

the tribunal of the Apostolic Process nominated. The following year the exhumation took place under the Presidency of the Auxiliary of Paris. It was with deep thankfulness to Almighty God that the Little Sisters learnt that the body of their beloved Mother Foundress had been found incorrupt. This was the more remarkable having regard to the nature of her last illness, and to the fact that the crypt where she lay had been inundated by floods some years before. So yet another of the daughters of St. Dominic is in the process of being raised to the Altars of the Church. Meanwhile, her daughters are living embodiments of that Christian Social Action united to, and springing from, a vital spiritual life which, necessary as it was in the last century, is even more the need of the world to-day.

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THE SPIRITUAL MAN¹

The Spirit breatheth where He will, and thou hearest His voice; but thou knowest not whence He cometh or whither He goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.

(JN. iii, 8.)

CAJETAN rightly observes that in these words our Lord, describing the way and state of the Spirit, described also the way and state of the spiritual man. Now, since Christ our Lord, the very truth, declares most plainly that this is the case of everyone who is born of the Spirit, we should conclude that the state of the spiritual man, as formed by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, cannot be explained in any better way than by the similitude here employed by our Lord.

Note, therefore, that this text lays down three conditions for the state of the spiritual man.

¹ From John of St. Thomas: *Cursus Theologicus in Iam II æ, D. Thomæ, D.XVIII, De donis Spiritus Sancti. Art. 1.*

First, there is the inward disposition of his soul, indicated by the words: *The Spirit breatheth where he will.*

Secondly, there is the outward communication of the Spirit, indicated by the words: *And thou hearest his voice.*

Thirdly, there is the secret impulse and hidden influence of God, of which we can have no full or certain knowledge, indicated by the words: *But thou knowest not whence he cometh or whither he goeth.*

1. The *first condition* is explained in this manner. The inward disposition by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which is enacted in the soul of the spiritual man and distinguishes him from other men, has this result, that such a man feels himself very free, willing and unhampered in his actions, delivered from all darkness, impediment, or constraint. As St. Paul says: *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty* (II Cor. iii, 17). Whereas the souls of men are bound and shackled by the bonds and fetters of sin, the first thing that the Spirit does when it enters a man is to burst the bonds of sin which bind him and to break asunder the iron bars that clamp his hard heart. Thereupon a man feels himself relieved as of a heavy burden and set free for quick and ready action. Nay, he takes the wings of a dove and flies and finds his rest in solitude (Ps. liv, 7, 8). There is, indeed, no rest for the heart but in flight to God; and Isaias says that the Seraphim at God's throne *stood and flew* (vi, 2).

But, lest we should commit the error of thinking that those born of the Spirit are moved by some wild impulse, like men possessed, our Lord requires as the first condition for the way of the Spirit that it *breatheth where it will*, signifying thereby that to be born of the Spirit does not destroy freedom of choice but confers it. Much merit, indeed, would be lost if the Spirit did not act by breathing upon the will and encouraging its bent, but were to determine it and work upon it in violent fashion. Therefore St. Paul says that *the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets* (I Cor. xiv, 32); that is (as St. Thomas explains) their prophetic spirit is subject in its manifestation to the will of the prophets, and they are not beside themselves like men possessed. And so it is that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to us in the form of habitual

dispositions (*habitus*), in order that we may be moved to those actions, to which the Spirit guides us, in a rational and voluntary manner. Consequently, those who are led by the Spirit are not moved as slaves but as freemen. They are willing and voluntary agents. By principles which are within themselves, yet derived from the Spirit, they are led to those operations which in their measure and compass exceed the ordinary mode of human action. The soul of the spiritual man is inwardly disposed in such a way that he moves freely and willingly in the way of the Spirit. Therefore, if a man does not feel himself unimpeded and willing in the things of the Spirit, but it irks him to abstain from luxuries and pleasures and he easily lapses into them, it is a sign that he is not strongly or perfectly moved and breathed upon by the Holy Spirit through the means of His Gifts.

2. The *second condition* requisite for the spiritual state is indicated in the words: *And thou hearest his voice*. Cajetan says that our Lord here means that the man who is born of the Spirit and moved by the Spirit manifests the fact perceptibly in his words, for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (Mt. xii, 34). For if a man who is born of the Spirit be truly of the Spirit, then all his outward, perceptible actions, and especially his voice and words, will proceed from the Spirit and be redolent of the Spirit. He will scarcely speak of anything but of God or in relation to God. Therefore it is plain that the inward spiritual man is chiefly manifested in his outward behaviour and the control of his outward senses, and especially in his voice and conversation. As St. James says: *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man* (iii, 2). Consequently the mortification of the tongue, that is, moderation in speech, and especially if such speech be concerned only with the things of God and the Spirit, is the chief sign that a man is guided and controlled by the inward Spirit. But when we hear no sound of the Spirit in a man's voice, when he gladly turns aside to hear and speak of things delectable and vain, such a one has little share of the Spirit.

3. The *third condition* is indicated in the words: *But thou knowest not whence he cometh or whither he goeth*.

This sentence designates the profound mystery of the Spirit that inwardly moves and directs us, without our being able to discern its source, path, or goal. Nevertheless, it penetrates into all the inmost secrets; for, as St. Paul says: *The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God* (I Cor. ii, 10). And so (says Cajetan) men may hear the voice and see the works of the spiritual man, but they do not know with clear knowledge either the divine source whence he comes or the divine goal whither he is going. By this we should learn that we ought not to be disturbed if we be not always certain of what spirit our actions are, especially when we are engaged in arduous and extraordinary tasks. Although the Spirit very often inwardly moves us, stimulates us, and impels us forward, yet we cannot fully know whence it comes or whither it goes—that is to say, its source and its goal. Thus does the Spirit of God elude our knowledge. It happens to many, who would wish to act in all that they do with the greatest security and certitude, that they often from narrowness of heart hesitate to follow these motions of the Holy Spirit, and so they become less apt to be moved to the undertaking of great and difficult enterprises. Let them enlarge their hearts and have great trust in God and in the power of His inward assistance.

JOHN OF ST. THOMAS.

Translated by Dom Justin McCann.