, is that God's Will be done, that He be allowed to do His Will in us. It is the supreme Revelation of His Mercy.

But how has it been possible to come to this almost general dimness concerning a truth that Scripture teaches explicitly in many passages, and when the Life of Jesus has been no other than a living of this truth?

We have come to this because it was necessary.

*"The 'Gentile people' were to travel the same path that the 'Jewish people' traveled in order to receive 'the promise': to know the Law and the precepts (Law of God and ecclesiastical precepts) as God's command for them, so that through the Law and precepts we might come to know sin and confess ourselves guilty before God; so that finding ourselves incapable of fulfilling the Law on our own, we might recognize ourselves as helpless and might search in our hearts for Christ, fulfillment of the Law—for the Law brought nothing to perfection. For a better hope has supervened...' For we Christians not only had the Law through Christ, in order to come to know ourselves as sinners, but also the faith and first fruits of the Promise..."* (*Peregrinación del Pueblo de Dios—Explicación de los grabados*, p. 85)

This situation of dimness that has taken place in the "gentile people" corresponds to the situation of the "Hebrew people's" having come out of Egypt toward the Promised Land, when it was to go through the long purifying experience in the desert. It is the return to the starting point, Egypt, where the Hebrews returned with their hearts, as St. Stephen says in speaking of this experience which we consider an exclusive experience of the Hebrews; but if this

has been preserved in the Acts of the Apostles, it has been so for us. *“In their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us. As for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him’.*” Jesus has died and, like Moses, has disappeared to the eyes of our natural life. *“And they made a calf in those days and offered sacrifice to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their own hands”*: They went back “to doing” works for God, works for the God they venerated as their protector. But *“God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the host of heaven”*: He left them for a time in the hands of the creatures until, in their affliction, they would return to implore liberation.

This necessary going-astray in order to come to realize our situation, thus enabling us to live the Gospel as expression of God’s Will, is what we have experienced in the centuries after Jesus. Francis had to live an experience similar to what we are now beginning to live. Even his own awakening came through a Divine Intervention. *“The Most High God Himself,”* he says, *“revealed to me that I was to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel”* (St. Francis, *Complete Works*, “The Testament,” no. 14). It has always surprised me that, it being a command to all to live according to the Gospel, Francis had to be reminded about this with a revelation, and that he should have to bring up this revelation in order to justify his choice. But keeping history in mind, it is understandable that, in fact, *that* Revelation became necessary because of the dimness that had been produced in the knowledge of this so-fundamental a truth.

This revelation became complete to Francis when he was told: *“Francis, go and repair my Church which is threatening to crumble”*. There are still many today who,



because of fear of remaining in a “visionary” and “bricklaying” Francis, want to see the answer to “repair my church which is threatening to crumble” in the founding of that which in history we have known as “Franciscan Orders.” If this were indeed true, wouldn’t Francis have ended up doing one more work, remaining at the level of his first comprehension of the vision: to gather bricks and sand? For this reason, in the desire that his true and profound comprehension might become a reality, he has had to repeat in our days: *“My children, I gave you a Rule, yes, and though I did not mean to give you any other Rule than the Gospel of my Lord, yet in what I have done, there may also be much error. Therefore, I tell you, my children: Live the pure Gospel and you will give me rest!... ‘Repair my Church, which is threatening to crumble,’ I was told; and I began to gather bricks, stones and sand. You too have done what I did then. Because you, my brothers, have held on to Francis Bernardone and have not followed the instrument of the Lord.”*

“Live the pure Gospel!”, Francis again says to us, repeating what he understood from the Lord: *“My children, you have a mission to fulfill—the hardest mission my Master could assign to you in these times of activity and enthusiasm for doing many things for God,” namely that of doing nothing in order that He may **do** and **undo** in you what you have done on your own, blocking the Work of God.”*

*A World according to the Heart of God* (which, as we have said at the beginning, forms part of a group of writings with which this “Message” has been given to us) comes precisely to explain to us the difference between acting in God’s Permission and acting in His Will, which is to let Him do. And in relation to the existent dimness, unmasked and overthrown are principles and values which, without being so, are almost unanimously held as indisputable.

In the light of God's designs, which in this book are revealed in a general vision, there appears the true meaning of the realities of our world, such as authority, work, money, sex, love, which in the world of the Permission appear in distorted and counterfeit images, precisely because they are works of God's Permission and not God's Will.

Everywhere, the presence of the "spirit of the world" is denounced, spirit that influences our whole world and, up to a point, directs it all, because "*the whole world is in the power of the evil one*" (1 Jn 5:19).

The world in which we live is, therefore, the world of the creatures' "doing," and not the world wanted by God. It is the world of Permission which is to be found in the hands of the Fallen Angel because man with his liberty opened the door to him and consigned it to him; it is, therefore, a world that is in need of being rescued.

What then is the world wanted by God, of which in Scripture (Gn 1:31) it is said: "*God saw all the things that He had made and they were very good*"! The subject of this book is precisely the explanation of this passage of Scripture.

José Barriuso

Bethlehem, May 20, 1979

## Inspiration

Lord, one desire throbs in our souls – the Eternal!

It's often said that it's necessary to create a "new world." Is this possible? In the first place, creating, in the true sense, is not incumbent upon man; it is exclusively Your domain, Lord. And in the second place, the new, however beautiful it may seem, is ephemeral; and with the passing years, the "new" becomes "old."

This is why, Lord, we don't want to create anything new that, with the passing of time, can turn into a museum of antiques. We're not going to do anything—except one thing: we're not going to block Your eternal projects which we men in our rebelliousness have impeded.

Lord, we're tired of new worlds and new life-styles. More or less consciously, we desire an "eternal world" – that world conceived by You ever since You decided to create man. We must rid ourselves of this eagerness to create, which, like a suffocation, constantly stifles all Your attempts to set up Your kingdom in the world of souls in order to give us eternal happiness. And because You are so immensely perfect, Lord, You don't bypass our liberty to impose Your eternal wishes.

Lord, grant us the humility to be still. Teach us to let You bring about that "eternal world" You tirelessly project on us.

## Introduction

It isn't easy to imagine the life of man different from the way it ordinarily appears. Nevertheless, the man who with deep insight goes beyond the thousand incidentals of the present state of the world might ask himself this question: How would the history of humanity have developed without sin? Even though it may not seem so at first glance, this question has practical value. Jesus' effort in his preaching is precisely centered on the following: to return man to the state in which God "created" him and intended for him: "*Be holy as your Heavenly Father is holy.*"

If man's history had not been penetrated by sin, it would have developed with the spontaneity of children's play unfolding before their father's kindly gaze; in short, we would be happy children. We now know good and evil, but we are not happy. Nevertheless, man constantly aspires to happiness, but as he does not look for it where he lost it, he has believed himself capable of inventing it. For an instant he seems to attain it; but that happiness is fleeting, and another "invention" turns up to fill the void left by the preceding one, and so it goes—on and on.

From this, we could conclude: inventions, which are considered progress, are the obvious consequence of sin. Without sin, "inventions," which are the pride of "fallen" man, would not exist. This doesn't mean that man would not have come to know inventions; he would probably know them better than he does now, but he would not ascribe to them their present importance, for the knowledge and joy in his possession of God would fill his soul in a way we cannot conceive. Do we give any thought to the light of a lamp when we have a shining sun at midday? And yet we light

this very lamp in the middle of the night; and if we had not seen the sun, we would believe that the lamp could not be substituted. This leads us to an extremely simple conclusion: Sin has plunged man into darkness; and man, instead of asking God for the true light, has believed he can invent it. Technical inventions are the lamps man has lighted in this darkness. They have reaffirmed man in this world, far from God—so much so that he considers himself proprietor of the world. Man—including the believer—thinks that these inventions are a development of the intelligence that God has given him. We must say to this that the true development of human intelligence must have another direction: the knowledge of God. It is principally, if not exclusively, for this purpose that God gave man intelligence. Sin has veered the orientation of man's knowledge: Instead of orienting his knowledge in a vertical sense, man has done this in a horizontal sense. He has delved into this knowledge in such a way that he has arrived at the madness of believing that God's existence and help are unnecessary.

Returning to that spiritual childlikeness wanted by God is a more difficult task for man than achieving a space flight. Yet, the words of Jesus stand—like a gently forceful invitation: *“Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt 18:3)—and others like it—*“Truly I tell you, unless you are begotten from above, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Jn 3:3).

If we seek to dig deeply into this return to childlikeness, we will find several basic elements for building true happiness.

Man's present anguish has ceased to be an abnormality and has become the normal thing. This state has been caused by the absence of God. Never before, like today, has God ceased to be the center of man's life—and consciously so, at

that. Other “centers” have absorbed man’s interest and attention, but these are not the *natural* centers wanted by God; hence, results contrary to true human happiness ensue, and a sort of dislocation torments man in the innermost depths of his being.

The return to childlikeness preached by Jesus is the profound solution that reaches to the roots of the evil that resides in the human being, restoring “normal” life to him. For this, it is necessary to understand what this new birth consists in, new birth which must be carried into effect with all generosity of will, inspired by grace. No area of the human soul can be unmindful of this regenerating task. From the moment another idea or another task is equated with this work, rebirth does not take place, and man continues in a state of moral-spiritual anguish.

This rebirth is a sort of illumination brought about by the profound union of grace and the human will. The will, in itself, encounters nothing but a chaos of instincts and passions that battle in the darkness. If man shuts himself up in himself, believing himself capable of putting this chaos in order, he will progressively become hardhearted until he believes himself a god. To a superficial observer, such a man can appear to have mastered the blind forces that stir within him, but the observer each of us carries within cannot but feel the uneasiness in which the other part of his “I” lives—the “I” who has believed he is self-sufficiently capable of regenerating himself.

Man’s authentic regeneration can come from none but God—once man opens himself up to His grace—something like what happened in the Redemption: Since no man was capable of redeeming other men, for all were submerged in sin, God in His immense love becomes man in order to redeem them all. Neither can any of man’s inner natural forces regenerate him, for they are all defiled. The divine

solution of the Incarnation and Redemption becomes extended by means of grace. It is as if God becomes “incarnate” anew in order to redeem each man from the disorderly forces that war in his interiority. A decisive element is needed to bring about this “rebirth” of man: his acceptance. This spiritual rebirth cannot take place if it is not preceded by two things: man’s recognition of his own helplessness, and his humble recourse to God’s power. At the base of true rebirth lies a lived and experienced humility. This humility will secretly take us to the Paradise of Eden—that state of union with God as lived by our first parents before they sinned. There we will feel the joy of a threefold love: the love of having been created; the love of having been redeemed; and the love of having been able to cooperate in our own redemption. We’ll have no more vain pretensions: humility will have given us those conditions that Jesus required for our entering into His kingdom: *“Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

After acquiring this spiritual stature, one cannot overlook a new obstacle: Those who decide in favor of this regeneration will receive the blows of the spirit of the world. What God sees as the humility of “strong children” will be considered helplessness and weakness by the spirit of the world. Here we take a further step: The one “reborn” in the Spirit of God must affirm himself before the world with a new expression of humility—he must accept failure rather than resort to falsehood or force. Falsehood and force are not God’s weapons, even though they have been used by some who call themselves sons of God. Of course, it’s hard to accept failure, but what we are referring to is not of a natural but of a supernatural order.

This rebirth requires an eagle’s eye view that will not take into account the values esteemed by the world: *this is the*

*victory that overcomes the world, our faith*” (1 Jn 5:4). If humility is the foundation of our “rebirth,” faith rekindled by hope and charity is the driving force that impels us to act according to our new life in God.

So that nothing might be lacking, we have been given a model of the perfect life – Jesus. He is the model to which all the “reborn” must conform in order to enter into the kingdom of God. Now then, what did this Man do in order to receive the Son of God in his bosom? Disappear. The human person of Jesus “disappeared” so that in him the Living God might appear. The human “I,” which in Adam affirmed itself in itself against God’s Will, disappeared into non-existence in Jesus. Hence God, the Son, lives in the Humanity of Jesus, sanctifying it to infinity. So too, as our “I” gradually disappears, the Son of God, Christ-Jesus, will appear in us. The very word, “disappear,” couldn’t it mean the “appearance” of God?

All this entails a task of chipping away – somewhat similar to that of chipping out the beautiful image that hides in a block of marble or stone; but in this work of spiritual chipping away, there’s a difference: the Sculptor is within us. Grace works in us like the sap that makes the plant grow, giving it the form its nature requires. How many forms have had to disappear so that the plant may acquire its definitive shape and yield its fruit! If the seed does not renounce its form by “disappearing,” the life does not “appear.” What is the definitive form of our human nature? It is expressly indicated to us in the Divine plan: *“Let us make man to our image and likeness”* (Gn 1:26). Our “form,” then, is a divine form of being. Jesus is not only the model but the incarnation of this Divine form, which makes him the “firstborn of many brothers.” Jesus is there, not like a portrait simply to be admired, but as an example of life that compels us to identify with Him; for if He is the Firstborn,



this means that there must exist others who will in some way participate in His very form and nature.

Very few make up their minds to “disappear” so that the life of God may “appear” in them. What is lacking is the self-oblation to the Father, as Jesus offered it, in order to receive the Son of God in their bosom. We want to be ourselves first; God, perhaps, has second place. We must keep in mind the following fundamental truth: Until we have immolated this “self-priority” in all its forms, the epiphany of God will not take place in us. A thorough owning-up to this “self-priority” must shake up all the “centers” around which our old life has revolved, that we may “become centered” in the One who is, was, and will be the center of the whole creation: the God-made-Man.

Throughout these pages, with the help of grace, we will meditate those elements of the world that God is constantly projecting on us, and the obstacles He has run up against in bringing it about.

## CHAPTER 1:

### *The Fallen Angel*

To come to know the cause of the existence of evil in this world, we must go out of it if an appropriate explanation is to be found. In the world, as God expressly wanted and ordained it, evil would not exist. The sacred writer makes a point of God's good pleasure in everything created: "*And God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good*" (Gn 1:31). And this is how it had to be, for the whole creation had been destined for the God-made-Man.

We say that the cause of evil must be looked for outside of the world "created" and wanted by God. Before this world that God "created" became "perceptible," He had created some spirits called angels. There was one angel—the one most full of light, Lucifer—who, knowing God's designs, desired for himself the creation that had been destined for the God-made-Man. Lucifer was joined by other angels—God had created them free. God sustains—He does not destroy—this angelic liberty, even though the angel may use it to choose something as disproportionate to his created nature as is the idea that all creation was made for a simple creature. On the basis of this inviolability of the created liberty, God, being faithful in His works, does not go back on His word. In His most perfect justice, God accepts the desire coming from His free creature: The angel desires for himself the creation, which has been destined for Another. God only places one condition on him: that the free being—man who will inhabit the world—accept him.

The Biblical symbol of a forbidden tree has no other aim than that of making us understand the following fundamental idea: that *that* tree is a symbol of the presence of the angel who desires the creation for himself. The man

has been warned: “...for on the day that you eat from it, you will certainly die” (Gn 2:17); but God does not disclose to him the fact that hidden therein are the pretensions of a usurper who wants to seize the creation. For the sake of justice with the fallen angel, God conceals this from the man for, otherwise, man would never accept the angel. The test for man lies in his obedience to God, who is the Good. The soul of man was inundated by this infinite Good that should have spread out to all creation, in the bosom of which—by divine Permission—the spirit of evil was working like leaven.

By obeying God, man would redeem the creation, which was subject to vanity by reason of the rebelliousness of the angel, the spirit of evil. But man disobeyed, remaining imprisoned in the very “vanity” of the entire creation and, instead of redeeming, he himself needed to be redeemed.

But God’s most perfect justice takes a new step in this new situation caused by the free creatures: the devil and man. The devil’s sin is irreparable because it sprang from “within,” in the fullness of the light. Man’s sin is indeed reparable because it has been an acceptance of a suggestion that has come to him from “without,” with no knowledge of evil. Not only for mercy’s sake but also for the sake of justice, God announces to man a promise of redemption from the slavery into which he has fallen: “*I will,*” God says, “*put enmity between you...,*” referring to the enemy, the fallen angel, “*...and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head...*” (Gn 3:15). Until this prophecy—which depends upon the human liberty—is fulfilled, the enemy of the God-made-Man and of the human race will carry out a devastating action. The enemy now has a right to introduce his spirit into men when they are begotten into the natural life—a consequence of original sin committed by the first man. Man’s work will consist in casting out this spirit by their faith in the promised Messiah

and by acting with great righteousness. Both things depend upon the orientation that the liberty of the human soul takes. We see it at once in the first two sons of the man (Adam)—Cain and Abel. Both have come with the consequences of original sin. Yet, God is pleased with the sacrifices of the younger, Abel, but not with those of Cain. God, who is perfect justice, has seen a difference in the offerings of the two, owing to the difference in their purity of heart. This causes Cain to walk crestfallen: *“Isn’t it true that if you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up, but if you do not do well, sin will crouch at your door?”* (Gn 4:7). If one bears in mind the fact that Cain also made an offering to God, one must presume that there was something unrighteous about it, and that his being conscious of this caused him to walk crestfallen. That is, Cain, using his liberty, had become decided for a *“personal”* acceptance of an inspiration of the spirit of evil, inspiration lacking in purity and righteousness. As this acceptance became more rooted, the spirit of evil gradually took over Cain’s faculties, to the extent that Cain one day conceived the death of his brother, Abel. This idea was inspired by the devil himself. St. John literally tells us this in his First Epistle when he recommends fraternal charity to us, reproaching Cain’s conduct: *“Not like Cain who, inspired by the evil one, slew his brother.”*

This diabolical inspiration has deeper implications than what appears at first sight. The fallen angel had desired for himself the creation destined for the God-made-Man. The fulfillment of this desire depended on man’s liberty. It’s true that the first man, Adam, accepted the action of the spirit of evil upon disobeying God, but his acceptance was not total, nor was it fully conscious—he was not aware of the evil in the first sin. After this sin, he was left with a weakened liberty, it’s true, but a liberty that could be remade by the

grace of the future Messiah if he awaited Him in faith and with a righteous life. This is how Abel acts; for this reason, his offering is pleasing to God. As the spirit of evil takes possession of Cain's faculties, because Cain accepts his action, he inspires in him a profound hatred for his brother. What is the precise reason for this hatred? Ordinarily speaking, we would say that Abel's behavior is a reproach to Cain, and this is true; but if we go deeper, bearing in mind the Divine plan, another reason must be given: Bearing in mind as well that Cain's inspiration to kill his brother comes from the devil, a deeper reason must be found in the devil: fallen man has been promised a Redeemer who will arrive when man's liberty fully accepts Him. Abel begins to accept Him with behavior pleasing to God. The "enemy" "sees" here the seed of the Fruit; this is why he drowns it in blood. To accomplish this, he avails himself of a human liberty that has become inclined to his action.

We should keep in mind that the devil directly can only inspire or prompt each man toward evil; but for his work of destruction or corruption of humanity, he uses men who have accepted and who accept his inspirations. These are the men who make up what has come to be called "spirit of the world"—faithful and unconscious collaborators with their own enemy, the spirit of evil. It's evident that ever since the beginning of humanity, there is in this "spirit of the world" a predominant desire to discover, dominate and take over the creation with a complete forgetting about God; it's like an echo, or better yet, like a fulfillment of the desire of the fallen angel who wants for himself the creation intended for the God-made-Man. In reality, the devil would be unable to carry this out except through those men who make up the "spirit of the world," and who have prepared and are preparing the "incarnation" (humanization) of the very devil himself, inspirer of all their works, works that in His most

perfect justice God *permits* through the free choice of His creatures. Cain's descendants form the first nucleus of this "spirit of the world": They are the inventors of musical instruments, sharp instruments, etc., and later on, this same spirit will build the famous Tower of Babel.

This "spirit of the world" is the opposition to the original plan of the Creator: man has lost that simplicity that paved the way for his contact with his Father and Lord. The Lord is supremely just; this is why His way of doing things differs from the devil's way. According to human justice, Cain would deserve death, but God knows that he is a blind instrument of the spirit of evil, and He places a mark on him so that no one may kill him, despite his having become inclined toward the action of the spirit of evil. God continues protecting him for as long as His justice allows. Once again, God gives a new son, Seth, to the first human couple. There's a complete, profound joy in Adam's exclamation: "*God has given me another child in place of Abel whom Cain slew*" (Gn 4:25).

We are often very quick to judge the first man. With great indifference, we forget all his yearnings for the promised Messiah, the activity of the Divine in man. If he heard the grave sentence that was going to weigh heavily on all his descendants, he also heard the promise of a Savior. He, who was personally responsible for original sin, must have felt an extremely keen desire to contribute as much as he possibly could to the Savior's coming. We are much too shallow to conceive the pain in Adam's heart when he found Abel—the faithful son of God from whom the promised Savior was to come—dead; for the same reason, neither can we imagine the new joy that Seth's birth produced in him. We easily talk about the first man's sin, but we forget that a repentance, inconceivable to us, contributed to the arrival of the promised Savior in the fullness of the times.

With Seth's descendants—who constitute the so-called “sons of God”—we come through multiple generations to another fundamental man: Noah.

The “sons of God” begin to mingle with the “sons of men.” The devil now utilizes another weapon to drive men away from God: the flesh. The disorder of concupiscence is aroused by the spirit of evil through fantasy. So great was the corruption that its punishment has been unique in the history of humanity: the flood. God finds one just man, Noah, and saves him with his family and establishes a covenant with him. Noah, in a sense, represents humanity anew, in a way similar to Adam. God gives Noah the same command He gave Adam: “*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...*” (Gn 9:1). He also places a condition upon him: “*But flesh with its life—that is, its blood—you shall not eat*” (Gn 9:4). This prohibition, like the one placed on Adam, has its justification: to remind man of his dependence on God.

One of Noah's sons, Ham, does not act with righteousness. The devil takes advantage of this abjectness of fallen man, and Ham consents to an action that merits him his father's curse on his descendants: “*Cursed be Canaan...*” (Gn 9:25). In that land [of Canaan], the devil will hold an unencumbered seat; this is the region that God will later assign to His Chosen People, wandering through the desert, region which will first be held by idolatrous nations where the very devil will have himself adored; thus, this idolatry will become a snare for the Chosen People: The sacrifice of human beings was the vengeance the devil was taking upon humanity in the cult inspired by him, as if with these aberrations he sought to humiliate the race in which God was going to become incarnate. It can be said, without fear of exaggeration, that the devil, taking advantage of man's ignorance, has been and is the true inspirer of all those religious cults that separate man from his Beginning

and his End.

In that world dominated by the falsehood of the spirit of evil, God couldn't carry out His promise made to the first man. God is faithful and just; this is why, in order to fulfill His promise, He manifests Himself to a man. With an attentive and scrutinizing gaze, He has followed the footsteps of the faithful and just descendants: From a descendant of Shem, son of Noah, God selects Abraham from whom He will draw forth a beloved people who ought to be holy. This is how He says it to Moses for him to repeat to the people: *“Be holy for me because I, the Lord, am Holy...and I have separated you from the peoples so that you will be mine”* (Lv 11:44-45).

Until the coming of the Son of God into this world, the devil had had veritable dominion over it. “The Chosen People” are like the subsoil in which the announced Liberator was to be born. Those—the prophets—called to care for this beloved parcel verify that their efforts crash against an invisible being that sweeps the Chosen People toward the most abominable idolatries. It can be said that not even the prophets themselves come to identify this invisible being. And yet the diabolical influence is as real as the Divine protection. While the Divine protection is obvious—keep in mind the Biblical prodigies—the diabolical influence is so concealed that the “enemy” is hardly mentioned except in very isolated cases.

There's another decisive moment for humanity, and directly for the people whom God intends to choose: In this decisive moment, the “enemy” attempts to thwart the Divine plan. This happens when God selects a man from whom the Chosen People are to come forth, and from them the Messiah. If in the beginning of humanity the devil presented himself to the first man against God's command, here in the beginning of the Chosen People, he passes himself off for



God Himself: “...*God tempted Abraham*” (Gn 22:1). It will be seen by this fact how God in His most perfect justice permits even this, which will ultimately redound to the good of the righteous and faithful soul. The apostle James says, textually, that: “*God...tempts no one*” (Jas 1:13). What’s more, if this temptation of Abraham’s had come from God, it would be a unique case in history. The Covenant with Abraham, and the renewal of the same by means of the circumcision, makes tests of the kind required by pagan religions, inspired by the devil, unnecessary. Wasn’t it the devil who made the peoples all around Israel believe in the necessity of sacrificing human beings? On the other hand, it is as unseemly to the Most Perfect Justice of God to submit someone to a test that goes against the nature He created, as it is to a rational being to sacrifice his own son. If God reproaches Cain for the death of his brother, how can He be the instigator of such a test for Abraham? It is the devil who once again attempts to frustrate the Divine plan, as he did with Adam. In Adam, there was more light, and Adam knew that the insinuation made to him implied disobedience to God. In Abraham, there was great faith, and faith is by nature dark. The devil takes advantage of this darkness and passes himself off to Abraham as God Himself. In the decisive moment, God miraculously intervenes, and the devil’s test, permitted by God, becomes, by reason of Abraham’s righteousness, fruit of blessing, confirming him in faith and in the promises that God had previously made to him, as He would have confirmed Adam in grace if Adam had overcome the temptation from the same enemy.<sup>1</sup>

There’s a circumstance in David’s history that can shed light on this one of Abraham’s. In the second book of Samuel, we read textually: “*And the anger of the Lord was again kindled against Israel, and stirred up David among them, saying: ‘Go, number Israel and Juda’*” (2 Sam 24:1).

And after having taken the census, David said: *“I have sinned greatly in what I have done”* (2 Sam 24:10). There’s another parallel text that reveals to us the true inspirer of this action of David’s that is displeasing to God. In the First Book of Chronicles we read: *“And Satan rose up against Israel; and moved David to number Israel”* (1 Chr 21:1).

In the story of Job, the devil is evident, yet Job is unaware of the fact that all those evils that suddenly befall him have been caused by the devil’s wickedness. Job expresses himself as follows: *“If we have received good things from God, why should we not receive evil?”* (Job 2:10). It’s no secret to the reader that Job’s utterance poses a difficult problem to resolve if what Job affirms is true: From God, we receive the good things and the bad. According to the old way of thinking, God punishes the bad and rewards the good in this life. So how is it that he, Job, who is just, is crushed by so many evils? Job is unaware of the fact that there exists a being—the devil—who has asked God’s permission to test him. Because He created the angel free, God in His justice permits the test— permission that will only heighten man’s righteousness if man remains faithful to God during this test that the evil spirit has petitioned for man.

The lesson for us is crystal-clear: We have an invisible enemy, the devil, from whom all our evils come, and with these evils he seeks our perdition, trying to make us believe that God is unjust, that evils come from God even though we have done nothing to deserve them—for their true author will not let his identity be known. How are we to serve a Lord who treats us so unjustly? This is the decisive moment in the ordinary temptation, and if man forgets his hidden “enemy,” he runs the danger of falling into blasphemy against God who, in His justice, has permitted something that a free creature, the fallen angel— the evil spirit—has wanted.

Striving to block the coming of the God-made-Man into the world has been the devil's constant struggle in his drive to finally usurp the entire creation.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### ***The Fallen Angel against Jesus***

To express it accurately, the promised Redeemer did not come to this world when He wished, but when a member of humanity fully embraced the redeeming Divine plan: This human being was Mary. God's most perfect justice had to rely on a free creature in order for the Redeemer (the Only Begotten) to introduce Himself into the world, just as through the acceptance of a free creature the fallen angel gained admittance. Mary fully accepted the Divine Will: ***“Behold the bondslave of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word”*** (Lk 1:38). The Son of God became man. The “enemy” has a premonition about this and makes use of a human instrument—Herod—who has surrendered himself to him by accepting his insinuations. Herod is not conscious of his being the devil's instrument. He sees only that his kingdom is being threatened by an announced mysterious king, born at that time. The devil manipulates his disorderly passions for a plan much more gross than the one Herod himself is thinking: to destroy the Redeemer of Humanity before He exposes him (the devil) with His preaching, His miracles, and even with His very casting out of demons. Herod is dominated and directed by the spirit of evil, and he orders the slaying of all the children of Bethlehem under two years of age: Indeed—he thought—the mysterious king would fall there.

We know there are historical facts that are a symbol of something that will later be fulfilled: Let us ponder the slaying of the paschal lamb, figure of the slaying of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Herod's attitude before the Son of God, born of Mary, reminds us of

what St. John in the Apocalypse saw would happen at the end of time. Wouldn't Herod's attitude be a figure of what would happen later? ***"...and the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, that when she had brought forth he might devour her son. And she brought forth a male child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the desert..."*** (Apoc/Rev 12:4-6). Consider the flight into Egypt. Herod, dominated by the spirit of evil, can be the figure of the dragon.

Before beginning his public life, Jesus submits himself to a prolonged fast. At the end of the fast, the devil shows up to sidetrack Jesus from the true way of the Father's Will. In the first temptation, the devil takes advantage of a natural necessity—hunger—to try to make Jesus use his Divine power to his own advantage. It should be noted that Jesus never performed miracles for his own personal interest. His standard was the glory of the Father: ***"...I do not seek My own glory, but the glory of Him who sent me"*** Jesus calls the tempter's attention to realities that never end or give out: ***"...not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."***

The devil's temptation is likely to start with things that, to all appearances, are natural necessities—in this case hunger—followed by pride, and ending with contempt for God.

The tempter once again sounds out the soul of Jesus to see if there exists in him "something" of his own with which he can dissuade him from the redeeming mission the Father has entrusted to him: ***"...he stood him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down...,'"*** and he adds a sound reason taken from the Sacred Scriptures: ***"...for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear"***

*you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone’.*” Earlier the devil had made use of a biological necessity—hunger; now he makes use of the word of God—spiritual bread. The “enemy” takes to using the word of God against pious souls. Jesus again answers with another quote from Sacred Scripture: ***“It is written further, ‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God’.*”**

The third temptation is the most insolent and implies the devil’s desires, partly fulfilled, to seize the creation destined for the God-made-Man: ***“Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And he said to Him, ‘All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me’.*”** Let’s not forget that this is what the fallen angel saw that God had in mind for the God-made-Man. Through the centuries, the tempter has gradually taken over the world as man has accepted the wickedness of his spirit. These kingdoms of the world belong to him, and now he offers them to the true Proprietor with one condition: ***“All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”*** The devil here expresses his thinking and primary desires, upon coveting for himself the creation—all of it the footstool of the God-made-Man. Jesus rids himself of the tempter in a decisive way: ***“Begone Satan; for it is written, ‘The Lord thy God shalt thou worship and him only shalt thou serve’.*”** Then the devil left him; and behold, angels came and ministered to him” (Mt 4:11).

A brief, practical observation: The spirit of evil does not leave man until man rejects his person; it’s not enough to reject his insinuations. Jesus rejected these, but the tempter only left him when he rejected his person: ***“Begone, Satan!”*** We mustn’t forget that the evil spirit can sneak in on us by making use of apparently humanitarian sentiments or ideas, sometimes even immediately following a true

Divine grace. Let's recall the case of St. Peter: After receiving the light from the Father for confessing the Divine filiation of his Master, he wants to dissuade him from going up to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Jesus seems to have sensed again—this time in his apostle—the breath of the devil who wants to achieve what he failed to accomplish in the temptations in the desert.

All of Jesus' life was an on-going struggle against this spirit of evil hidden in men's pride: ***"You"***—he said to them on one occasion— ***"are sons of the devil"*** and ***"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father..."*** (Jn 8:44).

The whole subtlety of human reason was manipulated from within by the devil. More than with men, Jesus struggles with this enemy that lives in them, whether through diabolical possession or through their having accepted his spirit to some extent. Jesus casts the evil spirit out of those whom it has possessed; and the others, who partake of this spirit of evil, make this absurd remark: ***"This man does not cast out devils except by Beelzebub, the prince of devils"*** (Mt 12:24). Jesus gives them this common sense reflection: ***"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation... And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?... for you say by virtue of Beelzebub I cast out devils... But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you"*** (Mt 12:25-28).

This last affirmation is of utmost importance: The kingdom of God has arrived when the usurper is cast out. The usurper had totally taken possession of some men. The kingdom of God consists in returning to the primary Divine plan, which Jesus restores by casting out the devil. It's up to each one of us to let Jesus continue His work of Redemption in our own souls— that of casting out the spirit of evil. Our

collaboration consists in giving Him our liberty in every action so that He may fulfill the Will of the Father in each of us. Then the kingdom of God will truly be close at hand.

But as if it were not enough to say that Jesus casts out devils by the art of Beelzebub, at another opportunity the devil himself has someone say that Jesus is “possessed.” The insult comes from hell itself. Since Truth cannot be dragged down toward falsehood, falsehood seeks to defile Truth by saying that the devil dwells in Truth.

Here also, a practical reflection can be made: The devil can make us see truth as something diabolical so that we’ll thus reject it. The means he will utilize are innumerable—as innumerable as is error. From this terrible net that the enemy constantly lays out for us, we will be unable to free ourselves without a profound humility and a sincere surrender to God’s Love and Will. The “littleness” recommended by Jesus will be the only thing that will make it easy for us to slip out through the mesh of this diabolical net that comes forth from the father of lies.

Jesus calls his Passion ***“the hour, and the power of darkness”*** (Lk 22:53). Several times, his enemies had tried to kill him, but “his hour” had not yet come. This ***“hour”*** is fixed neither by Jesus nor by the Father nor by the devil himself. This ***“hour”*** must be fixed by the liberty of a man who totally settles for the spirit of evil. If the ***“hour”*** of the Incarnation of the Son of God was fixed by the free will of a human creature, Mary, the ***“hour”*** of His Passion and Death was set by another free human creature, Judas. This faithful instrument of the devil is the one who initiates the painful Passion of Jesus and ***“the power of darkness”***: ***“After the morsel, Satan entered into him”*** (Jn 13:27).

One should keep in mind that in this human-Divine drama men are blind instruments of the devil, but it’s a blindness they’ve ended up in with a responsibility not unknown to



them, the full extent of which God alone knows: ***“God has given them a spirit of stupor until this present day, eyes that they may not see, and ears that they may not hear.”*** If in the public life of Jesus the devil made use of human reason to try to obstruct His luminous way, in the Passion of Jesus the devil avails himself of man’s abjectness— his cutting irony and sarcasm. The crown of thorns, the purple mantle, the reed placed in His Divine hands were the mockery of the devil himself in order to laugh at Him who had proclaimed Himself King, and who in the desert had scorned the kingdoms of the world offered by the devil. As in the desert, so also on Calvary, the devil mockingly attempts to stop Jesus from consummating the total sacrifice: ***“If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross”*** (Mt 27:40). In the desert, Jesus didn’t change the stones into bread, and he didn’t throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. There he overcame the devil with his Wisdom; here he overcomes him with his death, because this is the unavoidable road to his greatest victory: the Resurrection. And shouldn’t this be precisely the attitude Christ’s Church should take before her enemies? Isn’t Christ the model? Even the ignominious death itself begins to snatch away ground from the devil; one of the thieves, an old possession of his, implores the Crucified to let him enter into His Kingdom, Kingdom ridiculed by Satan. ***“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”*** (Lk 23:42). The “enemy” had defied Him to descend from the cross in order to prove His divinity: ***“If you are the Son of God...”*** His death, to all appearances like that of one who is helpless, converts the Roman Centurion, who confesses the very thing the devil had mocked: ***“Truly this man was the Son of God...”*** (Mk 15:39). In His very death, which looks like defeat, Jesus’ victory begins. This is the model-victory for all those who desire to be true sons of God.

If we should want proof of the irreparability of the fallen angel's sin, we would find it in the Resurrection of Jesus; it isn't really men, but the devil who, before the evidence of the Resurrection, will not admit defeat. This is so because the devil's sin was committed in the light of total evidence. This is why he'll never bow down in repentance; his sin remains forever. Faced with the evidence of the Resurrection, he uses money as a weapon for falsehood. Where there is falsehood, therein is hidden the father of lies: ***"...they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, 'Say, "His disciples came by night and stole him while we were sleeping",'*** " (Mt 28:12-13). Jesus' personal victory was confirmed on the day of Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Here, too, there are salient facts: an impetuous wind, tongues of fire, and, above all, unpolished and timid men who, speaking in their own tongue, are understood by ***"Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia..."***, etc. Using men, the devil interprets such a colossally divine fact in his characteristic way: ***"... They are full of new wine..."***, men full of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps it seems strange to attribute to the devil happenings in which men appear as sole authors. In reality, we've grown accustomed to this way of thinking, too easily forgetting the enemy of our salvation. Fallen man doesn't ordinarily close himself off in the face of evidence; only the devil and those who have accepted his spirit, totally, close themselves to it. Jesus' enemies have heard the account of the terrified Roman soldiers, but in the apparent impassiveness of those who listen is the spirit of evil who knows what he must do to keep the soldiers quiet about the truth. It is the devil who offers this money, as it was the devil himself in Judas who contracted the sale of Jesus for

30 coins. We'll have a chance to go into this topic later.

## CHAPTER 3:

### *The Fallen Angel against the Church*

***“I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers”*** (Gn 3:15). Jesus is the Firstborn among many brothers. With Him begins the triumph of the offspring of the woman against its “enemy.” The “enemy” has been unsuccessful against Jesus who, faithful to His promises, has sent what he promised—the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, Spirit of Love, of Truth, and of Unity, whose “first fruits” the Church has received. This Spirit is so powerful that He has achieved a miracle that Jesus could not accomplish in His Apostles, though he keenly desired it: that unity so implored of the Father in the Last Supper— ***“I in them”*** (Jn 17:23). In reality, the Holy Spirit has achieved a greater miracle than the gift of tongues: By means of the Spirit, there now exists a unity between Jesus, already in heaven, and his Apostles, like the unity existing between the head and its members, or to say it as Jesus himself expressed it—like the unity existing between the vine and the branches. It is the same life that circulates through the head and the members, the same sap that runs from the vine to the branches. It’s the same Spirit of Jesus who speaks through His Apostles. And when the devil, availing himself of Paul’s righteousness, strikes out against the rest of the woman’s offspring, Jesus complains from heaven as the head would complain if one of its members were injured: ***“Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute Me?”*** (Acts 9:4). The Holy Spirit has brought about this intimate and secret miracle: the union of the woman’s offspring, which turns out to be the mystical Christ of whom St. Paul speaks—the Church.

The persecution of the nascent Church after the Resurrection of Jesus could be called “diabolical madness.” When the devil saw the Holy Spirit descend, he lost the cool serenity he had had when he offered money to the soldiers to keep them from making public his Enemy’s Resurrection. The situation for his kingdom now worsened in a way that he probably couldn’t imagine. This is why he attempts to crush the nascent Church by using the Synagogue, just as he had attempted to kill the child Jesus by using Herod. The devil sees that his kingdom is crumbling, for the seed that Jesus scattered with his Blood suddenly begins to flower and yield fruit. In attempting to uproot the seed that has sprouted, the “enemy” becomes, through the Father’s permission, a veritable pruner. Thus the words of Jesus become fulfilled: **“...and every branch that bears fruit, my Father prunes it that it may bear more fruit”** (Jn 15:2). From the blood and prayer of the protomartyr Stephen, the indefatigable apostle Paul is born. The devil’s persecution against “the offspring of the woman”—whether by means of the Synagogue or by means of the Roman Empire—produces only this effect: **“The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.”** The catacombs were the soil that for several centuries hid “the grain of wheat,” which by dint of dying—**“If the grain of wheat does not die... “2—wound up bursting into an immense tree “...where the birds of the heaven came to dwell”** (Mt 13:32). The reading of the records of the martyrs reveals how totally satanical certain martyrdoms were. To regard these simply as historical happenings due to divergences of thought is to be totally ignorant of the essence of the true drama through which the **“seed of the kingdom of God”<sup>5</sup>** had to pass. Coming to know the true motive of this drama is a grace that gives us a Divine and much broader vision than the one contained in history books.

We have said that the *“seed of the kingdom of God”* has grown to such an extent that it has become a tree where, according to the way Jesus expressed it, *“The birds of the heavens would come to dwell.”* It should be noted, as well, that other “birds” have caused great damage to the “tree,” for they have been lured by its external splendor and their own personal convenience. This begins to happen when Constantine the Great ends the state of agony in which early Christianity lived. The kingdom of Christ begins to have contact with the kingdoms of this world. The devil uses a new tactic: from fierce, he turns pious-politician. Whereas he first used the disorderly passions of kings and emperors, now he will use the piety of converts; and so begins the veneration and esteem of men who make up the “kingdom of Christ.” No longer is there any heed or notion of the fact that the kingdom of God is not of this world. When they are given citizenship like other men, Christians begin to think they can live well-off in this world and at the same time belong to the kingdom of Christ. The “enemy” has laid the bridge: Jesus’ followers are going to want to settle themselves in this world, which is the “enemy’s” kingdom. With this tactic, the devil will gain more, although it will certainly take him longer. We’re not going to analyze all the phases through which the “seed of the kingdom of God” has passed. It’s sufficient to say that the “enemy,” Satan, has availed himself of everything for humiliating it and moving it away from the Spirit of Jesus, who is the Spirit of Love, humility, and sacrifice. And all these— Love, humility, and sacrifice—have been present throughout the centuries, even though many, many have crossed the “bridge” built by the “enemy,” seeking to make the kingdom of Christ a kingdom of this world where force, law, and power may substitute for the love, humility, and sacrifice desired by Jesus.

Once God “permitted” the formation of the Church’s

“temporal power”—power which is not of the essence of the Church—, it could be used as a temporary or provisional “means” for the Church to fulfill its salvific mission under historical circumstances that are difficult for the Gospel to penetrate. As men become morally elevated, the Church’s temporal power becomes less necessary. Humanity’s coming-of-age renders its action more unnecessary, and there is a wider margin for personal decisions. We would say that this is how God has worked in the progressive development of His contact with men through Revealed Scripture. From the Laws of Mt. Sinai to the Sermon on the Mount, there’s as much difference as there is from childhood to adulthood. Undoubtedly, there is a great difference from one set of circumstances to the other, but this difference doesn’t depend upon a change in God but upon the fact that the one who has changed, who has evolved, is man.

Something similar has happened with respect to the temporal power of the Church: As men have become educated in the concepts of the individual’s liberty, there is less justification for the existence of this power.

Having clearly understood the foregoing, and seeing how in His plans God employs means so “human,” we cannot silence the fact that many have been able to utilize this “means” for their personal aims instead of using it for communicating salvation. It’s enough to read the history of the Church in the 10th century in order to see the degree of abjectness into which the temporal power of the Popes fell—power that was coveted by diverse Roman families.

Is it that the temporal power of the Popes was bad? First of all, let us say that this “temporal power” of the Church, as we have said before, was in God’s Permission and not in His WILL. As to whether or not it was bad for the Popes depends upon the use they may have made of this “temporal

power.” Apart from what we’ve said about its being a power accommodated to historical circumstances, it also afforded the Church great independence in her spiritual action, since she did not depend upon any king or emperor. The struggle of Investitures between Pope and Emperor was aimed at acquiring this independence. That some Popes may have misused their “temporal power” should not surprise us, for if spiritual power can be misused, how much more so the temporal. Consider, for example, the distribution of indulgences.

A profound reflection on the parable of the wheat and the weeds would lead us to what we essentially need to know and should not easily forget—that in the *very field* in which One planted wheat, the “enemy” planted weeds, and that this happened *“while men were asleep.”* To reflect on this more-or-less blame-worthy sleep is to find the measure of each one’s responsibility. Let’s consider human respect, personal interests, false prudence, etc.; all these have been put to good use by our “enemy” in order to continue sowing weeds.

*“Stay sober and alert”*—St Paul tells us— *“Your opponent, the devil, is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith...”* (I Pt 5:8-9)- Unfortunately, what is lacking, after so many centuries of the “enemy’s” battle against mankind, is precisely the belief in his existence and his baleful influence. How are we to resist him if we don’t believe he exists? In practice, we live without taking this formidable enemy into account for anything. The devil’s past and present victory lies in going about undetected, making “intelligent” men believe that it is stupidity and a lack of culture to think of him as the causal principle of all the evils humanity suffers. In this way, he has an unencumbered road for carrying out his devastating work. Only the saints and



the souls who have made up their minds to go Godwards have come to know the secret snares the devil has laid for them. To come to know the devil, a serious spiritual life is necessary: exact knowledge of him requires spiritual maturity. St. Paul warned us many centuries ago: ***“Put on the full armor of God so as to be able to resist the devil’s tactics. For our battle is not against human forces but against the Sovereignities and the Powers who originate the darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens”*** (Eph 6:11-12).

We should recognize the fact that we don’t know how to “fully” arm ourselves—***“dressed in the FULL armor of God”***—by worthily using the Divine gift of liberty. Our irresponsibility is exploited by the “enemy” to promote in us a false liberty; here is the root of an evil as old as sin. Frequently, the Epistles of the Apostles exhort us to the freedom of the sons of God. Prior to knowing what the virtues of the sons of God consist in, perhaps we would need to thoroughly understand what true human liberty consists in, liberty which is the gift that most likens us to God. Our neglect of this understanding is utilized by the “enemy” to constantly hurt us.

## CHAPTER 4:

### *Man's Liberty*

Since God's grace is always at man's disposal for his returning to the state he lost, we must seek out the cause that detains us; and this cause lies in the wrong use of our liberty.

Are we truly free? In what sense? Everyone who does what he wants, is he truly free? We must answer that there is a false liberty that is slavery in disguise: External freedom of action can conceal an intimate slavery; this is the self-willed man who has the power and prerogative to act according to his whims. Such a man is a slave to the spirit of evil, spirit that resides in him and orients him to his egoistic-I; for we mustn't forget that there is a slavery not only to other men but to ourselves as well, which ultimately is nothing but slavery to the spirit of evil, for the soul's true "self" always tends toward God alone, inasmuch as she was created in His "image and likeness" and, for the same reason, must identify with Him. Any objective other than this union with God, which man may strive to attain, is due to a misuse of his liberty, producing in him the aforementioned slavery.

Here we have a slavery unknown to the vast majority of men, who believe themselves free. There's a reason why this confusion exists: In the innermost of the will, self-determination, free will, resides, but when the will accepts the insinuations of the evil spirit, shattering justice and truth, this self-determination cloaks a slavery—attachment to self.

Sin displaced God from the center of man's life and made man himself the focal point of his own thoughts and decisions. This change of "center" was the primordial work of the "enemy" for managing man more easily. The "enemy" made man see his subjection to God as slavery, so

that he himself could enslave him, taking advantage of his disorderly passions—a disorder due to man’s change of “center.” This is the slavery of original sin; personal sins can increase this slavery.

Baptism, the incorporation of the human being into Christ, pardons us from original sin, it’s true, but in Baptism we are given the germ of a truly free life that each soul must gradually develop by placing God anew at the center of her life.<sup>3</sup> The further man gets away from personal sins and lives from the grace of Baptism, orienting himself to his Divine Reality, the freer he will become. But man, despite Baptism, tends toward slavery, and he tends toward it by appealing to nothing less than liberty itself. Could we possibly find the root from which this fatal tendency originates?

Ever since man first sinned, he estranged himself from God, his Beginning and his End; he no longer senses God as the protector of his life. The “enemy” has taken advantage of man’s insecurity and estrangement with respect to God in order to enslave him in this world where he, the “enemy,” reigns, making man see as an end what should be a means for his returning to God. Thus man puts all his drive into gaining security in this world, and what he thinks, loves, and projects is nothing but a seeking to protect himself and his own personal interests. This intraworld slavery provides a certain kind of security, a painful security, but man prefers it to the insecurity through which he must pass if he is to acquire true security in God: authentic liberty.

Let’s recall the textual words of the Hebrew people to Moses: ***“Did we not tell you this in Egypt, when we said, ‘Leave us alone. Let us serve the Egyptians’? Far better for us to be the slaves of Egyptians than to die in the desert”*** (Ex 14:12). Let us analyze these words and this people’s situation, so that we may understand that deep

something that resides within the human soul, which tends toward slavery and seems connected with the instinct of self-preservation. The Hebrew people were in Egypt for 430 years. The Pharaoh who knew Joseph is no sooner dead when they are subjected to hard slavery; a “*hard and bitter*” slavery but which afforded them a security nonetheless. God wants them free from that slavery, but at the first sign of danger—they are between the Red Sea and the Pharaoh’s army—they prefer the bondage of Egypt. They forget the wonders God has worked by means of Moses; the ten prodigious plagues no longer mean anything to them. Their instinct of self-preservation at that moment longs for the slavery of Egypt, a slavery that didn’t free them from death either, yet they prefer to die slaves in Egypt than to run the risk of freedom.

In light of this historical fact, we cannot deny that in the human soul there dwells a spirit of slavery that is preferred to authentic liberty, because true liberty seems to place life itself in danger. The fact is that true liberty must first go through death; everything that is a fetter must die—fetter that ensures us in this world, it’s true, but which also enslaves us. Man resists this insecurity, just as he resists death. Dying to this slavery is painful at first, for it takes away from us the security afforded by it. This security provided by slavery can be of a spiritual or material nature. Those who are materially enslaved have already decided for spiritual slavery—their conscience rests comfortably on others. It’s easier not to think for oneself since this would be running a risk; the safest thing is what’s popularly said or believed. But have they stopped to think whether what is popularly said is true because it *is* true, or because others say it? And even being true, have they reflected whether or not it’s what God wants in that particular case? The lack of reflection reveals this cherished slavery—which men don’t plan to

forsake, so long as things are going well. It protects them in society. Why do they need to be free?

Therefore, authentic liberty for the creature is impossible if the Divine reality does not strongly emerge in the center of his life. Only the presence of God in man's existence can help him break away from the slavery in which he lives, because if God does not gain access into our human life, who else besides our "I" or "self" can take His place? But, behind this "I" is "another" who hides and aspires, sooner or later, to take God's place: the devil.

The existence of society is not enough to take us out of the slavery of the "self." A collectivity is basically useful insofar as it protects or foments the well-being desired by the slavery of one's own egoism. Society is not adequate enough to detach man from himself—from his slavery. All the contrary, it imposes upon him another slavery: the slavery that demands his services to society or to his country. The soldier who dies for his homeland, in reality dies because his threatened interests are in that homeland.

God alone can restore authentic liberty to us: When we sacrifice our egoistic-I for Him, we find the fullness of our freedom, for this freedom now carries out its functions in the perfect direction. This places us in a state of insecurity in the world. By not looking toward ourselves, we'll feel free to look after whatever may be God's Will; we'll live in a worldly insecurity; we'll not know what we shall eat tomorrow, how we shall dress, etc.—all this, we'll leave in the hands of the Lord whom we serve. In this way, we'll reach that security that comes from the perfect liberty—the security that God gives to those who serve Him faithfully.

We can ask ourselves yet another question: The person who makes up his mind to seek God, does he do so in order to serve God or because this service will bring him some benefit? Wouldn't this be a subtle form of egoism that,

above all, seeks its own happiness, as others seek it in other directions? This happiness should be a consequence, not the aim, of this free and selfless service to one's Creator. A person finds happiness because he's hit upon the center and reason for his existence. He is a slave to no one, not even to himself; his freedom comes to him because love made him a slave of his Lord, attaining the goal for which he was created. The more the creature actuates his liberty in this direction, the more perfect the liberty, as well as the creature will be. This is the opposite of what Lucifer, and later the first man, did; theirs is a rebelliousness in which the liberty failed to decide for the perfection of herself.

Is the devil freer because he wants the opposite of what God wants? His portrayal in chains is very enlightening. Has God put those chains on him? No, his own pride chained him; the devil is the eternally-chained, chained by his "self-esteem." The more men "esteem" themselves in a disorderly way, the more they liken themselves to the devil. True liberty will be substituted by satanic slavery in which pride holds them imprisoned as in a hell.

Service to God is by no means complex—even though the devil makes men believe this in order to make them his own slaves. Service to God is a lawful and rational order demanded by our right to be His creatures. It's true that God created man free, but this freedom, preceded by the knowledge of God and of his free condition, as well as of love, is man's so that he may recognize and freely embrace that lawful and rational dependence. The contrary is rebelliousness and, therefore, a false freedom that attempts to implant an unlawful order.

Now we can ask ourselves: How can the exercise of liberty exist when there's only one course of action? This exercise of the liberty toward a single course of action is rooted in the very essence of the will, which is naturally

inclined toward the Good; and when the will chooses a bad, it does so under the aspect of the good. Liberty does not decide between a bad and a good but between two realities that appear under the aspect of good, even though one of them may not be so. When man seeks his own good above all, disregarding Good itself, which manifests itself to him in his conscience, he acts in his “convenience,” and then, sooner or later, he’ll experience that he has decided for a wrong. Only when we act with a righteous conscience do we experience the sensation of having done right, because if we chose a wrong, it was because in *conscience* we saw it as Right. The devil’s temptation to the first man was partly true: ***“You will be like God, knowing good and evil”*** (Gn 3:5). Man didn’t know evil until he experienced it. The saints knew evil, but they overcame it by directing their liberty to the attainment of the Supreme Good. Physical pain, which is an evil as a consequence of man’s sin, did not enter into the original economy of redemption from the action of the angel in Creation. Now, however, the liberty will not become purified except through pain, which is a relative evil, but it opens the way toward the Supreme Good. Rebelliousness against pain is an additional sin that sinks man even lower. The liberty should accept pain as the medicine for its salvation; if the liberty rejects pain, it is rejecting its cure, which is nothing other than impeding its return to the lost Paradise. The Son of God came to lead us to Paradise and to tell us that He was the Way to go to the Father: ***“...No one comes to the Father but through me”*** (Jn 14:6). We’ll not be able to return to that Father whom we lost in Paradise if we don’t liken ourselves to His Only-Begotten Son. It is within Him that we must live so that the Father may see us through His Son, and seeing us thus identified, He, the Father, may exclaim of each one of us: ***“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”*** (Mt

3:17). But we cannot be within His Son except by traveling the Path He traveled: ***“My food is to do the will of him who sent me...”*** (Jn 4:34). The Father’s Will was on the Cross, Calvary, and Death of Jesus Christ, in order to redeem us from our sins; not that the Father’s Will had chosen the Cross, Calvary, and Death for His Son; it was man who chose it, and the Father’s ***justice*** accepted it. To reject the cross that the Father’s justice prescribes for each one of us is to reject the “Way” that leads us to the Father.

The Only-Begotten Son traveled the “Way” for our salvation; we should travel it, not so much for our salvation, but because He traveled it for each one of us. Through these deliberations, how profound are Jesus’ words: ***“I am the way”*** (Jn 14:6). Never would we have come out of ourselves—not even with the best of will. Only Jesus’ Love pulled us out of the self-centeredness in which we were living, opening up to us the way—***“...making of this ignominious way which men gave Him, way of salvation”***—way which we travel when, impelled by love, we decide to follow Him in the fulfillment of the Father’s Will. Our self-love never would have accepted pain in order to return to the Father, but His Son became pain for each one of us so that, seeing Him, we might embrace pain.

Here the liberty plays a highly important role: It must decide in favor of the profound realities that faith proposes to it, not allowing itself to be dissuaded by the resistance of a fallen nature constantly exploited by the devil. If man in Paradise embraced evil with no knowledge of it, now he must, consciously, embrace pain because pain harbors a good: his purification and salvation. This is what the saints have done. From the moment that, by means of pain, we are purified of our egoism, the soul will come out of her slavery, from her attachment to self, recovering her authentic liberty: the perfect election of Good.



## CHAPTER 5:

### *Liberty and Concupiscence*

We have discussed the obstacle that resides in the will itself and that blocks the liberty: egoism and pride.

Going a step further, we find a new barrier for the liberty, which is within man but outside his will: the disorderly concupiscence of the flesh. This second slavery, like every slavery, depends on the first: Since the will is not free—subject to God—it is unable to subdue and order the passions, thus giving way to the slavery of the concupiscence of the flesh.

In this matter of the flesh, what was man's situation prior to original sin? All his passions were orderly and in perfect balance under the control of his will, subject to God, thus delighting in a true liberty. This is why the enemy, the spirit of evil, could not touch his passions, since they were all, as it were, anointed by a will sanctified by grace. The temptation was directed to the will from outside. All of man's actions were most pure, for they proceeded from a Holy Source. His principal task had already been ordained for him by God: to multiply mankind—God's family.

The human family such as we know it today did not enter into the original Divine plan. This family, which seems to be an exigency of nature itself, is only so after the sin, when everything tends to become divided and requires some kind of order, and this order is now needed for man's purification; but had there been no need for this purification, which would have been the case had there been no original sin, the situation would have been very different. While man now tends in an almost clannish way to the formation of a family, in the primal plan he would have only one thing in mind: to fulfill the Will of God, which entailed his collaborating with Him in the multiplication of His sons,

irrespective of races or frontiers, since these are a consequence of sin. Sex was given to man by God for this purpose. This would have been fulfilled in a perfect way: the center of human life was God. The man was the creature delighted to know that he was at the service of his Creator. As God in His infinite power wanted the collaboration of the man in order to create other men like him,<sup>4</sup> He gave him a human collaborator—the woman. The woman, on the supernatural plane, comes forth from the man: ***“And the rib which the Lord God took from the man, he made into a woman...”*** and marriage was constituted: ***“...and they shall become one flesh”*** (Gn 2:24). Man would not be alone in so Divine a task: the multiplication of God’s family. What would take them to the sexual union would never be the egoism of disorderly instincts, but the “service” to their Lord who created them. Both man and woman would see themselves only as instruments, fully submissive to the Divine Will. United in one Love—the Holy Spirit—, they would never detain themselves in themselves.

We cannot now conceive how man and woman, being “naked,” were not aware of their “nakedness” prior to the sin.<sup>5</sup> This is an illuminating factor, revealing to us their exceedingly high degree of Divine contemplation. In such a state of contemplation, what importance could their bodies possibly have? The important thing was God’s Love which united them. It wasn’t the sexual drive that held sway, but LOVE—the clear vision of God who had commanded them to increase and multiply. Sexual pleasure, which indeed existed, was not comparable to the soul’s delight in knowing she was fulfilling the Will of her Creator whom she loved with her whole heart and mind. The body was merely a simple support wherein resided the soul—the “image” of God—who would collaborate with Him in the creation of other creatures. All these creatures would collaborate with

God in the same way. This doesn't mean that the *only* purpose for the union of man and woman was the procreation of mankind. The *main* purpose of this union was the fulfillment of God's Will; the other would be a consequence. From this union of souls and bodies in Love and God's Will, the whole creation would benefit. Thus, they were "image and LIKENESS of God"—a reflection of the Holy Trinity.

God Himself was the center of the man and the woman who were "one" in God. They, the man and the woman, were the center of creation. From the union of their souls and bodies in God, the whole creation received the strength, vigor, fertility, life!, which they were receiving from God, irradiating the good that penetrated the inner core of all created things, while at the same time they cooperated with their Creator in the creation of the "sons of God."

When sin came about, it caused a deep disturbance in the human being. Lacking the will's free submission to God, the other part of the human being—the body with its instincts—ceased to be submitted to the will, will that had rebelled, separating itself from God. This gives rise to the slavery of the flesh. Concupiscence does not faithfully obey the will. Furthermore, the will, enslaved by its own pride, seeks egoistic satisfaction above all. Sex, which God had given man for collaborating with Him, is used by man as a source of pleasure, making him a collaborator with the spirit of evil. The disorder of concupiscence—which is a consequence—reaffirms the slavery of the will, which is its cause.

But just as God did not take away man's liberty when he used it wrongly, neither does He take away his ability to procreate; nor does He dissolve marriage. In the Old Testament, Malachi reminds us with these words: ***"...Because the Lord is witness between you and the wife of***

*your youth, with whom you have broken faith though she is your companion, your betrothed wife. Did he not make one being, with flesh and spirit: and what does that one require but godly offspring? You must then safeguard life that is your own, and not break faith with the wife of your youth”* (Mai 2:14-15). And Jesus later confirms this in the New Testament. Replying to the Pharisees, Jesus says: *“...Have you not read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female and declared, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and the two shall become as one’? Thus they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined”* (Mt 19:4-6).

God does not retract His works. But to help man recover his early liberty, he gave him explicit norms: To the woman He said: *“I will intensify the pangs of your child-bearing; in pain shall you bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master”* (Gn 3:16). To the man, He said: *“...Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘you must not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your bread until you return to the ground...”* (Gn 3:17-19).

These norms were to establish an order similar– not equal–to the first: Man’s subsistence no longer depended on God alone. He must earn his bread *“by the sweat of his brow,”* and the woman also was to cooperate with her pain in the procreation of children. Each couple would form a family for which it must be responsible. The man will be more a man the better he fulfills his duty as the representative of the family before God, and the better his

will is able to master his concupiscence within the home. All this was the first phase of the purification of the flesh, besides the fact that it was required by the children, born in sin and in need of a much longer moral and material support from a family. The family would be, as it were, the spiritual climate that would shelter the Mother of the promised Messiah and her Son.

Mary initiated a second stage of purification by taking the vow of virginity, and at the same time she sanctified the family itself. The virgin souls who have followed her example have been a holy contribution to this purification for regaining the liberty of the flesh, purifying the fallen nature. Our limited vision—one of the many consequences of original sin—keeps us from seeing the social repercussions of this holocaust of the concupiscence consummated by these virgin souls.

The has attempted to get his share of this second phase of the purification: the struggle against concupiscence has engendered an unconscious aversion to sex—as if sex were the work of sin. There was even a sect that considered marriage an invention of the devil. It's sufficient to say that the pact of the old covenant established by God with Abraham was made by means of the circumcision, God thus getting ahead of what the devil could suggest much later on.<sup>6</sup>

It's true that man, after original sin, has lost the serenity that comes from a will submitted to God, free from itself and from the appetites of the flesh. The whole “natural” order that resided in man's interiority depended on the “supernatural” order of “grace,” which was the cause and foundation of that “natural” order. If we wish to return to that equilibrium where the will is free from all slavery, it needs the supernatural order of grace, for God wanted man in that state, and on man depended this “natural” balance. It

is grace, therefore, that will give man “naturalness” and spontaneity in understanding and talking about sex. The more this grace penetrates the soul, the more it restores the soul to that childlikeness recommended by the Master. And when have children thought that sex is something mysterious? The term “mystery of life” is product of disorderly concupiscence. For children, sex is something as natural as their hands, their head and their eyes. This naturalness can be reached with the help of grace, but the present state of society forces those who have reached this naturalness to continue on in the same reserve.

It should be noted that the man who is pure of heart has a naivety that can be judged as a lack of personality. This is what is thought by the man who has attributed personality to things that are not. This is because he does not possess a pure heart but one that is stained; and this stain, which is blindness, does not let him see the reality of the Divine plan, for true personality must be attributed to man’s loftiest possession: the image that God engraved of Himself in him: **“...Let us make man to our image and likeness”** (Gn 1:26). The man who is pure of heart gradually acquires that Divine “likeness,” which is his true personality. The saint is he who has attained the true Divine liberty that God wanted for man, which is like a partaking of His Will and has nothing to do with the hard-heartedness that arises from the slavery of concupiscence.

We have previously pointed out the collaboration of the woman with the man in the multiplication of the sons of God; but we should not forget that God created the woman to take away man’s aloneness: **“It is not good for the man to be alone”** (Gn 2:18). If this aloneness of man had been conspicuous after the sin, there would be an explanation for it. But, no, man was full of grace; God lived in him, and yet his Creator finds that **“it is not good for the man to be**

*alone.*” In this, we can see the exceedingly profound humility of God: In the man who belongs totally to Him, He leaves something of a spiritual opening for another creature to fill. Can’t God Himself do this? Yes, but God wanted to give man the joy of talking to a creature like himself. To do this, he makes the woman “dependent” on the man, leaving in him that opening, not only in the flesh but also in the spirit. The “help” that God gave man is of such a nature that it touches the very root of human existence. There’s a maxim that says: “Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.”

We may now draw a conclusion: The total development of man’s personality is achieved when his soul meets the soul of woman. The sexual aspect is a subsequent reality that may or may not exist. Let’s contemplate the lives of the saints. Always at their side is a woman who fulfills the mission of being the “help” wanted by God. Frequently this “help” is unnoticed by the eyes of the world, for the world would sully it; it remains concealed, fulfilling its humble but sublime mission. And let’s not think that God was enough for the saints; the first man had more graces than the saints, and God said: ***“It is not good for the man to be alone.”*** Not to acknowledge this “help” is to reject the Divine plan.

Depending on the attitude he adopts before the woman, two distinct abnormalities can develop in the man: hardheartedness and brutishness. Hardhearted-ness occurs when this “help” is disregarded; brutishness, when she is abused—when he makes a god of this “help,” believing that carnal satisfaction can give him happiness. And as this happiness lasts only a few moments, man thinks he can prolong his happiness by multiplying the moments. This way of thinking only brings on disgust. This behavior brings no development of the human personality; what it brings out is the beast in the man who retains only a minimum of

reason. The devil has succeeded in getting man to substitute sex for God. Sex is the god whose demands are ever more imperious. In this god, there is neither love nor justice—there is only one norm: egoism. Here we have a total slavery to the flesh, constantly fomented by the devil.

This slavery of the flesh can provide a rationale for other men who, desirous of liberty in order to better get to God, scorn the “help” by regarding her almost exclusively as an instrument whom the devil uses to separate them from God. This line of reasoning seeks to radically dispense with this “help,” perhaps with good intentions, because she is believed to be an obstacle, but God’s plan cannot be changed without our experiencing the consequences. This scorn of the “help”—*wanted by God*—produces an inner dislocation that ends up in hardheartedness, causing in the soul a coldness similar to that of those who have become brutish by abusing the “help,” because the man who sincerely surrenders himself to God must never disregard what God has created for him, even if others, by abusing this “help,” have gone against the Divine plan. Hardheartedness doesn’t occur when man has primarily sought to serve God but, rather, when he has given this priority to his egoism, living more and more a life of ease; that is to say, that in brutishness as well as in hardheartedness—in abusing as well as in disregarding the woman—the factor that motivates both attitudes is the same: *egoism*.

And so the devil has made us believe that man’s enemy is woman, and vice versa. It’s not easy to recognize the devil in all these evaluations, but from the beginning, it has been he who wants to block the Divine plan, for he himself used the woman to insinuate his spirit into the human soul and to lean on man to achieve his ambition to be man and reign over men. In man’s regeneration, the woman cannot be dispensed with, for God Himself, in His humility and



justice, used her—Mary—to introduce Himself into this world. Frequently, given our fallen nature, the only thing that is taken into account is the devastating work that the “enemy” has accomplished by means of the woman; but the hour has come—and now is!— when hearts filled with the Holy Spirit, enflamed by His most pure fire, are face to face with God’s way of doing things.

If sin left woman in a less injured state than man, this means that she now finds herself “naturally” closer to God. The meaning of “help,” for which she was created, now takes on new prominence. She should be submitted to the man (for this was the Divine decree after the sin), but this submission doesn’t exempt her from utilizing all the best that is in her to encourage the man to submit himself to God, for she can now orient herself directly to God and can help the man to get out of the creature in order to submit himself to God.

We don’t actually know how original sin came about, but from the consequences, we can see that the man was more to blame, since it is neither just nor reasonable that a greater disorder should exist in the one who has sinned less. Consequently, if there’s greater disorder in the man, it’s because his sin was greater. Now then, if the woman collaborated with the man (we don’t know to what extent) in the sin, she must collaborate and “help” the man to become regenerated. It’s true that he has grace at his disposal to help him, but before the sin, he also had grace, and yet God saw the man alone and deemed it necessary to give him a “help like unto himself”: the woman. Now then, in this regeneration of the man, the human element—the woman—must *assume the responsibility* of her highly important and delicate redeeming mission. It’s true that man must have a *determined will to raise himself up*, and this ultimately depends on him, but the woman with her intuition

should “help him” because, otherwise, it would be very difficult for him. It is precisely here, in the disorder of concupiscence, where the woman is more orderly and free, having retained more of her original balance.

The imbalance in the woman is not so profound as it is in the man, but it’s more subtle and could render her mission fruitless. This happens when she takes advantage of the gifts and graces God has given her and uses them in an ego-satisfaction. In that case, instead of being a link between God and man, she becomes a veritable obstacle, and the devil uses her as an instrument for brutalizing and enslaving the man even more. Superficiality keeps the woman from assuming the responsibility of her lofty and profound mission. If God delivered her to man as his complement, this encompasses the total being of both. The soul of woman should contribute something positive that man’s soul needs, and this “something positive” is something Divine that man lost after the sin. The woman won’t be able to accomplish this mission with the superficiality of a vain complacency.

In addition to grace, love and sacrifice will give the woman the fortitude and supernatural vision for carrying out her delicate mission. She will understand that it’s a mistake and an injustice to take advantage of God’s gifts in a foolish and absurd self-complacency in order to keep the man beside her, instead of taking him to God, thus rendering His gifts fruitless. She must be a fulcrum that never blocks man’s return to Him who created him. Woman’s mission is sublime, but also very humble; to depart from humility because her mission is sublime is not to have understood her mission. The whole spiritual and carnal tendency that the man feels toward the woman should be used by her to turn him in the direction of God. Should she appropriate this tendency for her own selfish interests, she is failing the Divine plan. Moreover, she will suffer the consequences, for

in wanting to retain the man, he will dominate her to the point of enslaving her through an ever-insatiable concupiscence, leading her also to brutishness and hardheartedness.

To succeed in being that “natural help” wanted by God for regenerating the man, the woman must attain that inner liberty, which we have already discussed, by sacrificing her subtle egoism, which is summed up in one very meaningful word: *vanity*. She’ll stop being vain when she stops being superficial; and she’ll stop being superficial when she penetrates the love God has given her, which is a spark of His infinite Love. A diligent and earnest collaboration with grace will lead her to discover her true beauty. It is on this true beauty that man should lean if he is to reach infinite beauty, which is Love and Truth in perfect liberty.

## CHAPTER 6:

### *The Spirit of the World*

We have reflected on the two obstacles to the liberty that man carries within himself: pride and disorderly concupiscence. The third obstacle is found outside of man: the spirit of the world.

When he arrives in this world, man is to be found spiritually wounded from within and from without. He comes with original sin, the spirit of evil, action of the fallen angel, which he must gradually expel with the help of grace. Outside of himself, man encounters a world where the spirit of evil that he comes with has been accepted by the vast majority of men. This accepted spirit of evil has a name, “spirit of the world.” This spirit has woven a net in which the liberty of the sons of God finds great difficulty for taking action.

Have we ever asked ourselves why Jesus did not pray for the world—and not only that He did not mention the world in His Priestly Prayer, but that He positively rejected it? . ***not for the world do I pray***” (Jn 17:9)- Could it be that the world and the devil are mutually identified? Can one possibly pray for the devil? For Jesus, the spiritual state of the “world” is in a condition identical to that of the fallen angel. In both there is a constant rebelliousness that renders them incapable of receiving Jesus’ prayer and the Father’s forgiveness. These are not just words: the world is the devil’s kingdom. Let us recall that in the third temptation the devil offered Jesus, as something of his own, the kingdoms of this world.<sup>7</sup> This is why the spirit of the world is the spirit of the devil. In the world, pride and falsehood reign because its spirit is the same as that of the one who is the

father of lies. And just as man needs humility to attain to truth, so falsehood springs from pride as its natural fruit. To understand this, we need only give ourselves a little personal test: Why don't we always tell the truth? Because there isn't enough humility in us to bear the consequences of a truth that would harm us personally. Let's magnify this little personal experience to the maximum, and we will see how the diabolical lie is implanted in the world—lie that hides the pride of beings who, to a greater or lesser degree, partake of the devil's spirit. These brief reflections have been able to clarify for us the reason why Jesus did not pray for the world even though his Heart expanded as he prayed not only for his Apostles but **"...for those also who through their word are to believe in me"** (Jn 17:20).

A brief, practical conclusion: So long as lying is a frequent occurrence in our lives, pride has its roots in our souls and, therefore, we will partake of the spirit of the world; and for as long as we belong to this spirit, we place ourselves outside of Jesus' prayer: **"...not for the world do I pray."**

The devil has worked to keep men from giving falsehood the import it deserves, and he has succeeded; furthermore, he has baptized some lies as "merciful lies." Can true mercy be combined with lying? The devil knows full well that it can't, but since he doesn't want to lose all his influence over good souls, he makes them believe that these lies are not important. For the time being, the devil is content to achieve this minimum victory: it's the open door that will enable him to penetrate more deeply at the opportune moment; for when souls accept something of his, such as lying, God, for the sake of justice, **will allow** him to draw close to them. Moreover, the "enemy" gains something more by this: By calling these lies "merciful," he succeeds in keeping souls from discovering the true motive of these lies: pride.

Falsehood is a dependable thermometer that indicates to what degree pride has become encrusted in our souls. At a simple glance, falsehood and pride don't seem to be related in any way. To see this relationship, we must not forget that the father of lies is the devil—pride personified. And the devil has established his kingdom in the world by means of men who have accepted him. This is why the world is ruled by the devil's spirit. The devil began to take possession of the world by means of a lie: ***“You will be like gods...,”***<sup>8</sup> he said to Adam. But the devil's kingdom is destined to perish. Just as truth is one and unifies, lying is multiple and scatters. ***“Every kingdom divided against itself is destined to perish”*** (Mt 12:25).

The spirit of the world has so many subtleties! And sometimes we think we know them all when, in reality, we have yet to know even those that most concern us. We should bear in mind that the spirit of the world works in different zones simultaneously: all the way from the purely material up to introducing confusion into our spiritual values. This spirit is nothing more than the extension of the devil's action for the purpose of attaining what the latter has not. In the life of Jesus, for example, the devil attempts to separate Him from the path of the Father's Will. He doesn't succeed, but he constantly tries the same thing with His followers by means of the spirit of the world, presenting himself under the aspect of what is “reasonable.” On the other hand, the devil makes the pure things of God seem “reasonably” exaggerated.

It's a dogged determination on the part of that spirit to have men live comfortably in this world, to the extent possible, dispensing with God. We say “to the extent possible” because if God is missing, men can't really be happy. The spirit achieves this aim in the area of man's lower faculties: from his senses up to a certain part of the

reason. But when reason searches deeply, it finds the falsehood of the spirit of the world. This spirit is not reasonable, it is sophistic because it seeks to make man forget the profound yearning that constantly tends to sprout in his soul: God. This forgetting about God takes on many forms but always carries the imprint of the “reasonable”: all the way from atheistic materialism to the religion that, in actual practice, seeks to come to terms with the spirit of the world. It is a fact that atheistic materialism leans on material and economic reasons for setting God aside. This is a “blind” reasoning—blind as is matter upon which it leans—bent on doing without God, when matter itself was made by God. By this, an “unreasonableness” is committed when, in attempting to implant social justice, God is dispensed with. Nevertheless, to such as these, doing without God is something reasonable. Have their eyes seen Him? Then He doesn’t exist. This is a deduction that an animal with a minimum of reason could make—the simple inference of the senses.

The spirit of the world is as varied and different as are the categories of devils. Haven’t we said that the spirit of the world is the hidden extension of the devil’s influence? Devils are multiple. The possessed man in the Gospel said that his name was “legion.” So is the spirit of the world “legion” and disunity.

Is this or that reasonable?... Then God wants it. This is how the “spirit of the world” thinks—spirit that energetically opposes the exigencies of a faith that sometimes asks the sacrifice of one’s reason in order to submit oneself unconditionally to the Supreme Reason. Let us recall the case of Saul; he was the man who always acted on rational impulse. A powerful army is on the verge of destroying Israel; Israel begins to scatter, and Samuel hasn’t yet arrived. Pressured by time, Saul thinks it “reasonable” that

he should offer the holocaust. ***“He had just finished this offering when Samuel arrived.. .and Samuel asked him, ‘What have you done?’ “***And Saul’s words are very reasonable, but Samuel answers him: ***“You have been foolish!”*** (1Sam 13:10-13). What was “reasonable” for Saul is “foolishness” for the man of God. Saul and Samuel were two men moved by different spirits. There was never a mutual attunement between them, despite the fact that their lives were so interrelated.

There’s no doubt that in man there’s a tendency to act and judge in the manner of Saul. The “reasonable” gradually separates us from God’s express Will, as happened with Saul. God commands him through His prophet Samuel to totally exterminate Amaleck. But Saul again sinks into his reason, which is rebellious to God’s command. He doesn’t totally exterminate Amaleck, and consents to his own people’s keeping some animals in order to offer them to Him who has commanded him to exterminate them. Herein is the tricky angle of reason: it is reasonably opposed to God’s command, ***“The offering is better than extermination”*** (1 Sam 15:22). Reason causes Saul to forget his obedience and submission to God, which included that extermination. This is what the man of God says to him: ***“To obey is better than sacrifice... For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the command of the Lord, He, too, has rejected you as ruler”*** (1 Sam 15:22-23).

What Samuel did with the king of Amalek offends our down-to-earth sensitivities that want to protest against something that seems cruel. But Samuel prefers men to judge him as cruel, rather than disobey the Lord’s command: ***“‘Bring Agag, king of Amaleck, to me... As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.’ And Samuel hewed Agag to***



*pieces before the Lord at Gilgal*” (1 Sam 15:32-33).

This historical passage leads us to analyze the exigencies of the world—those that the world demands of the men of God. The spirit of the world has succeeded in convincing men that holy souls, God’s elect, should be inoffensive people: “You ought not fear these holy souls,” he seems to tell them. “When they’re not in agreement with your opinion, they’ll keep quiet. They are so good and understanding!” Moreover, the spirit of the world impels his followers to collaborate with good souls, for thus, in some way, he holds them also in his nets. This spirit has convinced simple souls, desirous of greater perfection, that they mustn’t change things, that they’ve not been called to the road of perfection, which is not for everyone, and therefore they shouldn’t bother the others, for this would be a lack of charity and patience—failure to tolerate their “brothers.” It’s the devil himself who insinuates this to those souls, so that he can work better in the world.

We can reply to this with the example of two personages who struggled resolutely against the spirit of the world, and who appear beside Christ on Mount Tabor: Moses and Elijah. Moses *“...took the calf they had made and burned it with fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it”* (Ex 32:20). Later, he spoke thus to the tribe of Levi who placed themselves under his command: *“Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Put every man his sword on his side and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion and every man his neighbor’.*” (Ex 32:27).

The prophet Elijah was no less inflexible: *“‘Seize the prophets of Baal. Let none of them escape!’ They were seized, and Elijah had them brought down to the brook Kishon and there he slit their throats”* (1 Kgs 18:40).

From these facts, we could draw a brief conclusion: As long as we're scandalized about this kind of thing, it indicates that our worldly spirit renders us incapable of understanding God's justice. The spirit of the world has made us forget this Divine attribute, thus prolonging God's mercy in a manner disproportionate to His justice, for if His mercy is infinite, so is His justice. At what point does one begin and the other end? The spirit of the world is not the one most likely to know this. And these men, Moses and Elijah, were in those moments impelled by a force superior to themselves, carrying out Divine justice. So our reason doesn't go along with this? This nonconformity reveals that our reason is anchored not on faith, but on the spirit of the world. This spirit lives either on sentimentality or on personal interest; and Divine justice as well as mercy must be understood by a faith that bases itself on the Supreme Reason. Only those who are united by faith in this Supreme Reason will know the exact hour of His mercy and the exact hour of His justice.

It was the same spirit of the world—which in addition to being “reasonable,” gets carried away by its indignation—that did not let the “sons of thunder” see the exact hour of justice: “*...would you not have us call down fire from heaven to destroy them?*” (Lk 9:54). Jesus shows them that they are dominated, in those moments, by a spirit foreign to the Father's Will. “*You do not know of what manner of spirit you are*” (Lk 9:55). The hour of Jesus was the “hour” of Divine mercy: “*I have come to save the sheep lost by Israel.*”

Coming to know this “hour” is not easy for those who live submerged in all the things with which the spirit of the world distracts them. A sincere criticism of all this that distracts men away from God would be unbearable for them, and they would rise up against this radical judgment, saying:

It's impossible for man to live without any distractions. Everyone who thinks this way, in reality, has not found God; for when God has been found, all that which distracts from Him offends and disgusts. It can happen that for a few moments these things call the attention of our senses, but our innermost soul flees, seeking Him who is her life—God. ***“Through him all things came into being, and apart from him nothing came to be...”*** (Jn 1:3).

This is totally unintelligible for those who reason with their senses and spend their time in sports, politics, pleasure houses, business, social reunions, studies, etc.—and even certain “apostolic works” with an eye to “passing the time away” and at the same time doing something “for Christ” and “for their brothers”; this is another form of “distraction” that keeps good souls from fulfilling the Father’s Will.

All these things not only keep men distracted, but blind as well. As we’ve said earlier, it’s the same spirit of the world that works in different areas of the human soul. Those he doesn’t get in one trap, he catches in another. The businessman feels sorry for the individual who wastes his energies in sports or in houses of prostitution. The businessman thinks he’s a reasonable man who knows how to profit from his intelligence, his time and his money; and if, in addition to this, he attends some religious service, here we have the spirit of the world in a fine, elegant form, and even with the name of Christianity. Grace has to adjust to the normal course of his business; otherwise, he considers it fanaticism. His business ventures are more important. Religion might hold second place for him—if not the fourth or the last place. The person whose form of “distraction” is “apostolic works” reasons in a similar way: What’s important are his works; whether or not these works are in accordance with God’s Will is something that doesn’t even enter his head. It is God who must adapt Himself to man’s

will, and since God “allows” it, as He allows evil, men continue to think that their will is what God WANTS.

And are these the men who ought to judge the hour of God’s justice or that of His mercy? With their worldly frivolity and fickleness, they profane with their judgment what will never be made known to them: the Divine and mysterious plan of man’s salvation.

Another weapon that the spirit of the world uses is mockery, and this has different degrees—from the openly obscene joke to the joke that touches upon spiritual things (this last one is told even by religious persons). We won’t go into the animalistic joke, for it isn’t difficult to see in it the imprint of the spirit of the world in frank collaboration with the devil and the flesh. We already know to what class of beings these people belong who don’t sense an inner revulsion against this kind of joke. Those other jokes, which touch upon spiritual realities, are a much finer snare that the “enemy” uses to keep the things of God from being taken too seriously. In this way, he will create an atmosphere of frivolity around the things that are most holy, which will permit him to more easily carry out his plans of destruction.

This is why Jesus did not pray for the world; there was in it too much rationalism and frivolity that opposed salvation; and not only did it oppose salvation, but it would undertake the persecution of the Savior and all those who would want salvation. ***“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love what is its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I have spoken to you; no servant is greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also...”*** (Jn 15:18-20). These words of Jesus are much too grave for one of his disciples to easily forget. As a person ceases to belong to the

“spirit of the world” because of his fidelity to the intimate “call” of the Lord, the “world” begins to hate him—in a veiled manner at first, and later openly. The world’s “hatred” can be a gauge for knowing if we’ve already been “chosen” by Jesus: ***“If you were of the world, the world would love what is its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”*** While the world esteems us and is in agreement with our works, it is because our deeds are directed by the ‘spirit of the world,’ and we still belong to the “world” and not to Jesus.

Three phases of the spirit of the world with relation to the sons of God can be enumerated: deceit, contempt, and persecution. In the first place, the “spirit of the world” will try to deceive the sons of God with flattery, honors, and the material goods that belong to it. When a man will not let himself be deceived, and he scorns what the “world” offers him, then the second attitude of the spirit of the world arises: scorn and mockery. But when the man of God not only pays no attention to this scorn, but tries to unmask the deceptions of the world, then persecution and martyrdom take place.

Given his state of dislocation, caused by original sin, man has to live in a continuous war: either he causes this war in himself—if he is to uproot the spirit of evil—or it is brought on by external circumstances. Let’s consider religious persecution: If a religious persecution has not left in us the certainty that a persecution must continue on in the secrecy of our hearts against the “old man,” this old man will germinate again upon sensing a favorable environment and can then become more robust than he was before suffering the blows of the external persecution. Of this, we have an experience that is being lived in the religious life: The comforts of a world, apparently converted, can suggest to a religious that he no longer needs to struggle against anything

or against anybody. Those acts of heroism realized in times of persecution are not repeated under normal circumstances when only a minimum of sacrifice would be needed. The fact is that lacking this external persecution, faith gradually cools. There has been no continuity in a deeper struggle. After having conquered the opposition that came from without, the Divine flame that lives in the soul should have continued burning away the resistance of the “old man”/ who co-habits within man. In the absence of this pressure—this struggle— man’s becoming worldly is inevitable, given the rooted tendencies of the spirit of evil that are in him.

This takes us to a little-known consideration: Saints who have lived in a royal court may perhaps have more merit than the martyrs themselves. The martyrs gave their lives for the Lord in a few moments: They overcame barefaced evil. But the holy kings had to be constantly on guard, lest the honors of the world corrupt them, veering them away from the Spirit of the Lord. Their whole life was a martyrdom in the strict sense of the word: They were “witnesses” without bloodshed, facing the persecution of the honors and flattery of the world. This type of persecution is little known because the world doesn’t care to have it become known. It’s the most frequent persecution, and the one that the world turns to greatest advantage.

The words of St. John in his First Epistle sum up the full meaning of the spirit of the world, which we’ve barely outlined: ***“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the Will of God abides forever”*** (1 Jn 2:16-17).

This sense of the world’s fleetingness—***“the world is passing away...”***—cannot be perceived in all its profundity if

man doesn't detach himself from the "pride of life," pride that makes him see the world as having a certain stability and which is what rationalizes or justifies the "concupiscence of the flesh" and the "concupiscence of the eyes." If this world, greedily viewed by the "concupiscence of the eyes," continues, the "concupiscence of the flesh" finds no earthly reason why it should abstain from anything. Therefore, "pride of life" is the heart of the spirit of the world, which nourishes the two concupiscences: looking and reveling. They are not the only lusts, but they sum up all those that can possibly exist.

St. John alerts us with a laconic statement full of light: ***"And the world is passing away, and all its lusts..."*** The voice of warning against the deceptions of a proud world has been given: ***"the world is passing away..."*** Each one should delve deeply and convince himself of the fleetingness of this world, lest "pride of life" deceive him, presenting him with a false perpetuity. When "pride of life" is supplanted by humility of heart, it will be clearly understood that what our eyes see and our flesh feels is destined to disappear in order to make way for a new world and a new earth according to the Heart of God, where "those who have done the Will of the Father" will live eternally. ***"And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the Will of God abides forever."***

While the world is passing away, let us take St. John's advice: ***"Do not love the world, or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him..."*** (1 Jn 2:15). It's true; how are we going to have the love of the Father if we love that which rejected the Son? ***"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew him not"*** (Jn 1:10). Now we can fully understand the words of Jesus: ***"I do not pray for the world."***

We should be warned that when we begin to free ourselves *totally* from the spirit of the world, we'll begin to sense the impossibility of living in this world. We cannot know this impossibility until we truly *totally* renounce the world. This renunciation places us in a state of conflict with our fellow creatures. This conflict, strictly speaking, doesn't imply a lack of charity but a sort of dislocation; we live in the world, but with a spirit that collides everywhere with the way of thinking of those who are established in the world. This spiritual dislocation, like the dislocation of a member of the body, causes pain on our human side. The person who wants to live totally by the Spirit of God, would like to go along with certain weaknesses of those who still live by the spirit of the world, but he cannot. Here is the dislocation: wanting to, but unable to; wanting to in the human sense, unable to because the Spirit of God, by which he lives, will not let him go along with what belongs to the spirit of the world.

This constant conflict will not be understood except by those who have truly totally renounced the spirit of the world. And this "totally" is very important so that this experience may be perfect, because we can renounce certain aspects of the spirit of the world and at the same time live by this spirit under other aspects. We can say that the sign of this *total* renunciation is found in experiencing the impossibility to live in the world. Those who have not had this painful experience have not *totally* renounced the spirit of the world; this spirit is still struggling with the soul in order to remain with her. For when this spirit has been *totally* expelled and we live *solely* by the Spirit of God, we gain that perfect liberty that finds no obstacles for living even in this world—already initiating in our soul the kingdom of God.

He who wants to live in this world, esteemed by it, and



doesn't want to adapt himself to what its spirit demands, lives in a contradiction: He wants to be loved by "someone" whom he doesn't love. This is a selfish renunciation because he has renounced the external world, reserving for himself the esteem this same world can give him. Such as these live in a constant unrest for fear of losing this esteem, and at the same time, they don't want to go along with the world. (These are on the "path of convenience,"<sup>4</sup> a false position that can't last.)

We'll not talk of those who live totally enslaved by the spirit of the world. In such as these there is no peace, for it's not enough to surrender oneself to this spirit once and for all; its demands are ever greater, for at its base is the restlessness of a spirit that is in constant activity to renovate itself in order to hold its ground—inasmuch as it is error and lie.

How do we utterly face up to a true purification from the spirit of the world in order to restore liberty to souls? It's true that noble attempts at perfection—for cutting the contacts with the spirit of the world at their roots—can arise from a will determined to unite with the Spirit of God. This is the vanity of seeing ourselves free of certain defects that we recognize as such, precisely because of a grace, but this grace hasn't sufficiently permeated to wipe out not only the defects but the vanity of being better.

There's a humbler and more practical path: creating in our souls, by prayer and confidence in God, an attitude of willingness, recognizing the ties that still bind us to the spirit of the world, and asking God to come and sever them. All this implies a seriousness in our lives: This seriousness comes from the expectation that one day He'll enter our souls to sever these ties, creating in us a completely opposite attitude: ***"...Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give***

*him shall never thirst...*” (Jn 4:13-14). This is the true purification that only He can bring about. Severing our ties with the spirit of the world, He creates in us an incapacity for enjoying the things of the world. This transformation is a true “gift of God”— something incomprehensible for one who is still bound to the spirit of the world in one way or another. God grants this “gift” to him who asks Him for it and *earnestly* disposes himself to receive it. This “gift of God,” in the beginning, does not require sanctity (sanctity is a consequence of the “gift”) but humility— humility in the recognition of our helplessness to achieve such a purification—and then it requires fidelity to the on-going inspirations of grace.

There’s a painful side to this purification: The soul who has received this “gift of God” will feel a solitude all about her because the beings around her remain bound to the spirit of the world; they don’t live from the “secret well-spring” that grace, the “gift of God,” has opened up in this soul. This solitude is similar to the solitude of Jesus in the midst of men. These men, the Apostles included, moved around Jesus holding their petty views, while He was absorbed in the Will of the Father. The solitude of Jesus on the human level was infinite. So, too, the soul in which Jesus has “opened” the spring of “living water” will experience the consequences: the joy of having found her center and, at the same time, solitude, for the beings around her don’t understand the meaning of her life. For this reason, neither can they understand her expressions, and she’s always exposed to being misinterpreted. In her, the “gift of God” has created an incapacity for enjoying other delights, or other “water,” which is not the water that gushes forth from the secret spring that He has opened in her heart. She regards all things from His perspective and in His direction.

This is the authentic purification from the spirit of the

world that restores perfect liberty to us, and that we will not achieve if we don't dispose ourselves to receive the "gift of God" that will transform us into new creatures.

***"If you only recognized God's gift!"*** (Jn 4:10).

## CHAPTER 7.

### *The Slavery of Money*

In her struggle to find freedom, the soul encounters a powerful obstacle within the spirit of the world: money. Money has been an invention imported into this world from hell in order to take hold of the souls who live in it.

Let's reflect on this: Before "original sin," God had granted man the exuberance of a delightful Paradise: ***"Of every tree of Paradise you may eat..."***<sup>9</sup> God said to the man. The man had no particular material worries, but after the sin, God gives him several penalties, among them this one: ***"By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread..."*** (Gn 3:19). After the sin, work carries the seal of suffering. These two words "by sweat" contain the change that the meaning of work has undergone. Before the sin, work existed as a pastime, never as an oppressive burden. After the sin, work "by sweat," in addition to being a punishment or penance, could be a means of relative redemption, since absolute Redemption would come to man through Christ. Through work, the man was aware of the fact that he was settling accounts with his Creator.

We should point out that when God took the man out the Paradise of Eden, He did so out of love, in order to save him from eternalizing his evil—there's no doubt about this, once God gave us His Son, to save us, and with Him all things: ***'Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'— therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken*** (Gn 3:22-23). The "Garden of Eden" was the "setting of eternity" where the "tree of life" was located; it was a state that would give man

immortality of body, just as he had immortality of soul.<sup>10</sup> God introduces man into “Time” so that by doing penance, and with his death, he may be purified of the action of the spirit of evil, and, redeemed from his sins (receiving the Redeemer), he might be able to return to the state of “eternity,” which is union with his Creator.

Work wasn’t just a means of livelihood: In the guilty and repentant conscience of the first man, work itself, carried out “by sweat,” held a mysterious joy— something similar to the joy of the souls in purgatory, souls who understand how God’s justice is fulfilled in them by their expiating faults committed, and they love this loving Justice of their Creator. But as he moves further and further away from Him, man rebels against God in two ways: either by denying that He exists, or by conceiving God as a tyrant who delights in our suffering. How is this concept of God possible? Basically, there’s only one reason for it: Sin, *the denial of justice*, has penetrated deeper into the human being and unjustly attributes to God the painful realities for which man with his liberty is responsible. This deep submersion in sin—remoteness from God—doesn’t let man clearly see the significance of his woeful work.

The devil’s determination to get man even further away from God after the fall has increased. God placed man under the obligation of work “by sweat” so that man could keep up an existence on this earth that He had previously given him as a gift: “***See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on earth and every tree which has seed-bearing fruit to be your food***” (Gn 1:29). But in addition to its being necessary for subsistence, there was in this work a kind of atonement toward a shattered order: If man had come to understand this expiation aspect, he would have been able to better purify himself in order to later receive the true Expiator of Divine Justice: Jesus. But the devil placed an element between

man's subsistence and his work: money. God did not create money for man— not even after his fall. Money is totally and definitely an invention of the devil. How could this be demonstrated? Money is a reality handled by men, true, but its inventor is another—just as toys are for children, though children don't manufacture them but rather another, older person, who knows children's tendencies. In man, too, after the sin, there is a tendency: the tendency to separate himself from God, even though the opposite tendency exists in him as well— the nostalgia and semi-unconscious desire to recuperate the God lost by sin. The first tendency— separating himself from God—was a triumph attained by the devil with the first man's sin. The second tendency—his nostalgia for God—meant a danger for the devil. To satisfy both of these tendencies in man, and to feel more assured of his possession of man, the devil invented a god-substitute: money.

Why are we going to bring the devil into so human a reality as money? ...Because it is he, not man, who has a true knowledge of evil. Man, even after his fall, doesn't desire evil except under the aspect of good. The devil, who is the "personification" of evil (the complete opposite of God's WISH), cannot show himself to man for man to love him, choosing him over his Creator, for man abhors him. And so he has sought to make himself felt by presenting himself to men under the guise of a good; to do this, he invented money. Money fulfills a double mission: it makes man forget the true and only good—God; and it makes him forget true evil—the devil; for money appears as a necessary good. If God took on human form in order to draw near to men without dazzling them, the devil, to keep from terrifying them with his wickedness, and to draw them to himself, hid himself under the form of money.

We have said that after the sin, in addition to man's need

to work “by sweat” in order to subsist, his work had a relative atonement value. Because the devil had put money between work and subsistence, men would no longer need to work simply to feed themselves; there is now an intermediate spiritual state—they have to work to earn money, and money becomes the center of their work, for they think that it is money that will give them their longed-for happiness. Work, which had been decreed by God as a means of atonement, has been profaned. The devil could have chosen no better caricature for making himself desirable to men than that of money. Money has disrupted man’s very existence. He whose work is not remunerated with money cannot live. The devil has thoroughly convinced men that money is as necessary to life as the very air they breathe. Thus money becomes the center of all their aspirations. Work has ceased to be something sacred, imposed by God for the atonement of a guilt, and has become a cult to money—an idol invented by the devil.

His state of insecurity would lead man to resort constantly to God; but as a result of the invention of money, it is to the acquisition of money that all efforts are directed, for money provides an apparent security. What’s wrong with that? Isn’t it right that the world should have a means of exchange for social interliving? The question is much too sincere for us not to recognize its relative merit; and the answer, from a purely natural plane, is not so easy. We must make a gigantic effort to rid ourselves of our habits, customs, and conveniences in order to see the whole scheme, marvelously woven by man’s enemy, with the peculiarity that he doesn’t allow himself to be very easily found out, making men attribute to God things purposed by the devil.

The question we have asked ourselves is the following: Isn’t it right that the world should have a means of exchange for social interliving? We need to make a distinction: If man

is made to live in this world as conveniently as possible, there's no doubt that an international money "standard" ought to exist that will serve him as a type of credential for doing what he desires in all countries of the world. But if man is *essentially* made for God, then he must push aside—as much as he possibly can—everything that blocks his obtaining this aim. But, one might further insist, why is money going to block our way to God? Haven't there been saints who have lived in the midst of wealth? Our pride, christened with a superficial Christianity, claims to know more than Christ Himself. And His words are much too clear for us to try to deceive ourselves: ***"No man can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and mammon."*** The "master" that hides in "riches" is the devil. And those who serve money cannot justify themselves because there have been saints "officially" living in the midst of wealth whose hearts were completely detached from it. He who attempts to reconcile both things is doing so because he has unconsciously chosen to serve wealth: ***"No man can serve two masters..."*** The rich young man of the Gospel was more sincere than many Christians who seek to reconcile both things; the rich young man separated himself from Jesus in order to go on cultivating his riches.

We've said before that money provides a relative security for the individual. Is this material security wanted by God? What we're going to say will seem like madness, but between what men judge to be madness, and God, there is great proximity. St. Paul used to say: ***"What men judge to be madness is wisdom for God"*** (1 Cor 1:25).

After the sin, man had to feel an inner desertion similar to Christ's on the Cross. Not in vain was Christ paying Divine Justice the penalty for man's sin. This is why that desertion—which ought to get man going in the direction of asking for the help of the God he'd wronged—would maintain the



contact between the Creator and the creature. We can now better understand the words of Jesus on the Cross: ***“My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?”*** (Mt 27:46). (Let’s not forget that the “old man” of humanity was being crucified on the Cross.) That desertion was somewhat like grace inside out. What grace did positively prior to sin—to maintain the soul’s union with God—this desertion after the sin does negatively, creating in the soul a need for God; this was something like a “black grace.” This situation bore a painful insecurity, true, but it would never let man forget his guilt, and he would try with ardent desire to await The One who was to come. Man didn’t accept this purifying insecurity (***“The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”***) and through the devil’s insinuations he tries to build a paradise in this world, similar to the paradise from which he was expelled. Having this security in the world, man ceases to see the need for resorting to God or for expecting any Redeemer to free him from a guilt that gets more and more remote in the recollection of history.

Many things contributed to giving man this intrahuman security: one of them—and not the least important—was, and is, money. Man’s dread of insecurity cannot be overcome except by a living and active faith in the love of a God who is Father and Provider. The words of Jesus in which he recommends trusting in the Father’s goodness cannot be grasped in their full potency until we have rid ourselves of this “old man” whom we carry encrusted in the innermost of our being. “The birds and the lilies...,” fed and adorned by the loving hands of the Father, seem like pure poetry to the “old man” we carry inside but poetry with no resonance in the practical life; and, nevertheless, the words of Jesus are true: ***“And everyone who leaves father, mother, brothers... shall receive a hundred-fold in this life, and shall inherit eternal life”*** (Mt 19:29). The followers of Jesus will lack

nothing, but this will not take away their insecurity: “*A disciple is not greater than his master...*” could also be said here; and the situation of the Master was described by the Master, Himself: “*The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*”<sup>11</sup> It is holier to confess our natural incapacity to pursue the essence of the Gospel than to declare ourselves its followers when, in reality, we are ignorant of its most elemental exigencies. Who then will be able to earnestly follow the Gospel? What is impossible for men is possible for God. What we need to do is confess our incapacity, and petition the help of Divine Grace. For indeed this remains the least known aspect of the Gospel: the insecurity that a total detachment from riches implies. By its very nature, this detachment is impossible without a grace that impels us toward a Father who is LOVE. This doesn’t mean that we don’t have to work “*because the birds of the air don’t work...*” and because there is a provident Father who looks after our needs. This would be a new “deceit” of the “enemy’s.” The birds of the air don’t have to atone for a guilt like man does; and work is one way of atoning. But on the other hand, neither should work, and least of all money, constitute our security, because our trust would then be in work for work itself, and what was a means of atonement would turn into an idol: We would expect *everything* from work. And when we are finally too old to work, where would we place our trust? Therefore, neither in money (for it’s an invention of the devil) nor in work (for it’s simply a means of atonement) should we place our trust. Our trust should be placed in God, who created us. This is not opposed to the insecurity we discussed before: It’s a human insecurity because we don’t know nor can we count on anything concrete, but at the same time it’s a security because we are dependent upon the Omnipotent. Now then,

to count on this security from God, we have to live according to His laws: one of these laws is work; this can be material or spiritual. It's His Divine Will and above all His love that shall designate the work that will purify us—work that God *lovingly* imposed on us because justice required it of a shattered order. And just as God feeds the birds that sing, so will He also feed men who work and love. This is the security Jesus promised. He who attains this security has succeeded in freeing his soul from the slavery of money, and lives in the true freedom of the sons of God.

Those who find themselves under the slavery of money will see themselves enmeshed in a relentless and constant struggle because there are others who seek the same thing—so that the interests of some, clash with the interests of others. Here we find money bringing to men something characteristic of hell: hatred. This would be one more factor that serves to prove that money is an exclusive invention of the devil.

Money has no more value than that of representing another reality: property. Property is one more of the many traps into which man in his pride, desirous of establishing himself comfortably in this world, has fallen. Can it be that property, fruit of honorable labor, is not lawful? Strictly speaking, no. The only proprietor is God, for to Him belongs not only what we possess but the faculties with which we have worked. To profoundly sense this radical expropriation is for man to place himself in the void of a humility similar to that from which God drew him out: the nothingness. To sense that his natural faculties are a gift from God, and to live in this certainty, is exactly the experience of a rational creature in grace. Everything that differs from this is work of human pride, which, like the devil, seeks to appropriate things that are not its own.

Here's why property, in a pure and profound sense, is a

theft perpetrated against God. It is said that man is an administrator of God's, but in actual practice man lives with all the rights due a rightful owner.

A deep look that has succeeded in perceiving the exigencies of this veritable expropriation will ask this question: How, then, can one live in this world if property obtained by legitimate means is in fact illegitimate? It's necessary to experience these difficulties profoundly in order to see how far man has fallen, and feel oneself a stranger in a world that has been usurped by the devil, and in order to know that the devil seeks to make men participate in this theft, making them believe that they are the "absolute proprietors" of the world.

But it is not a matter of legal terms: Only the person who *feels and lives* the fact that what he has does not belong to him but that he is simply an administrator for Him to whom the Father submitted all things, only such as he will be disposed to do all that his Proprietor asks of him, for private property as well as common property carries this extremely grave consequence: It keeps us from hearing God. Our concern is centered on defending our own interests, and we forget, partially or totally, the interests of God. What's more, as we do not want to let go of our interests, we fall into the autosuggestion of believing that our interests are the "interests" of God. Recognizing this deceit, in which one has lived in a more or less righteous way, is work of grace and humility.

One of the difficulties that the devil can suggest to us is the following: the thought of how our life is to unfold in the future. If we have lived in error, what will our life be like in the future? And since God may not let us know the future, in the very moment in which He makes us see the error of our past, we refuse to acknowledge it. Our human nature is horrified of the void: Disowning the past without having a

secure future is impossible for human pride. Pride seeks security; hence it holds on to the past and the present, even if it's a mistake, and it will try to justify itself, convincing itself that to do otherwise is foolhardiness. Conclusion: According to pride, its own interests are the only practical truth.

Against pride, which has sectioned off the world into private or national property, there are only humility and faith for recognizing The One who, by nature and by conquest, is the true Proprietor: Jesus. ***“For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones or Dominations or Principalities or Powers—all things have been created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven”*** (Col 1:16-20).

When these words of St. Paul cease to be only a beautiful theory and become true to life, we will understand that all property is a sort of sacrilege, a theft perpetrated against The One to whom all things belong, ***“both in the heavens and on earth,” “for in Him all things were created,”*** and furthermore ***“through Him,”*** they were ***“reconciled, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”***

Someone might ponder: If the things of earth were ***“created in Christ”*** and He purified them with His blood, how then do they continue belonging to men? The question

is realistic; the answer can't be understood if such material realism doesn't come to see the realism of faith: The things of earth are in the hands of men until the number of the elect, whose Firstborn is Jesus, is complete. ***“For the eager longing of the creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity—not by its own will but by reason of him who made it subject—in hope, because creation itself also will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. For we know that all creation groans and travails in pain until now”*** (Rom 8:19-22).

This appalling state of creation, luminously described by St. Paul, arises from the fact that it ***“is subject to vanity, not of its own will but by reason of him who made it subject”*** and ***“creation longs for the manifestation of the sons of God”*** whose Firstborn is Jesus. And until that number of souls has the liberty of the sons of God, the “longed-for manifestation” will not take place, and the things of earth will continue to be “subject to vanity.”

In this state of affairs, it's difficult to understand the words of God to His Chosen People: ***“The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with me”*** (Lv 25:23).

In a new phase of regeneration, man's activity would have to be profoundly modified. Man is oppressed by pride and matter. Hence, there is in him an absorbing tendency to view material values with preference to spiritual values. It isn't that material progress is illicit, but that in man's limitation as human being, material progress has been detrimental to his moral and spiritual progress. Thus we see man managing material values with ruthless cruelty, violating the most elemental principles of justice: Matter has blinded him for seeing his neighbor; matter isolates, only love is principle of unity.

The fundamental task that man would have to impose upon himself would be to free himself from matter, coming to understand that matter does not have the importance he ascribes to it, and that when the spirit does not handle matter gently, it becomes a source of darkness and brutishness. Man should place himself in contact with God, the Supreme Spirit, who created all things and gave them an order that man's liberty has disrupted. To place himself in contact with Him, who is Light, is to be disposed to cast out the darkness that pride and matter have placed in his soul. To face up to the darkness and annihilate it by collaborating with grace is to be "born again." This is the "rebirth" of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus. It would include a slowing down materially. Just as a child isn't concerned with material advancements, neither would man, in this mysterious "rebirth," ascribe importance to them. In this initial work of regeneration, man's principal activity would be contemplation and reflection: "Who is God? Who am I? Of what value is matter, which oppresses me...?" Only when man has freed himself from his material chains will he have taken a step toward his true liberty, enabling him to free matter from the action of "Evil," sublimating it.

It is the human being's limitation that imposes a postponement and a slowdown on material progress as he progresses in the spirit. Otherwise, such spiritual progress does not exist, but only the danger of returning to barbarism and the destruction of great human masses. Matter tends toward decomposition and death; the same is true for those who *over-value* it. Only the Spirit vivifies, and if man becomes one with the Spirit, he will live and transmit this new life to matter, which is subject to him.

## CHAPTER 8:

### *Liberty and Authority*

God created man completely free, giving him dominion over all creation. It would be interesting to learn the form of government man would have had if he had not sinned. Most likely, each man would be directly dependent on God and governed by Him. The dominion God had delivered to him was to be a loving sovereignty over lesser beings; never would this dominion have extended over another being like himself: Man is exclusively God's property. This would be the pure form of government if man had not suffered the moral imbalance caused by sin.

Man used his liberty wrongly. He rejected the tutelage of God, and with the imbalance of his passions, he came to profane the most sacred thing that God had granted to the human being: the liberty. Man wasn't satisfied to dominate beings lower than himself; his main desire was to dominate other men. This domination, aggravated by the devil, brought on another slavery: millions of human beings are the slaves of an elite that has succeeded in imposing itself on the others. This slavery has become more universal today than ever—so much so that the vast majority of men live under it, unaware of the fact. This slavery includes all kinds of government and church controls, and to justify this slavery, we're told that this "control on freedom" is for the sake of the nation's economic order and for the spiritual good of man.

The Gospel repeatedly speaks of authority. Now then, if this authority is not fully into the Spirit of the *whole* Gospel, its desire to dominate will immediately surface.

Authority—at whatever level—that does not seek to impose itself on its subjects, but rather respects their liberty, is the



authority that most resembles God's way of governing man. One must acknowledge the fact that in order to come to this, a very great grace is needed, because wrongdoing and licentiousness seem to urgently require that authority impose itself in a dictatorial way; and this wrongdoing is the apparent justification for the awakening of authority's innate desire to dominate—a desire that is also a consequence of sin and is just waiting for the chance to put in an appearance.

Therefore, before dominating others, authority must first have dominion over itself by being *subject to God*. God, who has perfect dominion over Himself, rules men perfectly and never deprives them of their liberty. The first duty of human authority is to imitate God, something this authority will not be able to do if it is not identified with God's WILL in order to come to understand the Divine untouchableness of human liberty.

Authority, if it respects the liberty of its subjects, must go through the humiliation of failing frequently in its functions—an apparent failure, but a failure that conforms with the Divine way of doing things. God also goes through the humiliation of those apparent failures, to such an extent that many believe He doesn't exist and have precluded Him from the management of the world. This is so because His Divine authority is humble and respects men's liberty, to the measure that only His most perfect Justice knows. He is fully democratic, in that He respects the liberty of His creatures; He's in no hurry—He has a whole eternity ahead of Him to do all He has to do.

In contrast, in men's governments, time is limited, and the disorderly desire to make a name for themselves in history impels them to trample underfoot everything that opposes their ambitions. Nevertheless, considering man's soul, which is immortal, one can also say that this human authority has a whole eternity ahead of it to see the outcome

of its works.

For a human government to resemble the one God exercises over men, it would be necessary to choose a pure man rather than an intelligent one—pure, meaning a man with no ambition for human glory, no personal interests, a man who doesn't let himself be deceived by anyone, especially by himself. He must have attained that inner liberty that we have discussed. To acquire this, he must always keep his gaze on his model, God. From the moment he believes himself capable of governing because of his purity, and thinks he doesn't need God, he is even then staining that purity, and from this “pure” leader, a dictator will arise. From this, we can infer that humility is the fundamental virtue of a leader, according to the Heart of God. Humility will make him see the faults of his subjects with the same deeply loving understanding with which God sees them. There should also be humility in his projects; no leader should devise plans that annihilate another's freedom. This way of doing things isn't very practical and binds the hands of authority, but we mustn't forget that this is precisely the procedure of God—the governing model.

Whoever observes history's development, according to the human way of thinking, will see that God's works have an air of apparent failure. But the fact is that human thinking virtually fails to recognize the sacred worth of man's liberty. We discuss liberty with great irresponsibility and are frequently moved to talk this way for the sake of personal interests that need this liberty in order to be brought to fruition.

This doesn't happen in God: Human liberty is something untouchable, so much so that He does not subject it to any project of His own, even if this project is to man's benefit. We have two fundamental examples. The first is that God wants to save men. To do this, He sends His Son, and men,

using their liberty, reject Him. What we first see about the Son of God appears to be a failure if we look at it from the human point of view, but the fact is that the human does not take into account the inviolability of human liberty; it neither understands nor appreciates this liberty in all its grandeur. Therefore, we must be more precise: It's true that the Son of God died on a cross, but it wasn't because God's project of salvation failed, since salvation was accomplished under the form of Redemption; what did fail was the human liberty by not accepting the Son of God and at the same time choosing for itself a painful REDEMPTION: ***“Man, himself, whom I came to liberate, had to choose the form of his liberation, which the justice of My Father left to his free will. Man chose the sacrifice of the cross, and for this reason, no one—absolutely no one—can be saved without taking it up. The Cross has not been an invention of mine; it has not been a decree of My Father's; man himself willed it and arranged it so.”***

The other fundamental example in which God seems to fail is the sin of the first man. We have previously said that sin was not God's failure, but the failure of a liberty wrongly used.

All this leads us to the following conclusion: The leader who, in imitating God, respects the liberty of his subjects, must count on failing in whatever project he undertakes, however wonderful that project may be. One might argue: If the leader must respect the liberty of his subjects, what should he do if they misuse this liberty? Keeping in mind all that we have said, the answer won't be very easy to carry out, but we will be able to understand it. We must bear in mind that God does not restrain the liberty of His creatures when they misuse it; and that even from the condemned in hell, He doesn't take away one iota of their liberty: They hate God with a mysterious liberty. And what God does not

do—restrain man’s liberty—should it be done by human authority? Social order, the common good, seems to call for an affirmative answer; but the example of God’s way of doing things tells us differently. Given that God’s way of doing is perfect, we would have to say that authority, *as it is exercised*, is an invention of the “enemy” in collaboration with man. Ever since man sinned, the “enemy” has used human authority as a bridle so that men may feel secure in this world. If no such form of authority existed, human life would be unbearable, and men, in their insecurity, would seek God incessantly. But the “enemy” doesn’t want this, and he sets up a human authority that is a caricature of the Supreme Authority. Authority suppresses the liberties that can destroy the social order by which men stand protected, far removed from God. The work of the “enemy” has steadily progressed in such a subtle manner that man is convinced that it is a duty before God not only to govern men, but also to control good in all its forms. This is to the “enemy’s” advantage in carrying out his plans, since, as we have said before, he can’t become “king” of creation except by means of man’s liberty, and it will be man who will place the kingdoms of this world in his hands.

We must be sincere in admitting that we rebel against these ideas because they place us in a total human insecurity. Who would defend us if there were no authority? Human authority has practically done away with the need for God. This is a fact of such magnitude that its very enormity keeps us from seeing it.

The Hebrew people are an example in which the failings of all peoples are clearly reflected. Throughout their history, there is a desire to liken themselves to the peoples around them, who manufactured gods and had their kings. On a certain occasion, the people, enthusiastic over the victory of Gideon over Midian, entreated him: *“Rule over us—you,*

*your son, and your son's son—for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian*” (Jgs 8:22). And the victorious leader displayed a sublime humility, for he knew what the salvation economy that God had in mind for the people was: ***“I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD must rule over you”*** (Jgs 8:23). Worthy display that reminds us of Jesus’ reserved attitude when the people completely satisfied by the multiplication of the loaves wanted to proclaim him King!

The Hebrew people are no worse than other peoples, but their background of Divine realities makes their faults more conspicuous, as also happens in the religious life—the faults of a priest, a monk, or a nun are more conspicuous than those of other people.

The history of the Hebrews takes a new direction when the people want to establish a monarchy: ***“Therefore all the elders of Israel came in a body to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, ‘Now that you are old, and your sons do not follow your example, appoint a king over us, as other nations have, to judge us.’ Samuel was displeased when they asked for a king to judge them. He prayed to the LORD, however, who said in answer, ‘Grant the people’s every request. It is not you they reject, they are rejecting me as their King. As they have treated Me constantly from the day that I brought them up from Egypt to this day, deserting Me and worshiping strange gods, so do they treat you too. Now grant their request; but at the same time, warn them solemnly and inform them of the rights of the king who will rule over them’.*”** (1 Sam 8:4-9).

Samuel’s prophetic words were completely fulfilled in the perverse kings, who unmercifully mistreated the Hebrew people, who had rejected the tutelage of God.

Is this all? No. The consequences of this petition to Samuel culminated in the people’s apostasy from the true

King, Jesus Christ, by proclaiming themselves loyal to Caesar: ***“Shall I crucify your king?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar’.***” (Jn 19:15). It was the conclusion or consequence of that desire expressed to Samuel: They wished to be like the other peoples. There they rejected God; here they reject His Son in order to be like all the peoples submitted to Rome: ***“We have no king but Caesar.”***

If the Father was rejected before, and the Son after, now the Holy Spirit is being rejected! ***“Therefore I say to you, that every kind of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this world or in the world to come.”***

***“As they have treated me constantly,”*** God says to Samuel, ***“from the day that I brought them up from Egypt to this day deserting me and worshiping strange gods, so do they treat you too.”*** These words take on a chilling dramatic quality that reveals to us the depths to which the people pampered by God had descended. Let’s not confine ourselves to the Jewish people; the Jewish people represented all the “People of God” (humanity), and their attitude then is no different from the attitude of all the “peoples” who make up the “People of God.” ***“As they have treated me constantly,”*** the Father might say to Jesus, and Jesus to the Holy Spirit, ***“From the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day, deserting me and worshiping strange gods, so do they treat you too”;*** they declare themselves at the service ***“of Caesar”*** and reject You, the King of kings.

There was an eagerness in the people of Israel to be like the other peoples, despite the fact that God’s love was

calling them to be different. This distinction that Love had made in them turned into a curse invoked by the people themselves. ***“Let his blood be on us and on our children.”*** (Mt. 27:25). Jews or no Jews, all who set up resistance to the Spirit of Christ are those children, and upon them falls the sentence pronounced by “their fathers”: ***“Let His blood be on us and on our children.”*** Again, we repeat: Let us not confine ourselves to the Jewish people. These people represented the “People of God”—the entire humanity—IN ALL ITS ASPECTS, and this negative attitude repeats itself in all souls who by their lives devoid of faith are denying Christ. We have seen the positive attitude in the first Apostles of Jesus, and they, too, were Jews. The souls who, like the Apostles, identify ***with the life of the Son of God***, Christ, form God’s Church, the New Jerusalem, from which evil-doers are excluded—all those who, irrespective of race or nation, maintain a negative attitude before God: ***“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”*** (Tit. 2:11-15).

The Jewish People could not be like other peoples, for it was so decreed by the mysterious plans of God when He chose them to manifest His designs to humanity; and in order to give us His “SEAL,” He took on the flesh of this people, manifesting Himself to men in the Person of Jesus, His Son, who ***“...is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures...”*** ***“For in Him dwells all the fullness***

*of the Godhead bodily, and in him who is the head of every Principality and Power you have received of that fullness.”* Here is why this people continues to be a “figure” of our attitude before God, *“For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized in Moses, in the cloud and in the sea. And all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink (for they drank from the spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ). Yet with most of them God was not well pleased, for ‘they were laid low in the desert.’ Now these things came to pass as examples to us, that we should not lust after evil things even as they lusted. And do not become idolaters, even as some of them were, as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’ Neither let us commit fornication, even as some of them committed fornication, and there fell in one day twenty-three thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted, and perished by the serpents. Neither murmur, as some of them murmured, and perished at the hands of the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as a type, and they were written for our correction, upon whom the final age of the world has come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. May no temptation take hold of you but such as man is equal to. God is faithful and will not permit you to be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also give you a way out that you may be able to bear it.*

*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry”* (1 Cor. 10:1-14).

How very often God wants to distinguish us with His graces, freeing us from heavy human yokes! And, like the Hebrew people then, we are terrified at being “separated” from the rest of men, because this distinction creates a



solitude that at times gives us the feeling of “abnormality.” To live in this solitude is to live nailed to a cross: The inconstancy of individuals and nations tends toward change, but TRUTH is unalterable. This innate inconstancy in the human nature and the obligation to remain in the Truth produce the cross in this world. It is the redeeming CROSS, and if we embrace it, staying on it, we will be redeemed from “EVIL,” which is error and lie. It’s not that Truth is, in itself, painful; Truth is Love and Good; the pain is produced by the inconstancy of our nature, which, for moments more or less prolonged, tends to conform to the error of the spirit of the world.

The Hebrew people’s desertion of God is found more or less manifest in all nations of the earth and in each soul in particular. We long for a tangible security that will protect us. Atheistic authority is the diabolical perfection of government form. This authority has totally done away with God’s intervention in human life. Man is ensured by this authority so long as he performs and thinks according to its directives. Man has no need to resort to God for anything; his needs are “ensured” in all aspects: insurances on his life, old age, sickness, accidents, etc., etc. This “authority” has done everything possible to erase the idea of God from the human mind; for this, it provides man with everything.

Man with his freedom has brought on this “atheistic authority” imported from hell. And when we say “atheistic authority,” we are referring not only to those who deny God with their words, but to all authority that in *actual practice* is denying God by accepting the inspirations that separate it from a true faith: a *living and active* faith. Even now we can see how this “atheistic authority” is openly dominating in the world. Once it has imposed itself upon the majority of men, then will come the true representative of this “authority,” the man of iniquity, the Anti-Christ, he who

will be totally “moved” by the spirit of Satan; this is the king men have asked for, rejecting the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is why he “...*will seat himself in God’s temple and even declare himself to be God...*” as St. Paul says in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. This is God’s Justice in the free election of His creatures.

To understand clearly what perfect authority is, according to the Heart of God, we have no better model than that of Christ, described by St. Paul: “*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*” (Phil. 2:5-9).

In the Person whom we call Jesus, we see God who decides and speaks. The man, the human nature, is only an instrument so that the Logos, the Word of the Father, may have physical sound and may be heard by ears of flesh. Jesus has human will and understanding, but both are unconditionally submitted to the Divine Understanding and Will of the Logos-made-Man. In short, the humanity of Jesus became an empty receptacle into which the Divine Light that came into this world poured Itself. Wouldn’t this be what Christ desires of authority—that it be like a second “humanity” in whom He can express Himself with the same freedom, fulfilling the Will of the Father?

This human authority, then, would have to become empty of itself, just as the humanity of Jesus, docile to the Will of the Father, was empty.

Whoever comes to understand this will see the collapse of all the cogwheels of superimposed authorities that choke the word of the Father. How is the Word going to speak if there

are other human voices coming from interests different from it? It's as if the Son of God in Jesus went to speak, and another voice, different from His, were to say other things. This would happen if the human will of Jesus had not been identified with the Will of the Father. To be identified with the Will of the Father, the human person of Jesus had to "disappear"; the "I-ego" that opposes Divine inspirations did not exist in Him. It was a complete human annihilation so that the Person of the Son of God might be able to express Himself freely. Jesus ought not have any personal interests in order to unconditionally serve the interests of God who resided within him—his will, intelligence, memory, etc., all of these emptied of human pretensions in order to house in his innermost the Son of the Father. So overpowering was this annihilation that it did not, even for an instant, permit him to be vainglorious about being the bearer of the Logos.

Here we have the perfect model of what authority ought to be like: an empty instrument that serves as a shaft for the Light to continue illuminating those who are in darkness. This would require an intimate and personal contact with God, because from the moment this Divine contact is lost, the presumption to do something on one's own will arise. The "enemy" will tempt those in authority as he tempted Jesus by flattering his Divine power in order to get him to convert rocks into bread. The very first thing the "enemy" is likely to sound out is man's pride. Jesus, being humility itself, conquered pride perfectly. In contrast, men can't bear to be regarded as helpless and inactive. Unwilling to await "God's moment," that He might act in them according to His Divine Will, they want to achieve marvelous things that demonstrate their power and knowledge before the world. It should be pointed out that what is of God is perfect, but it is not perfect from a worldly point of view. The Cross of Christ was a perfect work of love and justice, but it wasn't

wonderful for the crowd that stood watching—not even for those who were expecting a “testimony” in order to believe in him as the Messiah. And we could add: The more wonderful a work is to the world, the less perfect it is to God, for the world esteems what resembles itself and scorns what dissents from its principles and values.

In the face of this situation, *permitted* by God but wanted by the “enemy” and carried out by men, the person subject to authority who has reached the inner liberty that we’ve discussed will encounter no difficulty in obeying all that which does not go against his conscience. If the perfect authority has a model in Christ, the subject also has the same model—Christ, free even unto death.

***“Because of the Lord, be obedient to every human institution, whether to the emperor as sovereign or to the governors he commissions for the punishment of criminals and the recognition of the upright. Such is the Will of God that, by doing right, you may silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free men, yet not using your freedom as a cloak for malice but as servants of God” (1 Pt 2:13-16).***

***“Let everyone obey the authorities that are over him, for there is no authority except from God, and all authority that exists is established by God...”*** This is the Permission of God,<sup>12</sup> for if He didn’t give them the power, they wouldn’t have this authority, just as evil could not act if God did not allow it. This doesn’t mean that this is the form of authority WANTED by God. ***“...As a consequence, the man who opposes authority rebels against the ordinance of God; those who resist thus shall draw condemnation down upon themselves.<sup>13</sup> Rulers cause no fear when a man does what is right but only when his conduct is evil. Do you wish to be free from the fear of authority? Do what is right and you will gain its approval, for the ruler is God’s servant to work for your good. Only if you do wrong ought***

*you to be afraid. It is not without purpose that the ruler carries the sword; he is God's servant, to inflict his avenging wrath upon the wrongdoer. You must obey, then, not only to escape punishment but also for conscience's sake. You pay taxes for the same reason, magistrates being God's ministers who devote themselves to his service with unremitting care. Pay each one his due; taxes to whom taxes are due; toll to whom toll is due; respect and honor to everyone who deserves them. Owe no debt to anyone except the debt that binds us to love one another. He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,' and any other commandment there may be are all summed up in this. 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love never wrongs the neighbor, hence love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom 13:1-10).*

*"Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as He is righteous. He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." (1 Jn 3:7-8).*

And one of these "works of the devil" is the authority that opposes God, blocking the works of the Holy Spirit, but it is God, and not man, who is to "destroy the works of the devil."

## CHAPTER 9:

### *Liberty in the True Righteousness*

Liberty is an effect of true righteousness: If we say that a being has dominated his passions, setting them in good order, it is because he possesses an inner liberty—it is because he has expelled the spirit of evil, and in him righteousness resides: He is a righteous being; therefore, he is free.

The Lord calls us to a secret righteousness that can live joyously before the Father’s countenance, with no major concern that men may or may not acknowledge it; for within a righteous but not perfect life, the flattery of being admired by men can lie hidden. To recover its true liberty, this righteousness has one last hump to get over: forgetting about men. ***“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven”*** (Mt 6:1). Man can attain this “forgetting-about-men,” to the extent that he possesses God’s pure outlook on things. A righteousness that takes pleasure in being beheld by men will, little by little, drift into unrighteousness, for it will try to conform to what men think and esteem as righteous. And since men live enslaved by sin, a righteousness that tries to draw their attention becomes injustice. The Lord knew this very well, and such righteousness will ***“have no reward before the Father...”*** for this righteousness, besides being carried out with vanity ***“before men to be noticed by them...”*** would end up in the unrighteousness of the spectators before whom it was carried out.

It’s up to each individual only to live “secretly” with a righteousness that draws ever closer to the righteousness of God. And when injustice—the unrighteousness of

others—calls at her door, what attitude is the righteous soul to take? This question touches upon one of the most difficult problems to deal with: practicing forgiveness—but a profound forgiveness that, with the force of love, pierces the depths of one’s soul, recognizing that the other is unaware of his ties to the spirit of evil that enslaves him in sin, an unawareness that is presented as an excuse before the Father: ***“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing”*** (Lk 23:34). It is not a matter of an unfounded excuse; the fact is that in the wrongdoing of a creature, who is not the devil or one condemned, there exists an unawareness of the root of evil. Such creatures know only the surface, which is often presented to them under the appearances of good: ***“And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers,”*** said Peter to the Jews, speaking of the death of Christ.

But what has the “enemy” done? He has convinced men that those who forgive don’t know any better, and these men say to themselves: “If you only knew!” This is completely contrary to what Christ did: ***knowing***, with the infinite gaze of God’s love, He found in man’s sin an excuse for obtaining the Father’s forgiveness. Of course, this excuse seems unfounded to those who live enslaved by the spirit of evil—egoism. Jesus was all love because he was free and full of light. ***“It was the true light, which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”*** (Jn 1:9). The luminous love of Jesus, upon “enlightening every man,” saw that in man’s wrongdoing, there was an attenuating excuse: Man was, without knowing it, an instrument of the spirit of evil. Egoism is incapable of accepting the profundity of this forgiving love. The devil has led men to view love as naive, to believe that hate has a clearer view of reality. The devil does this because he can hide under the blackness of hate, while in the luminosity of love he’s left exposed. But, as

man lives submerged in a multitude of temptations, the devil easily convinces him. Moreover, the world—the kingdom of the devil—displays its supremacy with its hate; the triumph of love appears to be very fragile. This is why love is cast aside, why love is not enough, and if you don't think so, take a good look at the world: In the very place where the doctrine of love is proclaimed, does love really exist?

These temptations can overwhelm the righteous soul: How is she to rid herself of them if they oppress her on all sides?

When these temptations assault a soul, faith in Jesus has to burn out all that rears its head bearing a value based on worldly experience. This worldly-experience-value is to be found in the hands of the enemy of Jesus; therefore, it lacks eternal value. It is Jesus who is the eternal form of all the elect: ***“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified”*** (Rom 8:29-30).

Eternal Glory is attained if, even now, in this world, combating against the spirit of evil, we become conformed little by little, through love, to the image of the Son, the “Firstborn among many brethren.” The attainment of this new superhuman form—for it is the form of the Son of God—cannot be reached by us without a faith pierced by love, or as is frequently said, a “living faith.” It is not possible to attain this new “form” if that faith does not abide constantly: That faith is like the heart of the “new creature.” Faith can no more rest than the heart can rest without death ensuing. This is not a more or less praiseworthy metaphor; it's a reality: Faith is the heart of a “new creature” who must conform to the “form” of the Son of God, “Firstborn among



many brethren.” And the form of the Son is love. Love, then, is the form of all who want to participate in His glory. But let’s not forget that true love entails *sacrifices*; such was the love of Jesus for all men, and it was crowned with the Sacrifice of the Cross in order to save us: **“...love one another, even AS I HAVE LOVED YOU” (Jn 13:34).**

In this world split apart by egoisms, whoever follows Jesus has to walk along the paths of a love that is ever ready to sacrifice. And we can even say: Every other program that neglects this “new form”—the form of a sacrificial love—is not an invention of God, but of men with a limited criterion for human perfection. The program according to which we are to be examined on the day of judgment is based on Love. God’s justice will zero in on love. On the Day of Judgment, the Ten Commandments, the Gospel admonitions—everything—will be evaluated on the amount of love that has vivified all we have done. It is necessary that we stop rambling about and beating around the bush, and try with all determination to get hold of this redeeming reality—love—that has been so outraged by egoism.

If man is not willing to accept love as his norm of conduct when faced with the injustice of an offense, then he must humbly confess that he hasn’t yet reached the goal proposed by his Master. With this humble confession, assisted by grace, we can start off on the true path—a path of great demands, demands of such subtlety that they seem at times to be insurmountable. Here’s one that tops them all: **“If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:23-24).** It’s better to say we’ve never done this and ask the Lord for His helping grace; for without a special grace, our mediocre sense of justice responds to the Lord’s demands in the following

manner: But why am I going to leave my offering before the altar? I have nothing against my brother; if he has something against me, he's the one who ought not make the offering before coming to be reconciled with me. Yet the words of the Gospel are there, announcing to us the good news of a purity and a liberty like unto the purity and the liberty of God: ***"...and there recall that your brother has anything against you..."*** It's not enough not to have offended our brother, but our love should go beyond its own limits, as well, and free our brothers from the spirit of evil that makes him feel we have offended him.

All these considerations would be left somewhat incomplete if we didn't make some reference to what is called the "law of retaliation": "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." To the superficial observer, it will seem that a fitting justice is contained here. And we have to admit that most of the time we act accordingly. Why? Simply because we don't have the true righteousness of love that, forgetting itself, comes forward disposed to a true righteousness, namely, to sound out the soul of our neighbor who, unaware of the action of the spirit of evil, has sought an egoistic good. In a word, this "fitting" justice has not reached true liberty; it is dependent upon the behavior of our neighbor. There's no doubt about it: The liberty of true justice is work of love. All other justice that is done with another light, different from that of love, can cause a new injustice. And the justice that has been called upon to restore a broken order can open new chasms if one of the parties is not disposed to intervene with a truly just and free love.

Ordinarily, in the face of an offense, man is likely to fall prey to a psychological reaction called "resentment." He tends to constantly justify himself before himself; he cannot get out of resentment's web if love—the only thing that imparts the liberty of true justice—is not allowed to

intervene. Let's take a brief, but profound, look at Christ on the Cross: He's accused of a multitude of wrongs, but His Spirit remains free of resentment. Let us recall the words of the Sermon on the Mount: ***"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you "*** (Mt 5:43-44). And Jesus announces with Divine clarity the liberty of love's justice: ***"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"*** (Mt 5:46-48). And St. John very briefly defines for us the perfection of God: ***"God is love"*** (1 Jn 4:8.16). Toward this perfection God's Son calls us when, in speaking to us of loving our enemies, He invites us to be perfect as is the heavenly Father. But how does the Father's Love manifest itself so that it can be the object of our imitation? St. John tells us with sublime fervor: ***"Love, then, consists in this: not that we have loved God but that He has loved us and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins"*** (Jn 4:10). But St. John does not detain himself in a simple static contemplation. He immediately deduces a vital conclusion: ***"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"*** (1 Jn 4:11). Here St. John launches us onto a more audacious path—the path of love's justice. Our love for our neighbor who has offended us ought to outdistance him, because the model we are to imitate is God's: The Only-Begotten who, annihilating Himself in the man, Jesus, loved us first, surrendering Himself as propitiation for our sins. Here we have a justice incomprehensible to hearts and minds enslaved by egoism. Love's justice outdistanced the offender. This is incomprehensible; but counter to

everything that our rational mind may think up, we need only present one fact: God, who is infinite justice, has done just that: He outdistanced man, a sinner, who had offended Him, and He loved him to such an extent that He handed over to him what He loved most: His beloved Son.

So will we do just that as we identify with the Son in the Will of the Father in order to be “channels”<sup>14</sup> of God’s Love for our fellowmen, practicing love’s justice, which is the true charity, because charity comes forth from God—it is “God’s love in action.”

Yet God didn’t send His Son for a simple manifestation of His love, but for the sake of a loving justice. Man had to be saved, but he was helpless to do this all by himself. If, in fact, God wanted man’s salvation, He had to give him a means: Jesus, the God-Man, was the Mediator—the means worked out by the Father’s justice so that men might attain salvation.

This implied a profound liberty in God: Man’s sin was no impediment for Divine justice to continue to work in his favor.

Wouldn’t this be the perfection to which Jesus calls us when, in speaking of love of enemies, he says to us: ***“Be you perfect even as your heavenly Father”***? Our neighbor’s sin ought not be an impediment to our love’s going out to his encounter,<sup>15</sup> “outdistancing him,” in order to save him from the shackles of the spirit of evil, since he is helpless on his own, for he doesn’t know his true enemy. If we, in reality, want his salvation—God wants it—we must, together with love, serve as mediators, even unto the sacrifice of ourselves, just as Christ did for each one of us. The glow of our love will help our neighbor to discover the “enemy,” whom he had served as instrument by using his liberty wrongly.

But the “enemy,” who neither sleeps nor rests in his

eagerness to lead men astray, has found out that only our love will allow our neighbor to discover his intervention, and so he avails himself of other weapons in order to keep his action from being discovered; this is why we, very often, don't come to know when our brother feels that we've offended him: his "resentment" is masked under the caricature of "good manners," and we never come to know about it; therefore, we can't discover our true "enemy," nor can we liberate our offended brother with our love— which is precisely the aim the enemy strives after when he keeps the other person from acting with sincerity and from showing his resentment. In addition to keeping himself cloaked, the "enemy" can also take advantage of the "offended" one's varying attitudes of coldness to give the "offender" hints of his "offenses." In this way, the evil spirit creates a bridge of darkness between the two brothers, bridge over which the spirit alone may pass, impeding their communicating with each other in the light by placing between them the darkness proper to him: The lack of sincerity between men is the abyss opened by the darkness to keep them from knowing and loving each other in the light of the truth.

We have dealt with the matter of a personal offense, but when the offense is carried out against a social order, what attitude should we take? Ordinarily, the criminal is seen as a danger to society. We always relate him to something or someone; we don't judge him for what he himself is. Only God judges us for what we are. The conclusion, therefore, is imposing in all its grandeur and humility. Only God knows to what degree wrongdoing is irredeemable in each man's soul. All we can see is the deeds of a criminal who is a threat to a social order, but we are *incapable* of knowing the criminal in all his redemptive capacity. God alone can say: Enough!...to a human life. What God desires for all those who make up society is their salvation. Safeguarding the

social order is a desire of men in order to live better-off in this world. Of course, God draws out His share of good from this order created by men, but the order itself holds no interest for God. When a criminal is judged for a wrongdoing, he's not punished because he has offended God but because he has disrupted an order that men have created for living better-off in this world, and that keeps them far-removed from God.

If, in spite of humanity's transgressions, God continues to sustain it in this world, He does so because humanity has not yet depleted all its possibilities for salvation. Thus God said to Abraham when he promised him that his descendants would settle the land: ***"Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete"*** (Gn 15:16). God's justice is so perfect that it is called by a more benign name: Mercy.

Man has disconnected these two attributes which become identified in God: JUSTICE and MERCY. If in spite of all humanity's transgressions, which disrupt a Divine order, God does not yet judge it, having mercy upon it, how is man going to judge even one single man for having violated a human order? Couldn't it be because man, remote as he is from God, has appropriated rights that are exclusively Divine? Here we have the temptation that is constantly hurled by the spirit of evil and accepted by men ***"You will be like God..."***

A humble confession presses: We are incapable of standing in judgment of others, simply because we are ignorant of the elements that constitute judgment: "Only God can judge"—one more reason for keeping our righteousness "secret," lest it try to invade a field unknown to it, for that field is way beyond the boundaries of our righteousness; that field is the "other" person, equal to us as for human being, but different as for individual.

Thus one serenely understands how the manifestation of God's justice becomes prolonged, even to the humility of leading many to believe that that justice of God's does not exist. The fact is that God knows and weighs in the balance of His justice, not the humanity itself, but the individuals—one by one.

Human justice oppresses but does not transform. Only God's justice—for it is loving—exhausts all available means that may find an echo in man. Human justice doesn't contemplate a man but a "case" that falls within penal laws formulated to safeguard a social order. It is said that the common good calls for the sacrifice of the personal good. This safeguarding is almost always in relation to material interests; these are what cause human justice to be oppressive, but no thought has been given to the true and profound regeneration of the individual, which is work of time because it depends on the individual's liberty in collaboration with grace. Human justice is radically impatient because it is limited in knowledge and love. This is understandable, but the inferences are not drawn until the end. There comes a moment in which the number of inferences drawn from a truth becomes annoying. Where are we going to end up? How could we live in this world with these ideas? Here we have the question that reveals to us the cause of the repulsion. We don't ask how we could get to God with these ideas, but how we could live in this world. And was man created for the "world," or for God? When the first Christians were less protected by human justice, they more rapidly attained salvation through martyrdom. But this violent form of entering into the Kingdom of God, into glory, is rejected by a Christianity that feels very satisfied in this world, protected by human justice, which defends their interests here on earth.

Conviction about these ideas is work of the heart's purity.

When man finally sets no store by anything that he loves and which keeps his heart in this world, far-removed from God, he will begin to see things in a new light: ***“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God”*** (Mt 5:8). It is not possible for man to perceive God if his heart is attached to something opposed to Him; for the creatures will take us to God, through our love and sacrifice, as soon as our heart is detached from them. Therefore, we won’t have an accurate idea of justice if our heart is not pure. In the moment that something upsets this purity, injustice is a logical consequence. Isn’t this too much to require of men? No. There’s only one thing required of man: that he be humble, recognizing his condition as creature and the fact that without the help of his Creator he’ll not be able to acquire the purity of heart that is to open to him the door to the justice and the knowledge of God. He has God’s help; what’s needed is the creature’s humble cooperation. Once the creature rids his mind of those lofty human ideas, including those with “good” ends, he will feel God’s help—His grace—profoundly.

When man becomes convinced of what he is, he will be what God wants: “One and the same with Him,” a faithful copy of His Son Jesus Christ; and St. Paul’s words will become a reality in him: ***“...and it is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me...”*** (Gal 2:20).



## **CHAPTER 10:**

### ***Liberty in Love and Humility***

We have tried to pinpoint true justice and have arrived at the conclusion that only a perspective abounding in love is capable of justice. Now then, since God alone possesses this plenitude of love, He alone has the right and the prerogative to pronounce a perfect judgment over men. The more souls identify with God's Love, the closer they come to His perfect judgment of men.

We've not yet told all: There's an immensely profound aspect of love, and it is love's humility. We often talk about the powerful force of love, but how are we to reconcile love's powerful force with its humility? It's necessary that we ponder this question slowly in order to reach a depth of true justice, often unknown, for if justice is impossible without love, love is impracticable without humility.

In the first place, we can't understand humility if we don't rise above the human experience of love, which is like a wisp of the Divine experience. Very often in human love, humility does not exist; it's a prideful love that tries to impose its selfish views upon the loved one under the pretext of true love. We need to forget our usual experiences if we are to penetrate the humility of God's Love, which is so immense that this Love, by virtue of its being humble, seems to have disappeared, for the haughty looks of His creatures don't see it: Why does God permit this or that? Why does He send us so many evils? And they come to the conclusion that God is the author of evil. This is the language of creatures who have proudly lifted themselves up in order to pass judgment on their Creator. Such a judgment is born of sin, deaf to hearing and blind to seeing His infinitely humble love— so humble that, if the creature is not

humble, God's love becomes imperceptible, to the point where the creature feels that that love doesn't exist.

Why is God's love like this? There can only be one answer: because He is LOVE. Love is a quest in search of the beloved; but the beloved has a liberty, and love won't try to encroach upon it by force. Love, in its essence, is humble and respects that liberty. This respect for the beloved's liberty can cause the beloved to believe that love doesn't exist in the One who is essentially Love. This is a more or less conscious outrage against Love—outrage that arises from the creature's state of rebelliousness against authentic love. This outrage doesn't disappear until the beloved returns to the humility of Love, who loves him by respecting his liberty.

This is why perfect love cannot for one instant let go of humility. So powerful is this perfect love that it is disposed to humble itself even unto being judged as nonexistent, for it is certain of its powerful existence. There's nothing fictitious about humility; it's as spontaneous as the beat of a robust heart; it is a humility sure of the fact that triumph belongs to Love! And time? Perfect love doesn't view time, but eternity. The face of love's triumph is constantly turned toward eternity. Time, in which this triumph is elaborated, is clothed in humility; time is love's humility; eternity is the splendour of love.

It's not possible to understand this in its full reach if we don't turn to the humility of Love. We talk a lot about love, but of that glittering, artificial love that lasts, at the very most, a lifetime. As it is a temporal love, it cannot be humble. The duration of a lifetime being relatively short, humility makes no sense in a love limited by time and space. Is the lover willing to let the loved one think he doesn't love her? No. This is why he takes advantage of the short time available to make the presence of his love felt. And in these

demonstrations of love, what a great many injustices are committed against the loved one! This is because human love, limited by man's sin, carries the seal of time's fleetingness. To break away from time and gaze upon eternity entails an unavoidable struggle against everything and everyone around us and a striving not to cling to the sign of time's mortal fate, loving souls more than bodies.

Even in the religious aspect, certain virtues must one day disappear; faith and hope will cease—only love has free entry into eternity. Faith and hope, which will one day cease, are fulfilling a beautiful mission in Time, which is necessarily subject to sin. Faith and hope must defend love from all that tries to limit it to Time. Faith and hope must always orient love toward eternity. There, where faith and hope cannot enter, love will receive all its meaning and splendour.

Who, then, will give human love the humility proper to true love? Faith and hope. These tell human love that love does not cease with death, nor with time, nor With the world. Thus, human love will be unconcerned about time's mortality, knowing that it lives on after death. Even though friends or enemies may think that in such a one love doesn't exist, he won't be concerned about reaffirming his love in time. In a word, his love becomes humble as is God's.

But is it possible that love ends with death? No. Moreover, love's most splendid phase comes after death. Love resides in the soul, and when the obstacle—the body subject to sin—is removed, love becomes indefatigable to the measure in which she has overcome the fatigue caused by the shadows produced by the body, for the body—like the organic matter that it is—is incapable of feeling “love.” Love is the exclusive patrimony of the soul, made to the image and likeness of God. What acts in the body, while the soul lives in it, is the instincts. Never can the blind forces of instinct be confused with the luminous force of love. The

intimate union of soul and body causes one to confuse two totally different things.

Death is a liberation not only for the soul but for the most precious thing that resides in her—love. Love cannot manifest itself in all its potentiality while the soul is chained to the body; for love, when it ignites in the soul, has repercussions in the body by virtue of the intimate union existing between the two; and as the body cannot enjoy the reality of love in all its purity because it is linked to evil, it responds to the joy of the soul's love with the instincts of the flesh. Now then, when a moral law exists that impedes the exercise of these instincts, the great conflict occurs between the precept of unreachable love and what the flesh demands: This conflict is produced by egoism; love is sacrifice. How can love give without the flesh being desirous of receiving? We need to pause on this drama of human love in order to acknowledge that while the "flesh" has not yet been purified, death has to be a true joy for loving souls who experience love's flame within themselves, the expression of which is impeded by the flesh, as long as its disorderly demands persist. And this is another aspect of love's humility; in a corporeal world soiled by sin, love cannot fully thrive, for obstacles are everywhere, obstacles that begin within the soul herself, enslaved by original pride; extend to the flesh, which is incapable of enjoying the reality of love; and carry over to the external world around her.

We repeat, death is an authentic liberation for the soul who has sighed after Love, the source of all love. Following death, love will be the soul's constant heartbeat like the heart of a new life. Apparent destruction by death is just that—apparent: Behind death is Life, said He who is the Resurrection and the Life. Who, then, opposes our believing this with a living faith?— the concupiscence of the flesh,

which with its ignorance imprisons love, hindering its sacrifice, not wanting love to embrace death, which is the sacrifice of the flesh.

The fact is that the “flesh” is incapable of conceiving that the soul has another life, once the flesh is consumed by death. Flesh doesn’t think, but it defends itself with its instinct, and this defense by the flesh can prevail over and influence the soul, bringing torture upon her, the torture of believing that, like the body, she’s not immortal. In that case, an eternal love would be inconceivable, for if the soul, which is love’s support, disappears, how can love be left in the void?

But the flesh is not love’s prime enemy; this enemy is the spirit of evil which enslaves the soul in pride and egoism, and these can degenerate even into hate. Hate—just like love—resides in the soul who surrenders herself to it. We can say that hate is the reflection of the devil, the spirit of evil, just as love is the reflection of God, the Holy Spirit.

If, as we have said, true love is humble, hate, then, arises from pride. A prideful love is a contradiction; it would be better to call it a prideful egoism. Pride and egoism are as inseparable as are humility and love. Satan is the personification of pride and egoism. Man’s liberty can choose love or hate; the two realities can live alternately in the soul but never at the same time, as neither can light and darkness exist at the same time—a baffling battlefield for the human soul: It can be heaven or hell, alternately.

Only true love, which is humility and sacrifice, will give the soul the desired liberty: an inner liberty overcoming its own obstacles—pride and the flesh; and an outer liberty that knows how to respect the liberty of others and overcome the obstacles posed by another’s egoism. The acquiring of this inner freedom is a veritable secret that God reveals to those who maintain a docile and humble attitude, “...*thou didst*

*hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst  
reveal them to little ones.”*

## **CHAPTER 11:**

### ***Unity in the Liberty***

In this self-liberating work, man has not had to be directly concerned with other men. But at the end of this liberation, he'll find himself united in the same Spirit with those who, collaborating with grace, have carried out a work identical to his own. They will most likely have traveled different paths, given the diversity of internal and external circumstances, but all will have rectified, from the very root of their being, everything that came from their slavery to the spirit of evil and manifested itself in egoism, isolating them from each other. If all have liberated themselves from the "self" in order to have only one legitimate center—the Good—they will consequently be united among themselves. That they don't know each other makes no difference; their union will exist, once their respective "self" has ceased to be the center of their attention in order to direct that attention to the absolute and true Good. The soul who achieves this profound uprooting of herself from herself will begin to have that broad vision of the Good, toward which she has directed herself and into which she should have fully entered. The vision of things changes drastically when viewed from such a different perspective—just as the view seen from a valley is quite different from the panorama seen from a mountain. All fences and boundaries—set up by men's egoism—which are clearly defined in the valley, become invisible to the vision which, free of itself, gazes from the infinite peak of the Good.

It is not by looking to each other that men unite, for even goodness that may exist among them is not immediately perceptible. The things that stand out most are those that derive from their slavery to the spirit of evil, and this spirit

is the cause of separation among men. Someone who may seek to unite himself with men—with his “neighbor,” to use a Gospel term—will not succeed; such a union frequently degenerates into a human “commitment,” without being founded on the true Good.

This is why becoming a one-truth soul, truly ecumenical, first requires personal liberation from the spirit of evil in order to be fully aware that this spirit is precisely what separates men. The soul will then feel united to humanity without being united to the spirit of evil that enslaves it.

We’ll not be able to travel the path of self-liberation without the constant assistance of Him who is Perfect Liberty: the Holy Spirit. This path of self-liberation is the regenerating work to which we’ve repeatedly referred and that bewilders those who live enslaved by the egoism of the evil spirit: *“The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit”* (Jn 3:8). This human feeling of bewilderment doesn’t imply that in the ways of one born of the Spirit a unity does not exist. It would be negating unity in the action of the Holy Spirit if those born of Him lacked this unity in their performance. Without a doubt, a unity exists, but it’s a mysterious unity that resembles the ways of the Holy Spirit who doesn’t totally abide by what is reasonable, just, or convenient, according to the human way of thinking; but rather, being Perfect Liberty, He takes none of that into account, governing Himself by true justice, which always and unfailingly directs itself toward the absolute and total Good. This is how one born of the Spirit ought to act. But it isn’t possible for this good to be seen in all its clarity by those who live detained in the “self—in any of its aspects—enslaved by the spirit of evil, for that spirit will not allow them to let go of their rationalizations. Hence, the ways of



those born of the Holy Spirit bewilder them.

He who desires to walk the paths of perfect liberty need not take into account this bewilderment, originated by a subtle slavery to the spirit of evil—a bewilderment that can still arise in the “reborn” himself when he begins to be free. But this inner liberty, as it gains admittance into the profound depths of Good, will facilitate for the soul her union with one and all, over and above the slavery to the evil they suffer. The “bewilderment,” the incomprehension of his ways, on the part of others, will not be a cause for the one born of the Spirit to fail to understand them. His way of doing things is Divine, and God does not fail to understand evil.

All the steps taken by one “reborn” have to be taken in union with this Spirit; it is He who frees and unites—frees us more and more from our own obstacles and those of others, and unites us in Truth, Justice, and Love. On our own, we’re incapable of such a union. It is He, the Spirit of Love and Truth, who will keep us, if we’re faithful, from getting confused by error or sentimentality.

This is the eternal world projected by God from all eternity: one Justice, one Truth, one Love, one Good—GOD. Everything that has not entered fully into the spirit of this Unity will not take part in Jesus’ keen longing: “*...that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us...*” (Jn 17:21).

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