

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.

A MODEL OF THE PERFECT LIFE: JESUS

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.

(pp. 8-10)

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.

(p. 43)

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, 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. 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 off-*

spring? You must then safeguard life that is your own, and not break faith with the wife of your youth” (Mai 2:1415). 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 19:46).

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 childbearing; 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 3:1719).*

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 “enemy” 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.

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. Hardheartedness 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 or less 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....

(pp.53-64)

THE SPIRIT OF 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," 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).

(pp. 84-88)

THE SLAVERY OF MONEY

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 inter-living? 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 inter-living? 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 intra-human 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.*" 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.

(pp. 91-100)

LIBERTY AND AUTHORITY

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 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 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 over-powering 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 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.

(pp. 120-124)

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 splendor 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.

(pp. 143-145)