

# CHRISTIAN MATURITY IN CLERICAL LIFE

## OUTLINE OF PART ONE

### I. THE MEANING OF MATURITY

(A) *Negatively*: the absence of childishness (1 Cor. 14:20).

- (1) Evangelical Simplicity
- (2) Ingredients of Childishness
  - (a) Childish Talk
  - (b) Childish Learning
  - (c) Childish Thinking
  - (d) Childish Uncleaness
  - (e) Childish Fickleness
  - (f) Childish Fears
  - (g) Childish Loves
  - (h) Childish Shamelessness

(B) *Positively*: adherence to God, the Supreme Good (1 Cor. 13:11).

- (1) Absolute Maturity: adherence to God, the Supreme Good, by Beatific Love.
- (2) Relative Maturity: ever increasing responsiveness to illuminating graces and habitual docility to the Spirit of Wisdom.
  - (a) The Goal of the Priest
  - (b) The Nature of Wisdom
  - (c) The Mode of Connaturality
  - (d) Gratuitous Gift in Apostolic Man
  - (e) Wisdom Among the Perfect
  - (f) The Works of Wisdom

#### PREFATORY SUMMARY BY DISCUSSION LEADER

Father Hennessy began the discussion with a brief summary of a paper on "The Meaning of Maturity." The paper was aimed at clarifying the notion of maturity as used in the present discussion. He proceeded as follows:

## I. THE MEANING OF MATURITY

(A) *Negatively*: the absence of childishness.

"Brethren, do not become children in mind, but in malice be children and in mind mature" (1 Cor. 14:20).

St. Thomas comments on this place: "Non ergo laudatur in vobis simplicitas quae opponitur prudentiae, sed simplicitas quae astutiae."

## (1) EVANGELICAL SIMPLICITY

The simplicity of children inculcated by Christ has nothing in common with childishness which is opposed to prudence. Thus we read in St. Leo: (Sermon 37)

"Amat Christus infantiam humilitatis magistram, innocentiae regulam, mansuetudinis formam. . . . Ut autem plene valeamus agnoscere quomodo apprehendi possit tam mira conversio et in puerilem gradum qua nobis mutatione redeundum sit, doceat nos beatus Paulus et dicat: 'Nolite pueri effici sensibus, sed malitia parvuli estote.' Non ergo *ad ludicra infantiae* et imperfecta nobis primordia revertendum est, sed aliquid, quod etiam graves annos deceat, inde sumendum, ut velox sit commotionum transitus, citus ad pacem recursus, nulla sit memoria offensionis, nulla cupiditas dignitatis, amor sociæ communionis, aequalitas naturalis. Magnum enim bonum est nocere non nosse et maligna non sapere; quia inferre ac referre injuriam, mundi huius prudentiae est; nemini autem malum pro malo reddere, christianae est aequanimitatis infantia. (PL. 54, 258-259).

From St. Leo's observations it can be gathered that the spirit of childhood commended by Christ is a guide to humility, a pattern of innocence and an exemplar of meekness. The foolish things of childishness have no part in Christian maturity. What we can learn from children are such lovable traits as the following: a native buoyancy which speedily throws off depressing troubles or agitation of mind, inability to nurse a grudge, a readiness to achieve a reconciliation, a refusal to take oneself too seriously, no expectancy of special deference, a love of companionable associations, a natural sense of fairness, and a frank avowal of equality. These are the ingre-

dients of wholesome spiritual infancy. The *ludicra infantiae* which the Apostle does not commend are well expressed by St. Thomas:

(2) THE INGREDIENTS OF CHILDISHNESS (*De Eruditione Principum* Bk. 5, c. 48).

(a) *Childish Talk*: Notandum quod octo sunt puerilia quae ab eis evacuanda sunt: quorum tria primo tangit Apostolus. Primum est *loqui pueriliter*, id est, sine praemeditatione. Loquuntur parvuli quidquid eis in os venerit; e contrario autem vir non loquitur sine praemeditatione. . . .

(b) *Childish Learning*: Secundo evacuandum est *sapere pueriliter*, id est, sapientem esse circa modica, ut sunt nuces, moneta plumbea, et similia. Hanc sapientiam habent illi qui circa temporalia bona quae modica sunt, sapientes sunt; circa spiritualia vero vel aeterna insipientes.

(c) *Childish Thinking*: Tertio evacuanda est *cogitatio puerilis*, quae est de solis presentibus. . . .

(d) *Childish Uncleaness*: Quarto evacuanda est a nobis *immunditia puerilis*. Solent pueri residere in luto et deturpare ornamenta sua, si qua habent. Similiter puerilitas in multis est qui sunt jam senes vel in virili aetate, et tamen non erubescunt morari in immunditia peccatorum suorum. (cf. also IIa IIae, Q. 81, a. 8, c)

(e) *Childish Fickleness*: Quinto evacuanda est a nobis *puerilis mutabilitas*, qualis est in illis qui una die aggrediuntur viam paradisi et alia die redeunt ad viam inferni; una die aedificant, alia die destruunt. Mutabilitas est signum stultitiae. . . . Vir justus debet in presenti quodmodo aeternitatem inchoare per constantiam et per perseverantiam. . . .

(f) *Childish Fears*: Sexto evacuandus est *timor puerilis*. Solent enim pueri falsa, ut socios suos larvatos; levia etiam magis timent quam gladium hostis. Talis puerilitas in multis senibus est qui divites sunt; qui velut homines larvati adeo timent, ut non audeant eis in aliquo contradicere. . . . Timor puerilis est eorum qui timent contemptum contemnendorum et irrisiones irridiendorum; qui non audent benefacere ne a malis irrideantur.

(g) *Childish Loves*: Septimo est evacuandus a nobis *amor puerilis*. Solent pueri concupiscere quaecumque pulchra quae vident, licet sint sibi nociva; unde quandoque arripiunt manu vel carbonem vel gladium propter pulchritudinem quam ibi vident.

(h) *Childish Shamelessness*: Octavo evacuanda est a nobis *invericundia puerilis*. Solent enim pueri mamillas invericunde a matre suscipere; qualis puerilitas est in eis, qui lac adulationis vel illicitae consolationis sibi oblatum invericunde suscipiunt.

Judging by these ingredients of childishness, it seems safe to say that a priest will be reprehensively childish when he (a) presumes to dogmatize about an astonishing number of intricate matters and assumes the mannerisms of an oracle, or (b) when he becomes a specialist in the insignificant and turns a hobby into an absorbing preoccupation, or (c) when he becomes so engrossed with available opportunities for recreation that he forgets that he must subsequently preach a Gospel of self denial, or (d) when he remains quite comfortable in the midst of attachments which befog his mind and deprive him of the cleanliness of heart which enables a man to see God, or (e) when undisciplined restlessness makes him flit from one fad or one project to another, unabashed by the mountain of unfinished business which is a monument to his inconstancy, or (f) when he compromises ingloriously because he is afraid to take a stand for principle, or (g) when he has a hierarchy of values which is an index to childish loves, or (h) when he is utterly shameless about a slavish addiction to sensible comforts or so susceptible to flattery that he laps up the "milk of adulation" with a boyish lack of discernment.

(B) *Positively*: Adherence to God, the Supreme Good. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child. Now that I have become a man, I have put away the things of a child. . . . Now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as I am known" (1 Cor. 13:11-13). St. Thomas comments on this place: Et est attendendum quod Apostolus hic comparat statum presentem pueritiae propter imperfectionem; statum autem futurae gloriae, propter perfectionem, virili aetate."

Hence St. Thomas here provides us with a foundation for subdividing Positive Maturity in Absolute Maturity and Relative Maturity.

(1) *Absolute Maturity*: adherence to God by Beatific Love. St. Thomas refers to this maturity when answering the

question: *Utrum charitas in hac vita esse perfecta possit?* He writes:

Ex parte vero diligentis tunc est charitas perfecta quando diligit tantum quantum potest. Quod quidem contingit tripliciter: uno modo sic quod totum cor hominis *actualiter semper feratur in Deum*: et haec est perfectio charitatis patriae, quae non est possibilis in hac vita, in qua impossibile est, propter humanae vitae infirmitatem, semper actu cogitare de Deo et moveri dilectione ad ipsum. (IIa IIae, Q. 24, a. 8, c.)

- (2) *Relative Maturity*: an ever increasing responsiveness to illuminating graces and habitual docility to the Spirit of Wisdom.

Continuing his observations on the perfectibility of charity in this life, St. Thomas says:

Alio modo ut homo studium suum deputet ad vacandum Deo et rebus divinis, pretermisiss aliis, nisi quantum necessitas presentis vitae requirit; et ista est perfectio charitatis quae est possibilis in via, non tamen est communis omnibus habentibus charitatem.

Finally, there is the perfection of charity which is common to all having the state of grace:

Tertio modo ita quod habitualiter aliquis totum cor suum ponat in Deo, ita scilicet quod nihil cogitet vel velit quod divinae dilectioni sit contrarium; et haec perfectio est communis omnibus charitatem habentibus.

The deputing of our zeal or earnestness to the attainment of that empty-heartedness which is the prerequisite to our being filled with the good things of God ought to be the preoccupation of the priest striving for relative maturity. The Ordination Ritual indicates the priest's call to this maturity and St. Thomas determines the ages of the spiritual life according to the "*diversa studia*" which characterize the respective wayfarers struggling toward the absolute maturity of beatific love.

(a) *Goal of the Priest*

In the ordination ritual the Church reminds the candidates that they were foreshadowed by the seventy men whom Moses chose as his helpers and that they will measure up to this calling only if they are "blameless and mature." Thus the Bishop says:

"... Vos quidem in septuaginta viris et senibus signati



estis: si per Spiritum septiformem, decalogum legis custodientes, probi et maturi in scientia similiter et opere eritis. . . ."

Then subsequently the Bishop prays that this maturity will go on increasing unto the measure of mature manhood in Christ. He prays:

" . . . et inviolabili caritate in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi, in die justi et aeterni iudicii Dei, conscientia pura, fide vera, Spiritu Sancto pleni resurgant."

The maturity required in him who is to be a custodian of the law demands the earnestness of one who is proficient or perfect in charity. Concerning the "*diversa studia*" of the three spiritual age brackets, St. Thomas writes:

Ita etiam diversi gradus charitatis distinguuntur *secundum diversa studia* ad quae homo perducitur per augmentum charitatis. Nam *primo* quidem incumbit homini studium principale ad recedendum a peccato et resistendum concupiscentiam ejus quae in contrarium charitatis movent; hoc pertinet ad incipientes, in quibus charitas est nutrienda vel fovenda, ne corrumpatur. *Secundum autem studium* succedit ut homo principaliter intendat ad hoc quod in bono proficiat; et hoc studium pertinet ad proficientes, qui ad hoc principaliter intendunt ut in eis charitas per augmentum roboratur. *Tertium autem studium* est ut homo ad hoc principaliter intendat ut Deo inhaereat et eo fruatur; et hoc pertinet ad perfectos qui cupiunt dissolvi et esse cum Christo. IIa IIae, Q. 24, a. 9, c.)

The growing up in Christ by which a man passes from infancy to maturity is fostered by the kindly direction of the Spirit of Christ who is intent upon engendering a likeness of Christ within us: "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6; cf. also IIa, IIae, Q. 45, a. 6, ad 1). And the culminating gift of the Spirit is the *Gift of Wisdom*, preeminently enriching the apostolic man.

(b) *Nature of Wisdom*

Concerning the nature of this Gift, St. Thomas remarks: (IIa IIae, Q. 45, a. 1):

Ille autem qui cognoscit causam altissimam simpliciter, quae est Deus, dicitur sapiens simpliciter, in quantum per

regulas divinas omnia potest judicare et ordinare. Huiusmodi autem iudicium consequitur homo per Spiritum Sanctum secundum illud (1 Cor. 2:15): "*Spiritualis iudicat omnia*"; quia sicut ibidem dicitur, "*Spiritus omnia scrutatur, etiam profunda Dei.*" Unde manifestum est quod sapientia est donum Spiritus Sancti.

(c) *Mode of Connaturality*

The distinctive feature of the Gift is to dispose us to judge rightly concerning all things with a kind of connaturality for the divine order of wisdom. St. Thomas writes (IIa IIae, Q. 45, a. 2 c):

. . . Sic ergo circa res divinas ex rationis inquisitionem rectum iudicium habere pertinet ad sapientiam quae est virtus intellectualis; sed *rectum iudicium habere de eis secundum quamdam connaturalitatem ad ipsas pertinet ad sapientiam secundum quod donum est Spiritus Sancti.*

After observing that there is a Gift of Wisdom necessary for all Christians for ordering their lives according to the divine plan of salvation and concluding with the words, "et hoc nulli deest sine peccato mortali existenti per gratiam gratum facientem," St. Thomas speaks of a Gift of Wisdom given for the benefit of others. It would appear to be a *necessary part of a priest's equipment.*

(d) *Gratuitous Gift in Apostolic Men*

Concerning this Gift which is given, not only for oneself, but also for the benefit of others, St. Thomas says (IIa IIae, Q. 45, a. 5, c):

Quidam autem altiori gradu percipiunt sapientiae donum, et quantum ad contemplationem divinorum, in quantum scilicet altiora quaedam mysteria et cognoscunt et *aliis manifestare possunt*; et etiam quantum ad directionem humanorum secundum regulas divinas, in quantum possunt secundum eas *non solum seipsos sed etiam alios ordinare*; et iste gradus sapientiae non est communis omnibus habentibus gratiam gratum facientem, sed magis pertinet ad gratias gratis datas, quas secundum illud (1 Cor. 12:8): "*Alii datur per Spiritum sermo sapientiae.*"

From his commentary upon two texts of St. Paul we can learn something about the way in which St. Thomas expected the maturity of wisdom to manifest itself. It is a solid structure of the spirit

unthreatened by any of those corrosive weaknesses stemming from childishness.

(e) *Wisdom among the Perfect*

Commenting upon St. Paul's words: "We speak Wisdom among the perfect" (1 Cor. 2:5), St. Thomas writes:

"Dicuntur autem perfecti *intellectu* illi, quorum mens elevata est super omnia carnalia et sensibilia, quia spiritualia et intelligibilia capere possunt, de quibus dicitur Heb. 5:14: '*Perfectorum est solidus cibus, eorum qui per consuetudinem exercitatos habent sensus ad discretionem mali et boni.*' Perfecti autem *secundum voluntatem* sunt quorum voluntas super omnia temporalia elevati soli Deo inhaeret et ejus praeceptis. Unde Matt. 5:48, praepositis dilectionis mandatis, subditur: '*Estote perfecti sicut et Pater vester celestis perfectus est.*' Quia igitur doctrina fidei ad hoc ordinatur, ut fides per dilectionem operetur . . . necesse est eum qui doctrina fidei disponi ad capiendum et credendum, etiam secundum voluntatem et affectum bene disponi ad diligendum et operandum." (*Commentarium super Primam Epistolam ad Cor.*)

Then in his commentary upon the verse referred to in the epistle to the Hebrews: "But solid food is for the mature, for those who by practice have their faculties trained to discern good and evil," the Angelic doctor delineates the characteristics of that maturity which enables a man to relish the Apostle's solid food. With this maturity comes the spiritual discernment of the Wise.

Unde in ista perfectione quatuor sunt attendenda, sc., *ipsa perfectio in se* in quo consistat, et quantum ad hoc dicit "*Qui habent sensus exercitatos.*" Et convenienter loquitur. In hoc enim exprimit utramque perfectionem, quia intellectus prout judicat de appetendis et agendis dicitur sensus; quia est relatus ad aliquid particulare, unde non accipitur hic sensus pro sensu exteriori. Qui ergo *sentit* quae Dei sunt, perfectus est. . . . Qui vero non sentiunt nisi carnalia, Deo placere non possunt. . . . *Secundo attendenda est dispositio ejus in quo est, quia debet esse exercitatus.* "*Exerce te ipsum ad pietatem.*" Qui enim non est exercitatus, non potest habere rectum iudicium, quod ad hoc requiritur. "*Vir in multis expertus, cogitavit multa.*" Item qui non est expertus, pauca recognoscit. *Tertio causa huius exercitationis est consuetudo, non, scilicet, otium, sed frequentia actus.* . . . Si ergo vis esse perfectus non des te otio, sed assuesce te bonis a



juventute. Quarto finis huius exercitii, quia, scilicet, "ad discretionem boni et mali." Sciat eligere bonum et reprobare malum.

(Commentarium super Epis. ad Heb.)

Finally, St. Thomas shows us how the wisdom of the mature who are gently led by the Spirit of Christ leaves them well-adjusted to all reality because their spiritual discernment enables them to order all things harmoniously according to the mind of God.

(f) *The Works of Wisdom*

He comments upon the words of St. James: "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, docile, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without pretence" (St. James, 3:17). His commentary is merely incidental to his answering an objection against his establishing a special relationship between the Gift of Wisdom and the seventh beatitude. He writes (IIa IIae, Q. 45, a. 6, ad 3):

Ad tertium dicendum quod, sicut jam dictum est, ad sapientiam, secundum quod est donum, pertinet non solum contemplari divina, sed etiam regulare humanos actus. In qua quidem directione primo occurrit remotio a malis, quae contrariantur sapientiae; unde et timor dicitur esse *initium sapientiae*, inquantum facit recedere a malis; ultimum autem est sicut finis, quo omnia ad debitum ordinem redigantur; quod pertinet ad rationem pacis. Et ideo convenienter Jacobus dicit, quod *sapientia quae desursum est*, quae est donum Sancti Spiritus, *primum est pudica*, quasi vitans corruptelas peccati; deinde autem *pacifica*, quod est effectus finalis sapientiae, propter quod ponitur beatitudo. Jam vero omnia quae sequuntur, manifestant ea per quae sapientia ad pacem perducit, et ordine congruo. Nam homini per pudicitiam a corruptelis recedenti primo occurrit quod, quantum ex se potest, modum in omnibus teneat; et quantum ad hoc dicitur *modesta*. Secundo, ut in his in quibus ipse sibi non sufficit, aliorum monitis acquiescat; et quantum ad hoc subdit, *suadibilis*. Et haec duo pertinent ad hoc quod homo consequatur pacem in seipso. Sed ulterius ad hoc quod homo sit pacificus etiam aliis, primo requiritur ut bonis eorum non repugnet; et hoc est quod dicit: *bonis consentiens*. Secundo quod defectibus proximi et compatiatur in affectu et subveniat in effectu; et hoc est quod

dicitur: *plena misericordia et fructibus bonis*. Tertio requiritur ut charitative emendare peccata aliorum sategat; et hoc est quod dicit, *judicans sine simulatione*, ne scilicet correctionem praetendens odium intendat explere.

Conscious of the far-reaching role which this heavenly wisdom must play in the life of a priest, the man who wants to increase "unto the measure of mature manhood in Christ," must submit to its saving bondage. The author of Ecclesiasticus wrote a stirring appeal for such a submission (Eccli. 6:24-32):

Give ear, my son, and take wise counsel and cast not away my advice. Put thy feet in her fetters and thy neck into her chains. Bow down thy shoulders and bear her, and be not grieved with her bands. Come to her with all thy mind, and keep her ways with all thy power.

Search for her, and she shall be made known to thee, and when thou has gotten her, do not let her go; for in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her, and she shall be turned into thy joy.

Then shall her fetters be a strong defense for thee, and a firm foundation, and her chain a robe of glory. For in her beauty of life, and her bands are a healthful binding. Thou shalt put her on as a robe, and thou shalt set her upon thee as a crown of joy.

## OUTLINE OF PART TWO

### II. THE PROBLEM OF MATURITY

*The Basic Question:* Are we really even approaching relative Christian Maturity?

#### (A) Alleged Deficiencies of the Clergy.

During the last three or four years Catholic literary craftsmen of recognized discernment (J. F. Powers, Harry Sylvester, Giovanni Papini, George Bernanos, Evelyn Waugh, Bruce Marshall, Frank O'Connor, etc.) have painted an unflattering picture of priestly immaturity. They have highlighted the petty but corrosive faults of the clergy. Is their picture a caricature?

#### (B) Actual Manifestations of Immaturity.

(1) Are there any petty moral deficiencies of the clergy which can definitely be labeled as "occupational" diseases?

(2) If so, what are they? Vanity? Laziness? Contented Mediocrity? Pompousness? Cynicism? Self-opinionatedness?

DIGEST OF THE DISCUSSION

(A) The discussion leader, at the request of Father Gallagher, S.J., read and commented upon typical passages from the authors under discussion. The portrayal of the modern priest by his more biting critics is revealed as a careful delineation of a professionally religious man who is nonetheless pompous and egotistical, lacking delicacy in human relations, self-opinionated and unobjective in his reasoning, arrested in his artistic development, possessing no agility of mind, and unresponsive to the tyranny of love.

Father Benard observed that not all the writers were endowed with equally admirable powers of discernment; some, like Sylvester and Papini, obviously lack well-tempered critical powers; yet there is hardly any fault highlighted by these literary critics which we cannot find either in ourselves or in some priest of our acquaintance.

After very little discussion the group was inclined to conclude that the portrayal of petty priestly faults, when taken cumulatively and repeated with the regularity due to a norm, is without doubt a caricature. But in the better exponents of this critical trend in Catholic letters, the focusing of attention upon clerical faults can frequently serve as a sobering challenge to the man who is intent upon growth in Christ.

(B) By way of inaugurating the group's own appraisal of actual manifestations of spiritual immaturity in clerical life, the discussion leader called upon Monsignor Murray to voice an opinion. Monsignor suggested that much retardation in Christian growth is attributable to parochialism; some of us have not learned to be Catholic-minded; our horizons are too narrow, our interests confined to the limits of a parish or a diocese.

Father Boyd, of Huntington Seminary, traced the origin of much mediocrity back to a lack of responsibility, initially engendered in the thoroughly comfortable modern home, allowed to persist throughout a seminary course, and then carried into the priesthood. He commented upon the seemingly more solid character of candidates who have worked for a few years before embarking on their studies.

Father Wyle, of New York, remarked that there is at times a certain unwillingness among us to accept the logical consequences of our priesthood. No condition that the priest faces leads inevitably to a compromise with mediocrity.

Monsignor Murray injected the observation that mediocrity stems frequently from the lack of a divine discontent; no real hunger for the things of God.

Father Aloysius McDonough, C.P., attributed some of the stunting of spiritual life to the intrusion of naturalism into the priestly life on numerous levels—in his apostolate, in his recreation, and in his everyday living.

Father Shannon, O.S.A., observed that a priest is geared to an authoritarian mentality from the very nature of his studies and from his preeminence as a moral leader. This authoritarianism may, through human frailty, sometimes be carried over into other fields in which the priest is not an authority. But the avoidance of such a fault can be better achieved by studying the great classics on the Priesthood than by giving too serious attention to intemperate critics. He especially recommended Monsignor Kirby's excellent work: *Prophets of a Better Hope*.

Father Spitzig, of Cleveland, reinforced Father Shannon's point by remarking that contemporary critics of the priesthood not infrequently inflate a temperamental weakness or a minor fault into the proportions of a mortal sin. What would be overlooked in another is lampooned unmercifully in the priest.

Father Hennessy, C.P., the discussion leader, gave his reasons for suggesting on the outline that if there is any moral delinquency which can be labeled an "occupational disease," it is perhaps vanity. Alleging that this fault is characteristic of people initially attracted to magnanimity or to the esteem that is due to the magnanimous man, he attributed the priest's special aptitude for being overtaken by this fault to three factors: his youthful appreciation of magnanimous undertakings for Christ, the subsequent impersonalism of his priestly apostolate unless he constantly sees the multitude focused into the likeness of Christ, and the danger of frantically snatching for substitutes for a heart-filling love of Christ Himself. Relying on St. Thomas' portrait of the magnanimous man (as delineated in

IIa IIae, Q. 129, art. 3, ad 3 and 5; art. 4, ad 3), Father Hennessy contrasted this greatness of stature with the pettiness of typical clerical counterfeits of the magnanimous man.

Father Benard, of Catholic University, warned against a danger of generalization when discussing the complicated psychological processes of the vain man. An overconcern about honor or esteem may not be the only index to vanity; it might manifest itself in a man's becoming a studious disdainer of all honors.

Father Hennessy agreed with Father Benard on the manifold manifestations of self deceit in the vain man and after remarking that St. John Chrysostom in his treatise on the Priesthood considered vanity the most dangerous rock besetting the course of the navigator who must pilot a cargo of souls to the haven of eternity, the discussion leader read a long passage in which Chrysostom points out the mischievous fertility of this petty vice of vanity. Among the wild beasts inhabiting the rock of vanity, St. John lists: strife, intrigue, hypocrisy, imprecations against those who have done no harm, delight in the unseemly behavior of fellow-priests, sorrow at their successes, desire for praise, yearning for honors, paying sordid court, ignoble flattery, fawning upon the rich, disdain for the poor, loss of freedom of speech, the suppression of convictions and reproof, and servile fear befitting only the meanest of slaves. (*De Sacerdotio*, Bk. 3, c. 9; PG, 26, 646.) (For similar observations cf. also St. Gregory: *Regulae Pastoralis Liber*, Pars Secunda, c. 8, PL, 77, 42.)

Father Yelle, of Grande Seminaire, remarked that St. Chrysostom's indictment, for all its severity, was notably more temperate and well reasoned than an outburst like the passage from Papini's *Letters of Pope Celestine VI*.

### OUTLINE OF PART THREE

#### III. THE CAUSES OF CLERICAL IMMATURITY

*Basic Question:* Is it possible to assign causes without undue generalization?

What causality can be attributed to:

(A) Hazards to Emotional Maturity in Seminary Training?

(1) Premature Adulation



- (2) Comparative Irresponsibility
  - (3) Overprotective Atmosphere
  - (4) Intellectual Passivity
  - (5) Expectancy of Easy Success
- (B) Inroads of Naturalism in the Priestly Apostolate?
- (C) Failure to appreciate the Redemptive Value of the Evangelical Counsels?
- (1) Preservative Function of the Evangelical Counsels.  
(S. T. IIa IIae, Q. 184, a.3; Q. 186, a.7.)
  - (2) Redemptive Value of the Evangelical Counsels.  
(*Commentaria S. Thomae super Epistolas Pauli* in Phil. 2:5; 2 Cor. 8:9; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 1:5-6; Gal. 5:17; 5:24; 2 Cor. 4:10-12; S. T. III, Q. 48, a. 5, ad 3.)
    - (a) The Apostolate and Poverty.
    - (b) The "Positiveness" of Consecrated Chastity (*Roman Pontical: De Consecratione Virginum*).
    - (c) The Heroism of Obedience.

#### DIGEST OF THE DISCUSSION

(A) The discussion leader prefaced this part of discussion by an observation on the very nature of a seminary. He remarked that a seminary is designed to provide an atmosphere which will protect the seminarian from threats to his unearthly idealism and will provide a relatively carefree existence wherein leisurely opportunity for prayer and study is abundantly provided. Yet without finding fault with the seminary ideal itself, it will not be out of place to ask whether or not there are any hazards to emotional maturity which are almost inevitable in a seminary atmosphere. If so, what can be done to forestall their mischief? He commented briefly on the five hazards suggested in the outline; in summary his remarks were: (1) *premature adulation* threatens the maturity of some seminarians because in the normal Catholic environment a boy's mere desire to be a priest already sets him on a pedestal and guarantees him a considerable amount of admiration and prestige; (2) his *comparative irresponsibility* is not an unmixed asset since he gets used to having his needs provided for him almost automatically; if there is financial

worry, or sickness, or domestic turmoil at home, all this is studiously kept from his knowledge lest he be plagued by needless worry; (3) the *ultraprotective atmosphere* of the seminary dispenses him from having to take a stand for integrity in the same way that a sincere Catholic of his own age must do in a secular environment, and his acquisition of good habits is imposed upon him by disciplinary rules; (4) a certain *intellectual passivity* is an almost unavoidable concomitant of his assurance of finding much greater learning and unquestioned intellectual honesty in his priest-professors; and (5) he enjoys an *expectancy of easy success* unknown to candidates to any other profession; simply by becoming a priest he is assured of having an expectant clientele waiting to receive him and predisposed to take him into their hearts with an enthusiasm born of faith.

Monsignor Murray remarked that he is inclined to approve the observation of a critic who maintained that some clerical piety engenders a sense of Byzantinism in the onlookers. They discover there a stiffness which comes from having lived in too closed-in a world.

Father Benard referred to Bernanos' contention that seminary training freezes the clerical mind in an adolescent mold. He defined the adolescent mentality as an ambivalent attitude toward society, at one moment claiming the rights of a man and at another taking refuge from responsibility in an appeal to the freedom of boyhood. He maintained that not infrequently the attitudes of superiors themselves cultivate this ambivalence in seminary students.

Monsignor Murray corroborated Father Benard's point on the shortcomings of superiors in demanding maturity from subjects on one occasion and then treating them like irresponsible children on another. He remarked that there were also some deficiencies in methods of treatment and training accorded to the different age groups among the seminarians, the training methods not being properly graduated.

Father Gallagher, S.J., maintained that a major deficiency in seminary training for maturity in priestly life is the failure to include courses on purely natural attainments like administration of property; he also maintained that priests frequently diminish

their effectiveness because of a lack of natural virtues such as an ability to handle people with proper gentility.

Father Hennessy objected to an emphasis on the natural virtues in training the seminarian for genteel relations with the people. He maintained that boorishness in a priest is definitely a sin and that there is no relationship between priest and people which is not covered by some supernatural virtue and that consequently, far from stressing the importance of natural virtue, we should lay greater emphasis on the potential parts of the moral virtues such as affability, gratitude, etc., which in the priest should be movements of supernatural justice under the dominion of charity.

Father Gallagher referred to his experience as a teacher of college boys and remarked that in retrospect he felt that the professor who helped him most by way of preparing him for his work was a man who stressed three points in his lectures: (a) the importance of developing a sense of responsibility; (b) methods of handling boys, and (c) the role of the natural virtues in a teacher.

Father Hughes, O.P., observed that in discussing hazards to maturity in seminary training we must be careful not to confuse the Pauline concept of maturity with a concept of maturity which demands freedom from all childish peccadillos. Even the priest with childish faults has the Pauline concept of maturity verified in himself because his will is not fixed in malice but rather fixed on eternity. Hence there can be fundamental maturity even with deliberate attachments. In an effort to eliminate the latter we should not resort to adding more courses but rather should stress the sapiential aspect of theology.

Father Benard commented on Father Hughes' observation by pointing out that even in the Pauline concept of maturity, as evidenced in the text (1 Cor. 14:20), there are two elements in the maturity under discussion, the basic maturity essential to the state of grace and the maturity which amounts to an absence of childish sins. The clerical shortcomings delineated by a man like Powers may be in themselves mere peccadillos but nonetheless the delineation of them is frightening in its accuracy.

(B) Father Hennessy, the discussion leader, inaugurated the group's treatment of the next point in the outline by asking what

causality could be attributed to naturalism in the unhappy business of making priests spiritually immature. He suggested that a workable definition of naturalism as applied to the this context might be taken from Lagrange who describes it in these words: "Natural activity, though not plainly reprehensible, would not hesitate to push its own development to the detriment of the life of grace. What is generally meant by natural activity in ascetical writings is activity insufficiently subordinated to our last supernatural end, unsanctified activity, activity stemming almost entirely from an extroverted temperament, from natural enthusiasm, poorly disciplined curiosity, and a need for diversion, influence, and recognized and enjoyed success. People of this type, while no doubt doing good, unconsciously tend to make themselves the center of things, to attract souls to themselves rather than to God." With this description in mind, Father Hennessy maintained that many of the clerical foibles which we already discussed owe their hardiness to intrusions of naturalism into the priestly apostolate.

Father McDonough, C.P., maintained that the problem perhaps goes even deeper than to the intrusions of naturalism but ultimately goes back to our failure to identify clearly the proper area of the natural and the supernatural and to bring them into an organic relationship.

Father Boyd, of Huntington, observed that candidates for the priesthood are products of their own generation and are predisposed to a crippling naturalism by the soft life experienced at home and which the average young person looks upon as a kind of birthright.

Father Gallagher, S.J., agreed with Father McDonough and reaffirmed his contention that certain natural endowments for leadership have to be learned and the learning of them should stem from their having been designedly taught.

Father Hennessy responded to Father Gallagher's viewpoint by asserting that the whole realm of the natural virtues ought to be transfigured in the life of a Christian. He quoted Arintero, O.P., as focusing the relationship between natural and supernatural virtues when he wrote: "Although the infused virtues have the same material object as the acquired virtues they transfigure that object and give it a new being by the very fact that they have an origin, end,

power, and mode of working that are very superior and of a distinct order."

Father Benard remarked that the infused supernatural virtues do not, like an acquired virtue, give facility of operation. Hence that facility has to be acquired by a repetition of acts of virtue. The acquired facility of a naturally good habit is a predisposition to that supernatural facility of operation which comes from repeated actualization of the infused virtues by actual grace. Consequently there is a danger of obscurantism in one's taking too demeaning an attitude toward natural virtue. On the other hand, it cannot be forgotten that a good Christian is not synonymous with an educated man.

Father Gallagher corroborated Father Benard's statement and asked why we should not work on both natural and supernatural virtues since their relationship is so closely interwoven.

Father Hennessy responded by saying that it seemed to him that in as much as we are obliged in all our conscious acts to be motivated in some way by our supernatural end, the deliberate cultivation of a merely natural moral virtue for its own sake is unworthy of an adult Christian in the state of grace. He should be actualizing the supernatural moral virtue pertinent to the matter at hand, with the help of God's normal outpouring of actual grace. Far from being a prerequisite for facility of operation in the realm of the supernatural moral virtues, the natural moral virtues ought to take their roots and increase as by-products of the practice of the supernatural virtues. Or if they exist antecedently, their seemingly natural operation should be, and probably is, supernaturalized under the influence of a virtual intention stemming from charity. If this virtual influence of charity were not there, the natural moral virtues would be nothing better than the very naturalism which causes havoc in our Christian lives.

Father Hughes, O.P., continued along a similar strain of thought and pointed out the need for transforming all natural activity through supernatural motivation.

(C) There was little communal discussion on this third point of the outline. Following the guidance of St. Thomas, the discussion leader simply pointed out the difference between the preserva-



tive functions and the redemptive value "of the evangelical counsels and made observations on the need for stressing their redemptive value." Then after a reference to paragraphs 44, 12, and 105 of Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis* (NCWC edition), he observed that the redemptive value of the evangelical counsels rests upon the whole redemptive plan of God. Consequently for a better appreciation of the role of the evangelical counsels in the life of the priest, we should recall the teaching of St. Paul and St. Thomas on five distinct points: (a) the notion of sacrifice in the redemptive plan (Phil. 2:5); (b) the idea of co-redemption (Col. 1:24); (c) the cross embedded in every fallen nature (Gal. 5:17); (d) mystic crucifixion as the price of fidelity (Gal. 5:24; 2 Cor. 4:10-12), and (e) the preeminent role of the apostolic man in redemptive activity (2 Cor. 1:5-6). Application of this doctrine to priestly poverty, chastity, and obedience was drawn from Cardinal Suhard's Lenten Pastoral of 1949.

#### OUTLINE OF PART FOUR

##### IV. THE REMEDIES FOR CLERICAL IMMATURITY

*Basic Question:* How can we achieve a closer union between our intellectual and spiritual life?

What benefits could be expected from a greater emphasis on:

- (A) The Centrality of Christ Crucified in the Integration of Sacred Wisdom?
- (B) The Inseparability of Christ's Priesthood from His Role as a Victim?
- (C) The Role of the Cross in the Work of Christ?
  - (1) In relation to God, His Father.
  - (2) In relation to Himself.
  - (3) In relation to Man.
  - (4) In relation to Man's Enemies.

##### *Digest of the Discussion*

At this point in the discussion the time allotted for the seminar was almost entirely consumed, so Father Burke, C.S.P., who was

acting as secretary, asked Father Hennessy to comment upon his own first suggestion for achieving a closer union between our intellectual and spiritual life.

Father Hennessy attempted to show what he meant by a greater emphasis upon the centrality of Christ Crucified in the integration of sacred wisdom. He observed that the cross of Christ, as we know from St. Paul, is the summation of the wisdom of God. God's own divine pedagogy concretized and epitomized His message to men in the vision of His crucified Son. Consequently, we should expect to be able to integrate the sacred wisdom we are attempting to teach to our students by constantly centering each tract of theology around Christ Crucified. Very frequently it seems that the theological learning of the students is kept in isolated compartments; they do not see the implications of dogma in every day Christian living, hence there is need for greater integration and it can be admirably achieved by "looking on Jesus Crucified, the author and finisher of our faith."

Father Burke observed that this would be rather difficult to do, especially when teaching a tract like *De Deo Trino*.

Father Hennessy replied that he thought it would be quite easy since the tract on the Trinity provides an ideal opportunity to explain the notion of holiness in God, the sheer ungodliness of sin, and the special fitness of the Son to be our redeemer because of His position in the interior life of the Blessed Trinity. In fact, this is what St. Thomas himself does when commenting upon Hebrew 1:3.

Father Hughes, O.P., remarked that it seemed to him that Father Hennessy's emphasis would amount to changing the formal object of theology.

Father Hennessy assured the group that his emphasis upon the centrality of Christ Crucified in the work of integrating theology in the minds of the students was in no way meant to be a divergence from St. Thomas' teaching on the nature of theology as set forth in the first question of the *Summa*. It would simply amount to a greater awareness of the fact that Christ Crucified stands at the very heart of God's revelation of Himself to mankind and consequently the various tracts of theology can be best integrated by tying them together around the central truth of redemption.

Father Burke responded by saying that this would perhaps be no more than a pronounced emphasis upon what Tanquerey used to call "corollaria pietatis."

Father Noonan, S.M., remarked that he agreed with Father Hennessy that these corollaries of piety should center around Christ Crucified because the priest is called to be the external instrument and sign of Christ and consequently he inevitably has the duty to reproduce Christ Crucified in the contemporary world.

Father Hennessy made a few concluding observations on the role of the cross in Christ's work and in the work of the priesthood, expressed his appreciation of the co-operation of the fathers attending the seminar, and thanked Father Burke for his kindness in acting as secretary.

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