

CHRISTIAN PATIENCE

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THE WORK OF PATIENCE IN THE SOUL

I.

The perfection of the Christian soul consists in that complete and exquisite charity whereby we love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves, for the love of God. This love, this charity that perfects the soul, is the sublimest gift that we can receive from God in this our exile, because God Himself is charity, and the life of God is charity. By charity God lives in us and we in Him.

The love of God is our spiritual life; it makes the will good, the affections good, the soul good, and the work of the soul good. Without the Charity of God we are nothing. Woe, then, to that false science which puts matter before spirit, sense before conscience, darkness before light and the creature before God, and professes to find the cause of light and love, those sublimest gifts of the eternal charity of God, in the lowest and least spiritual elements of His creation. It is an awful proof of the extent to which cultivated intellects, lost to charity, can be gained to pride, and of the utter perversion of that light of intelligence which their minds have received from God.

II.

The grace of patience is given with the grace of charity, as well to protect it as to bring it to perfection. True patience for the love of God's therefore the highest test and most evident proof of the presence of a noble degree of charity, because it can only be obtained even with the help of grace, by dint of labor, self-combat and effort; but we have the sensible result in the possession of oneself and in peace of soul.

The soul cannot possess herself when she is held in the possession of her mortal senses, appetites or passions, or when

held in bondage to creatures that are less than herself, and that trouble, degrade and divide the soul, and take off her mind and will from what is greater and better than herself. She can only possess herself in God through charity and patience, in love adhering to God, in patience persevering in that adherence despite of all the perturbations and fears of her inferior nature.

III.

So intimate is the connection between patience and humility, that neither of these virtues can make much progress without the other; nor can charity advance towards its perfection without their aid.

To the spiritual man patience is more essential than food, for food strengthens the body, and preserves it from weakness, but patience fortifies the soul, and without it no virtue can be firm and solid. But as we are bound to take more care of the soul than of the body, it is evident that we ought to be more solicitous for patience than for food.

God is our patience, our fortitude, and our strength, provided we rest our souls on Him, adhere to Him, are subject to His strengthening influences, and work with them in loyal co-operation.

Patience is the tonic medicine of our enfeebled nature; it fortifies the will, soothes down the irritabilities that derange the soul, braces the powers into unity, and gives stability to all the virtues. As the tree obtains its strength from being rooted in the ground, the soul, which is the tree of virtue, obtains her strength from patiently adhering to God.

Patience is concerned in all that we have to resist, in all that we have to deny ourselves, in all that we have to endure, in all that we have to adhere to, and in all that we have to do. Wherever patience fails, the act is weak, and the work imperfect.

ON THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN PATIENCE

I.

The first thing required to be understood is that patience is an immediate exercise of the will, which is the spring of all free and moral actions. It must not, therefore, be confounded with the sentiments, sensibilities or feelings, because it is a pure act of the will. When the will rests on God, looks to God and draws strength from God, that patience is generated which resists all evils and disorders, gives us the possession of ourselves, and keeps the soul in peace. "Be thou, O my soul, subject to God, for from Him is my patience."(Psalm lxi, 6.)

II.

The first movements of impatience, the first uneasiness of dissatisfaction, are warnings to patience to be upon its guard, lest trouble arise to disturb the soul and take hold of the will. If we calmly look down from the superior soul upon the first movements of irritation or impatience, nothing can appear more contemptible; and under the rebuke of the gaze of our interior eye they vanish in shame. The breath of patience will disperse the little cloud of trouble and discontent that moves in our lower nature, but if left to itself it will quickly grow on what it feeds upon, and will envelop and fill the soul with anger and vexation. For anger is a brooding vice that feeds on sensitive self-love and imaginary wrong far beyond the original offense, if, indeed, offense has been given.

There is nothing that drives us to impatience so vehemently, or throws us into greater interior disorder, than an injury, or the imagination of an injury, which is far more frequent than real injury. For many things are said and done without the least intention of injury; some from quickness of tongue, some from inadvertence or thoughtlessness, some in good-natured jest, some from good intentions, some from mere imprudence;

and no one has any right to take any of them in bad part, and so commit himself to anger, grief and sadness. But if anyone should falsely or maliciously assail our good name and reputation--a mode of detractation not limited alas! to the children of this world--let us in that case keep our magnanimity, that our virtue may be stronger than another's vice, and that our patience may suffer no loss by reason of another's improbity. Rather should we rejoice in the Lord that He has called us by these means to greater justice, which is commonly born, receives its growth, and obtains perfection among injuries and insults.

III.

When things are at their worst according to the world, if the calamity is rightly used, they begin to be at their best according to God. All things are in God's hands, to give or take as He chooses; and an immortal soul is more precious in His sight than all that the world can give. When He strips a soul of earthly things, He calls upon that soul to look to Him and to trust in His care and providence.

There is nothing really lost so long as God is with us, nothing, therefore, to be despaired of. As long as we are simple, upright, fearing God and departing from evil, placing our hope in God and not in the prudence of the world, He who has care of His servants will turn their calamities into blessings.

The only good we have that is excellent and imperishable is our soul, and the good which God gives to the soul. But by nothing except our own will can the soul or its good suffer injury. No one can be spiritually injured except by himself. So long as one possesses one's soul in patience, no one can take any part of that good away from us. We can only lose the good of the soul by not holding to it with constancy, and we thus sin by losing patience.

IV.

Sadness is the most selfish of all selfish things, and the very essence of self, eating and consuming the very heart of virtue. When sadness is much indulged in, there follows a contraction of mind, a weakening of the soul's power, a dissolving of the heart's strength, and an embittering of the spirit, which causes restless discomfort, and brings forth indignation and melancholy.

God knows what we stand in need of far better than we know ourselves. Our trials are the fatherly dispositions of His providence, and it is idle to fix our mind on human causes, when you are ruled in the results that affect us by the one Divine Cause. They are brought upon us for our probation, the correction or the expiation of our sins. They refine away those noxious humors, the products of self-love and sloth, that obstruct and impede the generous flow of spiritual life. They plant in us the ground seed of merit, and prepare the rewards of endurance. They make us generous in conforming our will to the will of God. Hence the cheerful endurance of trials and sufferings is a virtue truly sublime, reaching its heroic degrees in the martyrs and confessors of God. We are made to enjoy God. But we must be purified before we can be sanctified; and we must deserve God, as far as we are able, by becoming more like to His Incarnate SON, crucified in spirit as well as in body.

V.

Be it understood and remembered that the darkness of trial is not evil, that dryness of spirit is not sin, that confusion of mind is not malice. They are invitations to patience, calls to resignation, beckonings to the healing cross, admonitions to be humble and obedient to the will of God. But if in our interior trials we lose patience, then we fall into sadness, and so become weak, troubled and discouraged. The remedy for sadness is prayer. God is secretly present with the suffering soul, and in reward for patience she receives a secret strength and peace.

ON PATIENCE AS A UNIVERSAL VIRTUE

I.

One color cannot make a picture, nor one virtue a saint; many colors unite and blend their shades to form a beautiful work of art, and many virtues unite and blend together in happy mixture to make a beautiful soul.

All the Christian virtues live in the light of faith, all look to hope, all obtain their life from the love of God. They are founded in humility, sustained by fortitude, strengthened and protected by patience.

A soul given to impatience loses strength from every virtue and weakens her hold on all that is good; she has not the spiritual nerve to hold herself together; for in the impatient soul there is a restlessness, a wavering, a want of spiritual fiber, a swerving from good intention, and a want of steadfastness in action that disturbs the soul.

II.

All the present conditions of life seem to combine in making men restless and unstable. Most men have become eager for novelty and change, and they live so much outside themselves as to neglect or even abandon the interior good of their souls. The tree of knowledge of good and evil has been shaken for its fruits, and if the knowledge of good has fallen to those who are inclined to good, the knowledge of evil has fallen in great abundance to those who are inclined to evil. We live in the midst of a restless, impatient and fevered life, that more than ever demands for our security patience of will and stability of mind.

III.

Food is not more essential to strength of body than patience is to strength of soul; and God in His goodness makes us conscious of our weakness, that we may be induced to seek the means of strength. What God loves and approves in us is the cheerful and loving patience that we put into our duties, because that is the spirit of charity, and expresses the amount of charity with which we serve Him. Every new restraint that we put upon the hurry and impetuosity of our excitable nature IS a reduction to order, a power gained, a weakness removed, a further subjection of nature to grace, a step in the way of peace, that makes us less unlike to God. The secret of cheerfulness and content is in the freedom of spirit obtained by the conquest of the body.

IV.

There is also an impatience with oneself; and who is not acquainted with that infirmity? It may have its beginning in some venial fault or error into which we have slipped or glided with no great deliberation. But the failure has wounded our self-love, and produced an interior annoyance and vexation, which is far worse than the original fault. Like throwing away the medicine when the disease appears, patience is given up at the very moment when wanted to cure the infirmity. Had we taken to that steady virtue at once, the mischief would have been stayed; but the shame and humiliation of failure is allowed to disturb the heart, to discomfort the soul, and to bring on a certain sadness that goes from one act of interior impatience to another, doing more harm than a hundred of those faults from which this disorder is allowed to rise.

Patience would have purged the sin, and would have saved you from it in future. Take hold of patience, or the one fault will bring you others that are greater in its train.

ON CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE

I.

The greatest moral strength of which the soul is capable comes of the Christian grace and gift of fortitude, of which patience is a potential part, that is to say, it agrees with patience in some respects and differs from it in others. Patience is mostly concerned in overcoming the restlessness of nature, in enduring adversities, in resisting temptations, and in subduing or keeping away impatience, anger or sadness. Fortitude is a braver and a stronger virtue, is more deeply woven into the constitutions of the soul, and is concerned with difficult action as well as with difficult endurance. Fortitude is required to face great dangers bravely, to undertake great works beset with difficulties, or to undergo martyrdom or the equivalent of martyrdom. Fortitude is a virtue more deeply seated in the soul, is more calm in its operations, and less the subject of consciousness than patience.

II.

The world admires its own heroes, who, for honor, interest or the excitement which it gives them, undergo great labors, do works that look large in the eyes of men, encounter great perils with risk of life, or endure extreme sufferings for some public cause. And though these men are not infrequently known to have their moral deficiencies and failings, yet the world exalts them, rewards them with honors and benefits, and erects monuments to their memory. The hope of these things is often the leading motive next to the pride that moves within them. But the heroes and heroines of God, although the world takes little note of them, are far more wonderful. Armed with Christian fortitude, their hearts are set on God, in whose strength they do great things, and, whilst wholly indifferent to the world's opinion, are a spectacle to God and His angels.

In their valiant combats they first conquer themselves, that they may be in a position to surmount all outward dangers and

difficulties. They have no fears but the fear of God, and no will but His will. Let but the will of God be known, and, however difficult the task may be to human nature, no fear, no obstacle will daunt their ardor in accomplishing His will. The way of God in His servants is the way of fortitude in humility.

III.

Of all the burdens laid upon us in this life the heaviest is our own body, and this is owing to the just law which God passed upon that old sin, which is so widely known but so little understood. The soul trembles and quakes with fear, lest the body be vexed or tormented with pain or labor, or be taken from us by death. Through the mere custom of always carrying the body, we love the burden of it, and find it hard to realize that, if through the help of the law of divine love we govern the body wisely and well, it will obtain its resurrection and salvation, and its rights will suffer no injury. But when the soul is turned to God with the fortitude of love, these things become known and death is not only endured but welcomed with desire.

There remains the great conflict with pain and suffering, yet nothing of this kind is of such iron hardness and obstinacy but the fire of love will master it. When this fire bears up the soul towards God, she soars up freely and wonderfully on strong and beautiful wings over every torment inflicted on the body, until her chaste desire brings her to rest in the embrace of God. Can we ever allow that God would permit the lovers of money, or of praise, or of sensual pleasure, to become stronger than His own lovers? Their affections are not love, they deserve no other name than that of concupiscence or lust; yet they show what a force the soul can put forth, even in the heated and noxious pursuit of those poor objects. But this is an argument for us, for if the lovers of these things can endure so much whilst deserting God for the sake of them, how much ought we to be ready to endure to save us from the unhappiness of deserting God.

IV.

A Life of self-denial is a martyrdom. The life of the true Christian is a daily cross and martyrdom. To deny oneself, to combat the corrupt propensities of our nature, to keep the desire of Eternity well advanced before the things of time, and to endure whatever may come upon us, demands a patience, a fortitude, and a perseverance like the force that carried the martyrs through their sufferings.

Softness comes of ease and pleasure. A soft and easy life melts away those energies whereby we endure labors and hardships, and dissolves the force that encounters and conquers the difficulties that are met with in doing good works, and especially in doing them in the best and most perfect way. The proper cure for the contemptible vice of softness is labor and self-denial.

Whatever befalls you, let it not upset or disturb your mind. The whole world cannot injure a soul that is fenced with faithful fortitude.

ON THE PATIENCE OF THE SON OF GOD

I.

Of all that God has taught us, and of all we have learnt by experience, there is nothing that strikes the reflecting mind with more awe and wonder, or proves more fully His perfection, than God's infinite patience with His rebellious and sinful creatures. To the eyes of faith, this very patience is one of the sublimest proofs of the divine perfections.

As the Lord of men, Jesus Christ became their teacher, and He exhorts us to take up our daily cross, and to follow Him with patience.

Severe to Himself, He is gentle, mild and forbearing to all others. His meekness is the beautiful flower, His peacefulness the sweet fruit of His patience. His doctrine is doubted and disputed; He is charged with being an impostor; He is called a blasphemer; His wonderful works are ascribed to the devil; His adversaries gnash their teeth, burn with rage and are prepared to stone Him. Yet His equanimity is unmoved, His meek demeanor is not altered, the calmness of His peace undergoes no change. Resting on His union with His Father, the ground of His invincible strength, His divine fortitude is tried at every point, and at every point His patience is invincible.

II.

If we enter into the interior of the SON of God, we shall there find a crucifixion of the soul sustained by a charity most patient because most divine. Nothing can be so helpful to souls under interior trials as to enter in spirit into the interior crucifixion of our Blessed Lord. He thirsts for the salvation of all whom by His Incarnation He has made His brethren; and

the resistance that He meets with from the pride of self-seeking wills causes Him the greatest anguish of spirit.

Whenever we draw near to the suffering SON of GOD, and put our heart into that furnace of love and patience, we receive a light, an affection, and an unction that soothes all sorrows into peace, cleanses the soul from evil, and comforts her with a cordial strength and an ever-increasing desire of the Eternal Good. The world is full of mysteries; the soul is full of mysteries; Heaven is all mystery to us earthly creatures. But whoever embraces the Cross with open heart finds therein the explanation of a thousand mysteries.

III.

We profess to be the patient followers of the patient Son of God. Do we understand how deep that patience goes which rests the humanity of Christ upon the firm foundation of His divinity, and gives to His human will the strength to hold to the will of His Father, unmoved and undisturbed in its peace and self-possession by all that men can say or do against Him? Do we understand the profundity of that patience which refrains from every egotistical self-assertion, however grossly He is misjudged, however ignominiously He is insulted? He only glorifies His Heavenly Father, declares His unity with His Father, and equally declares that He can do nothing without His Father. Yet He calls upon us to be the imitators of His patience, to rest for strength on Him; to take up our daily cross and follow Him; to refrain from our selfish egotism; and in patience to possess our souls.

As the patient sufferings of our Lord were the cause of His glory, the like patience in sufferings will bring us to His glory.

ON PATIENCE AS THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SOUL

I.

What is it to hold our soul in our own possession? As we have not our resources from ourselves, because we are not created for ourselves but for God, we cannot possess our soul except in God. We possess our mind in the light of His truth, and our will in the grace of His love. Hence when Adam fell from God he lost the possession of himself. So long as our mind adheres to God in His truth, and the will adheres to God in His love, we are in possession of ourselves. But if we follow the seductions of error we lose the possession of ourselves. As our mortal life is only free and self- possessed when we live in light and air, our spiritual life is only free and self-possessed when we live in the truth and love of God.

Patience is the possession of the soul, enabling the will to keep the soul in peace, and to regulate her actions and desires by the light of truth and justice, with a constant view to her final end.

Impatience is the beginning of every movement that takes away the soul from God, and so from her self-possession.

II.

The greatest thing for us is the perfection of our own soul; and the Saints teach us that this perfection consists in doing our ordinary actions well. We do them well when we do them patiently and lovingly. We have to perfect our ordinary actions for the love of God, that we may be perfect in our human way before our Heavenly Father, as He is most perfect in His divine way. But it is the patience of charity that makes our actions perfect. It is not the habit or exercise of patience alone that gives perfection to our actions, but it is patience proceeding from charity, and working in the spirit abundance of charity.

III.

THE first rule for acquiring patience is to hold its value in great estimation, and to have a great desire of it.

The second rule is to begin the exercise of patience with our own interior, and to direct our chief attention to the controlling of our interior powers. For this virtue must be strong at home before it can be strong abroad.

The third rule is the government of the tongue, which is the surest test of the custody of the heart. Let thought go before speech, not speech before thought. The tree is known by its fruits, and man by his speech. Much talkativeness is the sign of a feeble mind, and an undisciplined will. The tongue is the great disturber of our peace, and of the peace of other souls.

The fourth rule of patience is to keep all things in their just and due order. To be careless about the order of external things is the sign of an ill-regulated mind, St. Bonaventure says.

The fifth rule is to bear patiently with those whose tempers are infirm, and to endure their tempers with charitable kindness.

The sixth rule is to manage our own infirmities of temper wisely. The provocation may arise within ourselves, or may come from the voice or conduct of another. Whichever it may be, the true cause of evil temper is always in oneself. One who is habitually recollected in God cannot easily be moved to anger. Resting the soul on her divine foundation, he enjoys a peace which makes the soul quickly sensible of the first movements of disturbance, and quick to turn from them, so that they cannot take hold of the superior soul.

The seventh rule is given by St. Paul: "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good."(Romans xii, 21.)

The eighth rule of patience is to bear our own interior trials, crosses, and aridities with peace and resignation.

The ninth rule of patience, and one of very great importance, is to bear patiently with one's own faults and failures. Unless we bear our failings with patience they will lead us into numberless faults.

The tenth and last rule is that of the perfect, who find a cheering joy in trials, contradictions, and sufferings, not only because they are great helps for advancing towards God upon the groundworks of humility and patience, but because they can find nothing more conducive to detachment from all that is not God, nothing more effective in subduing their nature to the reign of grace. They delight in bearing upon them the marks of Christ crucified. This is a degree of fortitude more than human, a singular gift of the HOLY GHOST, by which the superior will is so closely united with God as to remove all repugnance to suffering.

ON PATIENCE AS THE PERFECTER OF OUR DAILY ACTIONS

I.

That perfection of life consists in doing our ordinary actions well is one of the wisest maxims of the Saints. Those duties make up the chief sum of our lives during the time allotted to us in this world. As we owe our life and time to God, the good Christian has duties at all hours.

The perfection of our ordinary actions depends on high motives, good will and cheerful patience. High motives give them their value before God; good will makes them vigorous; cheerful patience makes them orderly, peaceful, effective and pleasant. Hence the poor man who goes to his daily toils with good will and cheerful patience for the love of God is a much nobler person in the sight of God than the man who, from mere human motives, shines with splendid actions in the sight of the world.

II.

Whatever we do is perfect in proportion to the self-possession with which we do it, and that self-possession is proportioned to patience. Nothing, however trifling, can be done well without good judgment. There are fifty ways of doing anything, but only one perfect way. Nature is always inclined to hurry, to run before judgment, but grace is deliberate. To work fruitfully is to work with a patient will; fretful haste damages both the work and the workman.

They who are patient with obstacles will be patient when the work runs smoothly.

There are few greater proofs of a well disciplined interior than to be able to break off at any time with cheerfulness from one duty and to turn with equal cheerfulness to another, however

unexpected the interruption may be. It is an effect of that detachment of will that comes of patient charity.

III.

That our offices of kindness and charity may have all their sweetness, beauty and consolation, they must proceed with direct simplicity from the love of God in the heart. The love of God's the most earnest and most practical of all things; and when it is devoted with sincerity to the service of our neighbors it places us in a sublime position that has more of Heaven than of earth in it. We enter into God's charity when we imitate His patient love towards all that come within our sphere of action.

Beware of anxiety. Next to sin, there is nothing that so much troubles the mind, strains the heart, distresses the soul and confuses the judgment. Anxiety is not in the things about which we are anxious. It is caused by taking our solitudes and uncertainties into our own interior and there making them the subject of our troubled, disquieted and overstrained feelings.

There is but one remedy for anxiety, and that is by using the firm force of patience to keep the objects of our solicitude in their proper place, and that place is outside of the feelings and before the mind. Every advancement in humility and patience removes the causes of anxiety and trouble, because they all have their roots in the restless impatience of sensitive self-love.

In all your affairs and responsibilities rest wholly on the providence of God, who alone can bring your plans to a happy conclusion. Yet do your best in a peaceful way to follow the guidance of God's providence, and then be assured that if your trust has been in God, whatever success you may obtain will be all the more profitable to yourself whatever you yourself may be inclined to think of it.

Whenever you are perplexed as to what course you should take, if you go blindly into action, you will be sure to repent of it. Wait for light, wait with patience, and light will not fail you.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PATIENCE

I.

There are two Christian virtues whose names sound unpleasantly to the sensual man. Humility is one of them, and patience is the other. Self-love and impatience are cowardly vices, that shrink with insane fear from the health giving labors of humility and patience.

So completely does the habit of patience form and perfect the character of the Christian man, so thoroughly does it furnish the test of his faith as well as of his charity, that St. Paul has not failed to point this out in his own example to his favorite disciple, Timothy.

What is perfect is unchangeable. The patience of God is unchangeable. But we, with our little patience, are the subjects of time and change; and impatience always changes us for the worst. Change, like death, destroys what went before; if the change comes from God, it is a happy change; it makes us better than before. If it comes from impatience, it makes us worse than before. But whoever by patience adheres to God is saved from the changes that make us worse by union with the unchangeable good, whereby we always change to better things.

II.

In your patience you shall possess your soul." Every man is a man in so far only as he holds the free possession of his soul. Every woman is truly a woman only in so far as she possesses her soul in peace. The Christian is so far a true Christian as he possesses his soul in God, so that the world cannot take hold of him. And the secret of this self-possession is in the patience which gives him a beautiful resemblance to Christ.

These words, "Thy will be done," when they spring from the surrender of all to God, bring to the soul a peace and courage that are not without a tasting of the goodness of God. Why are great trials allowed except to bring the soul to devout acts of resignation? This pure resignation brings the soul straight to God, establishes her in God, and makes her comformable to God. True devotion, therefore, consists in true and most humble resignation. Those who strive most vigorously against themselves, though they may leave this world imperfect and have to be purified in the next, will obtain a much higher place in Heaven than those who have not striven with the same energy and patience, even though these last should reach Heaven without any need of purgation.

III.

There is nothing that we suffer for the honor of God, however little it may be, that is not more serviceable to us than if we possessed the dominion of the world. But suffering must be unselfish. God would not have us suffer anything for His sake that is not both useful and fruitful to ourselves. However great our trial or affliction may be, the Son of God bore them first, and permits them for our good.

Christ our Lord not only perfected His own patience by His sufferings, but He receives all the sufferings endured by His members for His sake, incorporates them with His own, endows them with His merits, and thus gives them a communion with His own proportioned to their loving patience. For in virtue of His grace and love they are made sacred and holy.

IV.

We may sum up the value of patience and resigned suffering in the language of the devout and learned Blosius.

1. Nothing more valuable can befall a man than tribulation, when it is endured with patience for the love of God, because there is no more certain sign of the divine election. But this should be understood quite as much of internal as of external trials.
2. It is the chain of patient sufferings that forms the ring with which Christ espouses a soul to Himself.
3. There is such a dignity in suffering for God's sake, that we ought to account ourselves unworthy of an honor so great.
4. Good works are of great value; but even those lesser pains and trials that are endured with peace and patience are more valuable than many good works.
5. Every sorrowful trial bears some resemblance to the most excellent Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and when it is endured with patience, it makes him who endures it a more perfect partaker of the Passion of his Lord and SAVIOR.
6. Tribulation opens the soul to the gifts of God, and when they are received tribulation preserves them.
7. What we now suffer God has from eternity foreseen, and has ordained that we should suffer in this way, and not in any other way.

ON THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

I.

Fortitude is one of the seven gifts of the HOLY GHOST: it is the strengthening gift, and patience is included in fortitude.

Through the Apostles the HOLY GHOST was manifested to the world in the inspiration of their preaching, the fortitude of their sufferings and the wisdom and sanctity of their lives. He is incessantly manifested in the Church through her wonderful unity, the unchangeableness of her teaching, the divine gifts of her ministering and the number of her saints.

What a mighty Creator is the HOLY SPIRIT exclaims St. Gregory. He has only to touch the soul and all is taught.

We owe it to the supreme condescension of God that his HOLY SPIRIT attaches Himself to His gifts of sanctifying grace and charity. By so doing He dwells in us, imparts life to us, adopts us, establishes us in dignity, makes us like to God, and moves us towards God.

The presence of God in the soul gifted with charity is a divine fact, to be realized by the mind to the utmost. It places the possessor of grace in a divine order of things that leads up to God and points to His glory.

Take the whole circle of created nature, where grace is not; that nature is powerless to ascend to God. It follows of necessity that there can be no proportion of value between nature and grace.

There are two principles of movement then in the Christian soul; one is the movement of the man, the other is the movement of God. The mere human virtues move from natural reason; the Christian virtues move from grace. The gifts of the HOLY GHOST give a higher perfection to the

faculties than the grace of the virtues, raising our spirit to higher things, and rendering it prompt, vigorous and readily responsive to the divine influences.

II.

Let the soul understand this thoroughly, and reflect upon it earnestly, that it is the presence, charity and action of the HOLY GHOST within us that makes us acceptable to God, when we are faithfully obedient to His light and inspirations. For what pleases our Heavenly Father in us is His own Divine Spirit, given to us through the merits of His SON, working in our nature, and drawing our will and mind to work with Him.

St. Basil compares man to a ship under sail. The ship may be well constructed and provided, but without the impulse of the wind it cannot move towards its destination. So man may have sanctifying grace and the habits of the virtues, but without the moving power of the HOLY SPIRIT he cannot advance towards God. Without the wind the ship is not at liberty: without the breathing of the HOLY SPIRIT the soul has not her spiritual freedom.

If we generously give up our will to the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, it will take away all doubting, diffidence, fear, shrinking, inconstancy and changeableness, wherever the will of God shall manifestly appear.

The honest soul, and as no soul is honest without humility, the humble soul, then, will ascend in union with the HOLY SPIRIT above all creatures to worship God with gratitude and praise.

III.

It is said in Proverbs: "Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn out seven pillars." This house is the sanctified soul in which the HOLY SPIRIT dwells, and the seven pillars are

the seven luminous and strengthening gifts that in the living house aspire to God. The seven gifts are opposed to the seven deadly sins, and they are the life of the eight Beatitudes. As the heart sends the life's blood through all the veins and limbs of the body, the HOLY SPIRIT sends His living fire and unction through all the powers of the soul.

By the gift of understanding the HOLY SPIRIT purifies the eye of the soul, and leads us into ourselves, where we begin to understand what we are and what God is. And whilst we subject our understanding to God, His truth makes us children of light. Moving upwards through that light, we rise above our senses, above our imagination, above the instincts of our nature, and enter with intelligence into the presence of God. There we receive the gift more abundantly in proportion as we die to ourselves; and from the gift there grows a singular virtue that makes us watchful of good, and conservative of the light of life. The soul delights in God, and the interior man is renewed day by day.

IV.

We begin with the gift of fear," says St. Augustine, "and passing step by step through the intermediate gifts, we reach their consummation at last in the gift of wisdom." This gift is given in its abundance to the pure of heart, and is chiefly cultivated in contemplation.

It is the final gift, because it tranquilizes the soul, and makes her peaceful, fruitful and joyful.

ON PRAYER

I.

The path of prayer is the King's highway from earth to Heaven. Whilst the body remains on its kindred earth, the spirit ascends on the wings of grace into that divine region of light and good for which she was created. This royal path leads the soul into the Eternal Presence, there to plead her cause with her CREATOR and Sovereign Lord; there to converse in the humble spirit of child-like affection with her Heavenly FATHER; there to receive His good and perfect gifts. This royal highway to God was opened for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, was consecrated by His prayers and sufferings, and was illuminated by His ascension to Heaven through the path which He opened. By his Incarnation He bridged the whole distance between the creature and the CREATOR. He is Himself the way, the light of the way, and its security. Through Him we have access to the Father, who answers us with mercy and benignity. "I go to the Father: and whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the SON."(St. John xiv, 13.)

II.

Prayer is, therefore, the noblest and most exalted action of which man is capable through the grace of God. It is the action of God's created image seeking union with her Divine Original, and seeking it so that this image may be healed from offense, and perfected into likeness by the reception of life from the Eternal Life, and be prepared for beatitude through the gifts that descend from God's infinite perfection. The voices that reach the ears of God are not words but desires. If we seek the Eternal Life with our lips, without desiring that life with our heart, our outcry is nothing but silence. But when we desire that life from our heart, though our mouth be silent, in that silence we cry to God.

The great obstacles to prayer are self-love, the inconstancy of the will, and the sadness that results from self-love and inconstancy. Self-love draws our sense, thought, and will to ourselves, instead of surrendering them to God and to the guidance of His HOLY SPIRIT. This causes the will to vibrate like a pendulum, but in a very unsteady way, between God and one's self, making the soul restless, impatient, inattentive and wandering. Yet we cannot look to God and to ourselves at the same time: we cannot feel after God and after ourselves at the same moment. This is not pure prayer, but prayer mixed with distractions, self-love and confusion.

III.

The HOLY SPIRIT is the true teacher of prayer, and the liberty of prayer consists in freely following the divine attraction, which always leads to greater simplicity, humility, love, patience and union with God. "Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in Him.... Be subject to the Lord and pray to Him."(Psalm xxxvi, 5-7.)

All prayer has one final end, that of our beatitude in God! and all should be exercised in spirit and in truth. Every kind of prayer leads to interior recollection according to each one's gift and disposition, and when this recollection ascends to contemplation, the summit of prayer is reached. Contemplation rises above the senses, above the imagination, above all processes of the reasoning powers. Collected within herself, the soul rises above herself, and with a simple view beholds, though "darkly as through a glass," some manifestation of the beauty, goodness and greatness of God, which deepens her sense of God. The acts of contemplation are four: to seek after God, to find Him, to feel His sacred touch in the soul and to be united with Him and enjoy Him.

ON PATIENCE IN PRAYER

I.

As that which is weak is strengthened by resting on what is strong, the soul is made strong by resting with her interior center upon the strengthening power of God. "Be thou, O my soul, subject to God: for from Him is my patience."(Psalm lxi, 6.) What is restless by nature can only be made calm and peaceful by union with what is calm and peaceful. We obtain peace from our trouble by union with the God of PEACE. "It is good for me to adhere to God, to set my hope on the LORD GOD."(Psalm lxxii, 28.) As we can only obtain stability of mind and heart by union with what is unchangeable, our soul obtains stability by union with the unchangeable God. The principle of that union is charity, and God has placed the power of patience in the gift of charity, that we may be able to adhere with our spirit to Him in a firm, stable and patient love. "Charity is patient."

Whatever is created is made for an object and an end which is different from itself, from which it receives its fullness, peace and perfection. God has created us for Himself, and only by union with God can we receive our fullness, peace and perfection. This union we seek in prayer, and by prayer we prepare ourselves for our eternal union with God.

II.

It is of great importance to understand what we ought to put into our prayer; for the value and merit of our good works depend less on their show than on the spirit and virtue put into them.

The first condition of prayer is attention, which word signifies a stretching forth. We stretch forth the ear to listen, the eye to see and the mind to understand.

The second condition is humility, whereby the soul is opened and made subject to God.

The third condition is faith in God, and trust that He will hear our prayer, and grant us according to His promises.

The fourth condition is the love of God, which makes our prayer generous and acceptable.

The fifth is obedience to the interior movements of the HOLY SPIRIT.

The sixth is patience. This virtue should be present throughout every good prayer.

III.

Let anyone who would feel the value of patient prayer take the "Our Father" or "The Creed," or a Hymn of the HOLY GHOST and repeat it slowly and attentively, with the heart on God and the mind on the sense of the prayer, and he will find, perhaps with some surprise, how much more light will come to his mind, how much more sweetness to his heart, how much nearer he will feel himself to God, than when these customary prayers are little better than gabbled without their full and solemn sense.

Patience is the Queen of the Soul. She is seated on the rock of fortitude. She conquers, and is never conquered. This virtue is the marrow of charity. By its presence we know whether the garment of charity with which we are clothed is the true nuptial garment or not. If this garment have rents in it, it is an imperfect garment, and impatience will escape through the rents.

Impatience springs from one of two causes: from spiritual death when the soul is in mortal sin; from imperfection of life

when the root of self-love is not mortified. Those imperfect souls live by grace, but they are tender about themselves, sensitive from sensuality and have a soft compassion for their own weakness. This leads them to murmuring, and to judging the wills of other persons. All this comes from self-love, and impatience is the proof of it. They love their own way, and what tongue can tell the troubles of self-will? In these self-willed persons the eye of the understanding is obscured; their faith, the very apple of the eye, is clouded with self-love, and they are unfaithful to their light. The impatience that follows makes them disobedient; this weakens their judgment; and this again leads them to murmuring. Although they live in grace their souls are imperfect; their self-love obscures their sight and their virtues are imperfect. Impatience is the habitual outcome of infidelity to what God ordains for us.

ON THE CHEERFULNESS OF PATIENCE

I.

There can be no better proof of a healthy soul than habitual cheerfulness. Christian cheerfulness is that modest, hopeful, and peaceful joy which springs from charity and is protected by patience. It is the well-regulated vigor of spiritual life that throws off all morbid humors and depressing influences, refusing them a lodgement in the soul devoted to God. Cheerfulness gives freedom to our thoughts and a generous spirit to our actions. It makes our services to God acceptable, and our services to our neighbor grateful. "God loveth the cheerful giver."(2 Corinthians ix, 7.)

This cheerfulness of soul springs from the divine good which God has placed within us, which acts within us, and of which we are partakers. Hence purity of conscience is a great promoter of cheerfulness, for when the conscience is clean the affections are pure. But the moving cause of cheerfulness is in the exercise of the virtues, especially as they are the ready servants of the joy of loving God. Yet even the joy of charity is very imperfect, and is often troubled, unless that charity be patient.

II.

If we had no greater joys than the world can give the body, or the body give the soul, we should be poor creatures indeed, nothing but animals. If we had no greater enjoyment than the material scientists can give us, we should be unhappy creatures. Poring into matter until they lose sight of their immortal souls, they materialize their souls, and wish to materialize us. Losing the power of ascending from the creature to the CREATOR, by an immense abuse of their intelligence they drown their souls in their senses, cast a

shadow of gloom and sadness over the world, and do their best to make it a dreary habitation for immortal souls.

The Christian soul lives in communion with God, and to that soul a prospect is opened into infinite and unchangeable truth. Within that soul a sense is opened that tastes the infinite and eternal good. What opens this eye to the soul? The light of faith descending from God. What awakes this sense in the soul? The grace of charity from the HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD. Can anything be so cheering to the soul as her growth in truth except her growth in good? As truth and good come to our soul from God, can anything secure their increase like prayer and communion with God? By this holy converse hope is ever growing of greater things to come. Unlike our converse with the world, it is inexhaustible in expectation of eternal good.

The children of the world who live for themselves, know nothing of the enjoyments of the children of grace who live for God. Bent upon the things beneath them, their enjoyment comes from nothing that is equal to their spiritual nature; and what they do enjoy contains the seeds of sadness and decay. Loving but mortal things with an immortal soul, they pervert the order of their nature until their desires contradict their wants. The flowers of their gladness fade and die, and the fruits of sadness come in their place.

III.

Nothing contributes more to cheerfulness than the habit of looking at the good side of things. The good side is God's side of them. But even on their human side, what makes them appear worse than they are is conferred on them by the envy, jealousy and malice of our hearts, falsely imagining that what depresses others exalts ourselves. Let patience keep down envy and repress the fancy of our own superiority.

Cheerfulness implies hope, courage, confidence in God, the turning a deaf ear to the complaints of self-love, and a certain

modest joy in the consciousness that in the hands of God, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," we are safe.

Why should we not rejoice in the good things of God? We can rejoice in the good things of the senses, why not in the good things of the soul? If the day is pure and serene we enjoy its gladness. Why should we not rejoice in the serene light of truth that shines from Heaven upon our minds? Why should we not delight in the beautiful gifts of God? Having an Almighty and most loving Father, let us rejoice in Him. Having a-most loving SAVIOR, very God of God, who has made Himself our brother, and feeds us with His life, we ought surely to rejoice in Him. Having the HOLY SPIRIT OF God with us, dwelling in us with wonderful condescension. making us His temples, and pouring His love into our hearts, we ought certainly to answer His love and rejoice in His overflowing goodness. Why should we ever set a gloomy face against a guest so beautiful and generous?

The great enemy of the soul is not trial but sadness, which is the bleeding wound of self-love.

"We may always rejoice," observes St. Chrysostom, "if we will only keep our head a little raised above the flood of human things."