

## C. ON THE PERFECTIVE WAY AND ITS THREEFOLD EXERCISE

15. Finally, what are we to do about the little flame of wisdom? We are to act in the following way: it is first to be CONCENTRATED, then FED, and then RAISED ALOFT.

Now, we concentrate it by turning our hearts away from the love of creatures. This we absolutely must do: for there is no advantage in such love; if there were any, it would not be substantial; and if it were substantial, it still would not be sufficient. Therefore, all love of creatures, without reservation, must be rooted out of our hearts.

16. Next, we must feed it by turning our hearts toward the Spouse. Now, we do this by considering love in reference to ourselves, to those in heaven, and to the Spouse Himself. This leads us to realize that, through love, whatever we lack is given to us; through love, an abundance of all good is given to the blessed; and, through love, there is attained the supremely desirable presence of the Spouse. These are the considerations that set the heart aflame.

17. Third, we must raise it aloft, above anything perceptible, imaginable, or conceivable, in this way: first, looking straight upon Him whom we desire to love perfectly, we realize that this Beloved cannot be perceived through the senses, since He is neither seen, nor heard, smelled, tasted, or touched: thus, He is not perceptible; yet *He is all delight*. Next, we realize that He cannot be seen through the imagination, since He has no shape, figure, quantity, limitation, or mutability: thus, He is unimaginable; yet *He is all delight*. Finally, we realize that He cannot be conceived through the intellect, since He is beyond demonstration, definition, opinion, estimation, or investigation: thus, He is inconceivable; yet *He is all delight*.

Ct. 5:16

## D. COROLLARY

18. All this makes it clear that meditation about the purgative, illuminative, and perfective ways results in attaining the wisdom of Holy Scriptures. We should be concerned with this triple way whether we meditate on the Scriptures or any other subject.

He who is wise will meditate only upon these things:

—The acts of man: what man will or should do, and why.

—The acts of God: how much God has entrusted to man by creating all things for him, how much He has forgiven, and how much He has promised, these three summarizing the works of creation, reparation, and glorification.

—The principles of both kinds of acts: God and the soul, and the union that is to be accomplished between them.

Here our meditations must rest; this is the end of every thought and deed, the true wisdom where science is Life.

19. In a meditation of this sort, the whole soul must be attentive, applying all its faculties: intellect, synderesis, conscience, and will. For in such a meditation, intellect investigates and makes a proposition, synderesis judges and clarifies the issue, conscience agrees and draws the conclusion, will makes the choice and brings forth the solution. For instance, if a man wishes to meditate on the purgative way, intellect must raise the question of what should be done to a violator of the temple of God. Synderesis will answer that he must be either chastised, or cleansed by the tears of contrition. Conscience agrees: "Since this violator is yourself, you must either condemn yourself to hell, or afflict yourself with the goad of penance." Then will makes a choice: that is, it rejects eternal damnation, and deliberately chooses the sufferings of penance.

The same applies to the two other ways.



## F. ON THE TWO MANNERS OF CONTEMPLATING THE DIVINE MYSTERIES

11. Note that our vision of truth must be elevated toward the incomprehensible, that is, the mysteries of the Trinity most high, to which we are raised in contemplation in two possible manners: one AFFIRMATIVE, the other NEGATIVE. The first is that of Augustine,<sup>9</sup> the second, that of Denis.<sup>10</sup>

First, through affirmation we understand some concepts of Divinity as COMMON, others as PROPER, others again, intermediate between the two, as APPROPRIATED.

Understand, and behold if you can, what in God is common to the three Persons, and see that He is First Essence, Perfect Nature, and Beatific Life. These have a necessary sequence. Again, attend, and discern, if you can, that God is Ever-present Eternity, Plenteous Simplicity, and Motive Stability. These, likewise, have a natural sequence and interrelationship.

Finally, consider that God is Inaccessible Light, Unchanging Mind, and Uncontained Peace. These attributes imply not only unity of essence, but also the most perfect trinity of Persons.

Light, as the parent, generates brightness. Brightness and light produce heat, so that the heat proceeds from both, although not in the manner of an offspring. Thus, if God truly is Inaccessible Light in whom Brightness and Heat are substance, but also hypostasis, in God there are truly Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; which are the proper names of the divine Persons.

The mind, as the principle, conceives and then expresses the word. Out of their union the gift of love emanates. This process is seen in every mind in the state of perfection.

*cf. 1 Tm.  
6:16*

If God, therefore, is Unchanging Mind, it is clear that there exists in the divine Being the First Principle, the Eternal Word, and the Perfect Gift. These also are proper names of the divine Persons.<sup>11</sup>

Peace, likewise, implies concordance, and thus more than one element. Now, two elements cannot be perfectly concordant unless they are alike; they cannot be alike unless both proceed from a third, or one proceeds from the other. But, in the Godhead, two Persons cannot proceed from the third in an identical way. Necessarily, therefore, if true peace exists in God, there must be present there the First Principle, its Image, and the Bond between the two.

12. There are three categories of appropriated divine attributes. FIRST, unity, truth, and goodness: unity is attributed to the Father, for He is the Origin; truth, to the Son, for He is the Image; goodness, to the Holy Spirit, for He is the Bond.<sup>12</sup> SECOND, power, wisdom, and will: power is attributed to the Father, for He is the Principle; wisdom, to the Son, for He is the Word; will, to the Holy Spirit, for He is the Gift. THIRD, loftiness, beauty and sweetness: Loftiness is attributed to the Father, because of His oneness and power;<sup>13</sup> for loftiness is nothing but singular and unique power. Beauty is attributed to the Son, because of His truth and wisdom, for wisdom implies the plurality of ideas, and truth implies their unity with the object; while "beauty means unity in plurality."<sup>14</sup> Sweetness is attributed to the Holy Spirit because of His will and His goodness; for wherever supreme goodness is united to will, there are found supreme love and supreme sweetness. Thus, there is in God an awesome loftiness, a wonderful beauty, and a desirable sweetness: and here we rest. This is the elevation of the mind in the affirmative manner.

13. But there is another, and higher, approach: that is, by manner of negation. As Denis says: "(When applied to God,) affirmations are inadequate, while negations are wholly true."<sup>15</sup> Negations seem to say less but actually they say more. This manner of elevation consists in using nothing but negative predications, and that in a way which is orderly, proceeding from the lowest to the highest, but which also expresses transcendence. For instance, we say: God is not perceptible through the senses, but is above the senses; nor is He imaginable, intelligible, manifest, but is above all these concepts. Then the vision of truth, having experienced the night of the intellect, rises higher and penetrates deeper, because it exceeds the intellect itself as well as every created thing. This is the most noble manner of elevation. To be perfect, however, it postulates the affirmative manner, as perfection supposes illumination, and as negation supposes affirmation.<sup>16</sup> The more intimate the ascending force, the more powerful the elevation; the deeper the love, the more fruitful the rising. It is beneficial, therefore, to practice this manner.

14. Note that on the first level, truth is to be invoked by sighs and prayer, which pertains to the Angels; it is to be received by study and reading, which pertains to the Archangels; it is to be communicated by example and preaching, which pertains to the Principalities.—On the second level, truth is to be sought by recourse and dedication to it, which pertains to the Powers; it is to be grasped by activity and endeavor, which pertains to the Virtues; it is to be assimilated by self-contempt and mortification, which pertains to the Dominations.—On the third level, truth is to be adored by sacrifice and praise, which pertains to the Thrones; it is to be admired in ecstasy and contemplation, which pertains

to the Cherubim; it is to be embraced with caresses and love, which pertains to the Seraphim.

Note these things carefully, for they hold the fountain of life.

HERE ENDS THE TRIPLE WAY  
OR LOVE ENKINDLED

