

Article X.

This Apostolic Constitution in no wise alters the laws and obligations of Institutes already in existence, no matter whether they were founded by Bishops in consultation with the Holy See or approved direct by the Holy See.

These aforementioned things we proclaim, declare and sanction; likewise we decree this Apostolic Constitution always to be and to continue to be permanent, valid and in force; further, we decree that its enactments will prevail and obtain, notwithstanding all things (no matter how important) to the contrary. Therefore, no one may lawfully infringe this Constitution, which we promulgate, nor transgress it with impunity.

Given at St Peter's in Rome on the second day of February, the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 1947, the eighth of our Pontificate.

PIUS PP. XII.

THREE SHEWINGS OF GOD'S LOVE

BY

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THE opening words of the Catholic Catechism give a very simple answer to the enquiry concerning the origin and purpose of man. 'Who made you? God made me.' Here we are immediately confronted with the problem of our own origin, since as soon as our minds awaken from the slumbers of unconsciousness, we become supremely aware that we are alive, and seek for an explanation. The question then arises, 'Why are you alive?' And the correct answer must be, 'Because God loves me'. God's love is creative and the cause of things. But it may be asked, 'Why does God love you?' The answer to this query is found in the fact that God is what he is. He is infinite goodness, and wills to communicate himself to others. St Thomas has said, 'to love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing'. (I, 20, 2.) It was by an act of love that 'God made me out of nothing by his word'. Moreover not only does God create, but he preserves in being whatsoever he has made; 'In him we live, and move, and are', says St Paul (Acts. 17, 28). Each living soul is indeed an immediate and distinct creation of God, and because of its immortality it can never die

or suffer extinction. God 'gives to all of us life, and breath and all we have' (Acts, 17, 25). He is the Maker, the Keeper, and the Lover.

Then, 'Why did God make you?' 'What does he expect of you?' The answer surely is, 'God made me to know him, love him, and serve him in this world, and to be happy with him for ever in the next'. The ultimate purpose or reason why God created man is the enjoyment of eternal bliss. Heaven is the reward held out for services rendered. The mainsprings of vital service due to God, are knowledge coming from Faith, and love born of Charity. The just man lives by Faith, i.e., his inner convictions and beliefs are the driving force and guide to his life and behaviour. '*Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum*', 'Thy word is a lantern to my feet' (Ps. 118).

The human response to the realisation of creatureliness (i.e. utter dependence on God as Creator) is worship. Worship is the effort to give back to God something of that which he himself has bestowed. It is inspired by Faith, Hope, and Charity, whereby, 'I must believe in him, I must hope in him, and I must love him, with my whole heart', as a condition for salvation. The highest expression of this self-abasement or worship is found in sacrifice. In the new dispensation the supreme and most perfect sacrifice is that of Calvary, which is renewed or re-enacted in the Mass. It is made available to us, and may be said to be ours in a very real sense, not simply because Christ our Lord is of our flesh and blood, or even because he is divine, but because God in his loving providence has from eternity so ordained. In reality the whole divine plan as unfolded in the Christian dispensation is not only a manifestation of an infinite might which is inevitable and irresistible, it is also a disclosure (or revelation) of God's love for his creatures. 'He hath made us only to himself, and restored us by his blessed Passion, and keepeth us in his blessed love; and all this is of his Goodness.' (Julian of Norwich, *Revelations*, Ch. V.)

Assuredly the simple acceptance of a creed, or the assent to certain Christian propositions or formulas as true, is not integral Christianity. Christianity is essentially a life, modelled on Christ the divine exemplar. As the human and divine are combined within Christ himself, for he is perfect God and perfect man, so the Christian life includes within it elements which are divine as well as human. That Christ-life cannot be lived by purely human effort; it is dependent at every point and stage on divine ministration at its birth and in its growth. For this no amount of human planning will do, nor will the ideal be realised simply by throwing oneself into

social activities, however good these may be in themselves. Rather is it a question of being subdued by grace, and of yielding consciously to a moulding process wrought by God's hand, through which he alone can create the pattern of his own design. There is need of passivity, of 'being humbled under the mighty hand of God,' of becoming pliable to God's moulding influence upon which Christian formation depends. St Paul wrote to the Romans, 'we are well assured that everything helps to secure the good of those who love God, those whom he has called in fulfilment of his design. All those who from the first were known to him, he has designed from the first to be moulded into the image of his Son, who is thus to become the eldest-born among many brethren.' (Rom. 8, 29.) By the self-same eternal and irrevocable act on the part of God, both Jesus Christ (God-made-man) and we were pre-ordained to, or 'designed for' eternal life. (cfr. III, 24, 4.) And by an eternal destiny God foreordained that our salvation should be fulfilled through Jesus Christ our Lord (*ibid.*). Or in other words, according to St Paul, 'He has chosen us out, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be saints, to be blameless in his sight, for love of him; marking us out beforehand (so his will decreed) to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ. Thus he would manifest the splendour of that grace by which he has taken us into his favour in the person of his beloved Son.' (Ephes. I, 5-6.) This loving design of God is centred in Jesus Christ, and in us inasmuch as we are Christ's members.

Evidently our creation is more than the happening of coming forth into being out of primordial nothingness, it is an act of grace, by which God 'has taken us into his favour in the person of his beloved Son'.

This truth becomes the more striking and impressive if we consider that it is not as though we had first loved God; but he has loved us first, and 'sent out his Son to be an atonement for our sins' (1 Jn. 4, 10). 'Enemies of God, we were reconciled to him through his Son's death; reconciled to him, we are surer than ever of finding salvation in his Son's life' (Rom. 5, 10). As St Paul reflects, 'It is hard enough to find anyone who will die on behalf of a just man, although perhaps there may be those who will face death for one so deserving. But here, as if God meant to prove how well he loves us, it was while we were all sinners that Christ, in his own appointed time, died for us' (Rom. 5, 7-8).

Revelation is the divine means which enables us to know what God is like. In the New Testament God has revealed himself as love, '*Deus caritas est*'—'God is charity: and he that abideth in

charity abideth in God, and God in him' (1 Jn. 4, 16). The divine love is based on the fulness of his goodness. Because God is infinitely good in himself he is infinitely lovable, and he loves himself first with an infinite love. God's love is not a passion, it is not an activity aroused by the perception of something outside himself, it is an act of his will necessitated by the very goodness of his nature. It is impossible for him not to love himself, and his goodness is so compelling in its lovableness that he loves himself of necessity. Without any selfishness, the love of God is centred in himself, and is identified with himself as the sovereign good, which is to be preferred above all else. Even if God had created nothing it would still be true that God is love.

It is characteristic of goodness that the more perfect it is the more it will strive to communicate itself most intimately and completely. It strives to give and to impart that which itself possesses. '*De ratione boni est, quod se aliis communicet*' (III, 1, 1). Thus in the physical order the sun diffuses abroad its all-pervading heat and light; plants and animals engender a life which is similar to their own. The saint will strive to arouse that enthusiasm and holiness in others which he already has. This principle is pre-eminently verified of God.

Within the life of the Blessed Trinity the Eternal Father, by necessity of the Godhead, imparts to his Son by an eternal begetting the whole goodness of the divine nature which is his. The Father and the Son in a mutual divine embrace breathe forth love, which is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit of love.

But there is another type of love in God which does not spring up out of the necessity of his nature, but is a free act of giving to others out of his bounty. With an abundance of love God has elected to give others a share in his riches. Yet God has no need of us, and the creation of the universe makes God no greater than he already is.

The generosity and fecundity of God's love are revealed in three outstanding ways. (1) By the creation of man, and his elevation to the supernatural life of grace, (2) by the Incarnation, and (3) by the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

We may apply our principles briefly to each of these three in turn.

(1) *Creation*: God made all things for his own honour and glory. He shows his love for the things that he made by imparting to them as it were by way of reflection something of his own goodness, being and life. The end of creation is the divine goodness. St Thomas explains the manner in which the parts of creation are related to

each other and to God as their final end: 'If we wish to assign an end to any whole, and to the parts of that whole, we shall find first that each and every part exists for the sake of its proper function, as the eye for the function of seeing; secondly, that less honourable parts exist for the more honourable, as the senses for the intellect, the lungs for the heart; and thirdly, that all parts are for the perfection of the whole, as the matter for the form, since the parts are, as it were, the matter of the whole. Furthermore, the whole man exists for the sake of an extrinsic end, that end being the fruition of God. So, therefore, in the parts of the universe also every creature exists for its own proper function and perfection, and the less noble for the nobler, as those creatures that are less noble than man exist for the sake of man, whilst each and every creature exists for the perfection of the entire universe. Furthermore, the entire universe, with all its parts, is ordained towards God as its end, inasmuch as it imitates, as it were, and shows forth the divine goodness, to the glory of God. Reasonable creatures, however, have in some special and higher manner God as their end, since they can reach him through the functioning of their own powers, by knowing and loving him.' (I, 65, 2). The abundant generosity of God is shown by the fact that he acts not for his own utility but solely for the sake of his own goodness (I, 44, 4 ad 1.) God loves all existing things because he infuses and creates the goodness which they themselves possess. (I, 20, 2.) Nor does the fact that he permits evil militate against God's goodness and love, for as St Augustine expresses it, 'So great is the goodness of God that he will not permit a shadow of evil, unless it were within his power out of evil to draw good'. (*Enchiridion*, cap. xi.)

But furthermore, Christian revelation tells us that we are made to live by a life which is altogether above our own natural life. God always intended us to live a supernatural life, and has set before us a supernatural end. This life we can neither merit nor earn, since it is a free gift from God, which is on that account named grace. It is a newness of life making us 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter, 1, 4), and enabling us to know and love God in ways in which a man cannot know and love him by his own natural forces. As with all life it is destined to grow strong, to spread and to triumph, until at length it issues forth into the vision of God. 'At present', says St Paul, 'I see as by means of a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in a fragmentary way, but then I shall know even as I am known.' (1 Cor. 13.)

The gift of grace was bestowed on our first parents to be trans-

mitted to their posterity, but it was lost by the Fall. That new life has now to be regained by our being incorporated afresh into Christ the Second Adam, who as the God-man, is the source of life itself.

(2) *The Incarnation*: The mystery of the Word made flesh. 'God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.' (Jn. 3, 16.) In a manner far surpassing that of creation God has manifested his love by bestowing on mankind his most precious gift of all, his own Son. Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. He was sent forth into the world by his Eternal Father to redeem us from sin and hell, by the pouring out of his life's blood, and to be to us 'the way, the truth and the life.' It befits God, who is the highest good, to communicate himself in the highest and most intimate way. This he has done by sending the divine person of the Son to be tabernacled in our human nature; 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'. The Son in his turn out of obedience to his father and out of an undying love for souls, as priest and victim offered himself as redemptive sacrifice on the altar of the Cross. 'Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (Jn. 15, 13). God willed to shower his own goodness on the human race by requiring of his Son an heroic act of love in reparation for the sins of the world. Christ's love was so great and infinite in worth that he gained the victory over sin and over death itself, 'death no longer hath a mastery over him'.

(3) *The Holy Eucharist*: 'Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' (Jn. 13, 1.) Before leaving this world Christ our Lord at the Last Supper instituted the Holy Eucharist to be both a sacrifice and a sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament is therefore as it were a prolongation of the Incarnation. As a sacrifice we have Calvary brought into our very midst, that its fruits may be applied to our very souls. As a sacrament Christ is truly present in the vesture of bread and wine. Our faith tells us that the Blessed Sacrament contains the body and the blood, the soul and divinity of Christ. He gives himself to be the food and nourishment of souls. In the words of the Council of Trent, 'Our Saviour, when about to depart out of this world to the Father, instituted this Sacrament, in which he poured forth, as it were, the riches of his divine love towards men, making a remembrance of his wonderful works; and he commanded us in the participation thereof to venerate his memory and to show forth his death until he come to judge the world. And he willed also that this Sacrament

should be received as the spiritual food for souls, whereby may be fed and strengthened those who live with his life, who said, "He that eateth me the same also shall live by me", and as an antidote whereby we may be freed from daily faults and be preserved from mortal sins. He willed furthermore that it would be a pledge of our glory to come, and of everlasting happiness, and thus be a symbol of that one body, whereof he is the Head, and to which he would fain have us as members be united by the closest bonds of faith, hope and charity.' (Séss. xiii, cap. 11.)

The most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is in a very special sense the Sacrament of Love. The Last Supper was the chosen moment for its institution, leaving an undying memory of our Redeemer as the divine lover in his last will and testament. Only the divine Love could have found so efficacious a means of sustaining the soul's supernatural life. 'He that eateth me the same also shall live by me.' The very purpose of this Sacrament is to prevent the love of God in the heart of man from growing cold by giving it a lasting strength, ardour and intensity. As Our Lord said, 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him'. The very purpose of the Christian life is to be brought into union with God, but this cannot be without a love that is sustained and fortified by him who is the living Bread.

THE WORSHIP OF LOVE

BY

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NE of the more important aspects of the growth of the spiritual life is the way in which the higher stages, far from leaving the lower entirely behind, do in fact reproduce the earlier virtues and activities in a new milieu; a higher synthesis is reached. Thus it would be a mistake to imagine that merely because progress in grace means first the predominance of the moral virtues and then the theological, that therefore such virtues as religion, obedience and various forms of asceticism fade away in the wings as faith, hope and charity take the stage. There are some who consider that they have reached a degree of perfection where obedience hardly applies; love predominates so that they are free from the hindrance of the moral virtues, particularly from the inconvenience of having to do what with other men they are told. They feel themselves above the law.