

surpassing Christian form? Conversation has scarcely opened with the Far East; we must, to be sure, remain in it men of clear thought and entire faith, but no true understanding will be possible unless we rediscover, restoring them in some measure in our own lives, the intuitive values which have been sterilized in the West during recent centuries, the sense of certain spiritual realities attested even in experience, without which man appears to the Oriental to be looking backwards. At the same time, also, we shall be able to become partners again with the Christian East, where these realities have remained more alive than with us.

This is the immense labour of the new man, in the Gospel's sense, the man who is growing to the stature of the world of tomorrow. To *understand* infinitely more things, and infinitely greater things, to love more widely, to put into operation more redoubtable powers, to confront perhaps a mad society, this will not be all: it is going to be a necessity for spiritual energy to be set free in us, to be disciplined and to become effective.



## THE NATURE OF ACCIDIE (II)<sup>1</sup>

JOHN CASSIAN (A.D. 360-448)

MANUAL LABOUR AS A REMEDY

TO THE embers of such faults, then, he now hastens to apply a suitable remedy, and laying aside the apostolic power which he recently called into play, he turns once more to speak with the heart of a kind father or a gentle physician, and, as speaking to his children or his patients, he presents the medicine of health with words of salutary counsel, on this wise: 'Them that are such, we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus that with quietness they work and eat their own bread' (2 Thess. 3, 12). He has cured with the one salutary precept of work the causes of such terrible sores which spring from the root of idleness, in the manner of some most skilled physician, and he knows also that the rest of the ailments which sprout up from the same soil will straightway vanish away, when once the primordial disease has been destroyed.

<sup>1</sup> Cf: the November issue of THE LIFE, page 189.

## THE SPIRIT OF DEJECTION

If gnawing sadness once gain, by individual attacks, or in different and unseen ways, a power of mastery over our souls, it separates us ever and always from any insight of divine contemplation, and casting down the mind from whatever of purity it might possess, entirely overthrows and depresses it. It allows us not to fulfil our prayers with wonted readiness of heart, nor to give our attention to the remedy that is found in reading Holy Writ. It suffers us not to be at peace, and mild with the brethren. It makes us restless and irritable for all the duties of our work, or our worship. All salutary counsel is lost, and the heart's constancy overthrown. It makes a man as if bereft of his senses, or the victim of intoxication—broken and overwhelmed with guilty despair.

Wherefore, if we desire to contend well in these spiritual contests, we must try to cure this disease of sadness also, with no less care than the others. For 'as a moth doth by a garment, and a worm by the wood, so the sadness of a man consumeth the heart'. (Prov. 25, 20 LXX.)

For a garment spoiled by moths is no longer of any value, and can be put to no further use; and a piece of timber likewise, which has been furrowed by worms, cannot serve to adorn even a modest building, and is good only to be burned in the fire. So also a soul devoured by gnawing sadness will be useless either for that priestly robe which, as David in prophecy informs us, is wont to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit coming down from heaven, first on Aaron's beard and then on his skirts.

## ITS CAUSE

Sometimes this fault is wont to follow upon the sin of anger, or to arise from some desire unfulfilled, or from some gain not attained to, when a man sees some hope decay which he had entertained in his heart. Sometimes, again, when no previous cause can be found which might impel us to this defect, goaded by our subtle enemy, we are oppressed suddenly with such a degree of sorrowfulness that we are unable to greet our dearest and nearest, when they come to us, with ordinary courtesy. Whatever they may say to us in easy conversation seems to us all needless and out of place; we refuse to make them any kind reply: the gall of bitterness invades the recesses of our hearts.

Hence it is very clearly proved that it is not always the faults of others that goad us to trouble of heart. It is rather our own faults—we who have in ourselves the causes of offence and the seed-plots of sin, which, when our minds are watered with the showers of temptations, are ready immediately to spring up, and grow, and bear fruit.

For never is a man forced into sin by another's fault, unless he have, stowed away in his heart, matter for evil deeds. Nor is a man to be held a victim of sudden deception if at the sight of a woman's beauty he fall into an abyss of vile lust. Rather is it that diseases of soul, deeply hidden away and lost to view, come then to the surface on the occasion of the sight.

And therefore God, the Creator of all, caring above everything for the restoration of his handiworks, and knowing that the root and cause of offences lie not in others but in our own selves, had bade us not to separate ourselves from consort with the brethren, nor to avoid those whom we think that we have injured or that they have injured us, but rather to soothe their feelings, knowing that a perfect heart is acquired not by drawing apart from men, but by the virtue of patience. This virtue, when it is firmly held, will make us to hold to the love of peace even with them that hate peace, and when we possess it not, our lack thereof makes us constantly at enmity with those who may be perfect and higher in virtue than we. For it needs must be that, in the course of human intercourse, occasions of perturbation will arise which will make us hurry to quit the company of those to whom we are bound, and for this reason, when we leave one set of companions for another, we are not ridding ourselves of causes of sadness, but only changing them.

A threefold reason is assigned for barrenness of mind. It is the result either of our own carelessness, or of the assault of the devil, or else it is a thing permitted by our Lord to try us. It arises from our own carelessness when, by our own fault and previous coldness, we behave not ourselves circumspectly, and slackness gains on us, and our cowardly sloth allows us to feed on poisonous thoughts so that we make the ground of our heart the seedbed of thorns and thistles. As they grow up there, we become barren and bare of all spiritual fruit and contemplation. The assault of the devil is its cause, when, with cunning craftiness, that adversary of ours sometimes penetrates our minds even when we are busied

in good pursuits, and we are drawn away from our best endeavours unwittingly and unwillingly.

## WHY GOD PERMITS IT

Of God's permission and trial of us, however, there is a double cause. The first is that for a brief space we may be forsaken by the Lord, and thus behold with humility the infirmity of our minds, and may be in no wise puffed up on account of the purity of heart which we possessed before, and which had been given to us by God's visitation, and that we may learn by experience that when we are forsaken of him we cannot by any groanings or efforts of our own win back the pristine state of gladness and purity, and may know that the brightness of heart which we have lost had not been bestowed upon us by our own work but by his favour, and that now we must seek it again of his grace and enlightenment. The second cause of trial is that the constancy of our minds and our perseverance and desire may be tested, and that it may be made manifest in us with what intention of heart, what instance of prayer, we beseech the return of the Holy Spirit who has left us, and that when we know with how great toil that spiritual joy and gladness of purity must be regained, we may the more carefully endeavour to keep it when we have found it, and hold it the closer.

## WHEN DEJECTION IS ALONE VALUABLE

In only one event must we reckon that sadness is profitable to us, namely, when we entertain it either from penitence for our sins, or fired by desire for perfection, or at the contemplation of future bliss. Of this the blessed Apostle speaks when he says: 'Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret; but the sorrow the world worketh death' (2 Cor. 7, 10).

To such degree did the blessed David realize that this departure—and if I may call it so—desertion by God, was advantageous, that he never cared to pray, not that he should at any time be entirely forsaken by God—for that, he knew, was not to the good either of himself or of any human being who had set out towards any sort of perfection—but he preferred to ask that such desertion might be tempered, as when he said: 'Forsake me not utterly' (Ps. 119, 8), as much as to say, in other words, 'I know that for their good thou art wont to forsake thy holy ones that thou mayest

try them.' For they could not be tried by the adversary except they were for a brief space forsaken by thee. Therefore, I do not ask that thou shouldest never forsake me for it is not good for me either that I should not feel my weakness and be made to say, 'It is good for me that thou hast chastened me', or that I should never have experience of conflict. And this, without doubt, I cannot have if the divine protection clings to me always and without intermission . . . I rather pray that thou shouldest not 'utterly' forsake me—that is to say, even to excess. For in so far as it is advantageous to me that thou doest a little withdraw thyself from me that the constancy of my desire may be proved, so also is it to my hurt if thou dost suffer me for my evil deserts and my sin's sake to be too far forsaken.

#### HOW TO TEST AND ABOLISH IT

That sadness which 'worketh repentance unto sure salvation' is obedient, courteous, humble, kind, gentle, and patient—coming down, as it does, from the love of God. It reaches out tirelessly to every kind of bodily pain and contrition of spirit in its desire after perfection, and, in a way rejoicing and buoyed up with the hope of spiritual progress, it keeps entire its graces of gentleness and long-suffering, having within it all those fruits of the Holy Ghost which the Apostle enumerates when he says: 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance' (Gal. 5, 22-23). The other kind of sadness, on the contrary, is most bitter, impatient, hard, filled with resentment and unfruitful grief and wicked despair. It calls off and breaks away whomsoever it has taken hold upon from diligence and godly sorrow, for it is opposed to reason, and impedes not only the efficacy of prayer, but also makes of none effect all the above enumerated fruits of the Spirit, which godly sorrow can call forth.

For these reasons every kind of sadness, save that which we embrace for the sake of salutary penitence or zeal for perfection or longing after future bliss, we must drive away from us, as being of this world and productive of death, and we must root it out of our hearts just as much as the spirit of fornication or avarice or wrath.

Now we shall be able to drive this most deadly passion out of our minds just in the degree that we keep them constantly

occupied with spiritual meditation, and raise them up in hope and contemplation of our promised future bliss. In this way we shall be enabled to overcome all sorts and kinds of sadness—that which comes upon us as a result of previous anger, or from loss of our goods and damage we have suffered, or from injuries done to us, or what again comes upon us from unreasonable disturbance of mind, or that which brings us to deadly despair.

#### DEJECTION AS A RESULT OF LUKEWARMNESS

According to what we read in Scripture, there are three conditions of soul: the first carnal, the second natural, and the third spiritual. They are described as follows, in the writings of the Apostle: 'I fed you', he says, speaking of the carnal state, 'with milk and not with meat, for ye were not yet able to bear it' (1 Cor. 3, 2, 3). And again, 'For as there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal?' Of the natural soul mention is made in such words as these: 'Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him' (1 Cor. 2, 14-15). But of the spiritual things, and he himself is judged of no man'; and again, 'Ye which are spiritual, restore such as one in a spirit of meekness' (Gal. 6, 1). Therefore, it behoves us to show all diligence that, as by our renunciation we have ceased to be carnal—that is to say we have begun to separate ourselves from worldly conversation and to cease from the open and manifest pollution of the flesh—we strive with all our might to lay hold forthwith upon the spiritual state, lest, flattering ourselves because we appear so far as the outward man is concerned to have renounced the world and to have fled from all contagion of fleshly lusts, and arguing that thereby we have achieved the height of perfection, we become thenceforward slacker in our effort to wipe out the other passions of the soul, and slothful, stopping between the two grades of spiritual progress, unable to follow its upward path, imagining that it is enough and to spare as regards our perfection that with our outward aim we appear to be drawn apart from this world's business and pleasures, or that we are untouched by the sins of carnal lust—and thus may be found in that state of lukewarmness which is pronounced the most dangerous of all, liable to be spewed out of the Lord's mouth, in accordance with the words: 'Would thou wert cold or hot, so because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold,

I will spew thee out of my mouth' (Apoc. 3, 16). But he who becomes lukewarm and abuses the very name of monk, and refuses to adopt with fervour and humility the path of his profession, as he is bound to do, being once infected with this pitiable vice and, so to say, unmanned therein, will be no more able either of himself to acquire a perfect spirit, or to accept admonition from another. . . . He becomes in this way worse than the man of the world, because he does not see that he is miserable and blind and naked, or that he stands in need of admonition or instruction from anybody, and therefore he will not listen to the least exhortation of saving words, and cannot perceive that the very name of monk is a weight about him, and is lowering him in the opinion of all. While he is accounted by many as a holy man, and is revered as a servant of God, the only result will be that in future he will suffer a far severer judgment and penalty than would otherwise have been the case.

#### OF THE USE OF THE WILL IN ACQUIRING EQUILIBRIUM

Between the two desires of the flesh and the spirit, the will of the soul stands in a middle position, not free from blame, nor delighted with the wickedness of sin, nor finding content in the pains of virtue. It seeks relief from fleshly passions, but only on condition of not bearing the consequent pains without which it is impossible to possess what the spirit longs for. It would obtain chastity of body without punishment of the flesh, purity of heart without the toil of watching, it would abound in spiritual virtues and yet retain fleshly ease, it would possess the grace of patience with no irksomeness of contention, practise the humility of Christ, but with no loss of worldly honour; combine the simplicity of the religious life with the following of secular ambition. It desires to serve Christ to the accompaniment of praise and the favour of men; to profess the narrow way of truth without even the least offence to anyone; in a word, its aim is so to pursue the award to come, as not to lose that which is here and now. Such a will can never bring us on to reach true perfection . . . for when yielding up our wills to this condition we are ready to allow ourselves to fall away little by little to such remissness, at once the urging impulses of the flesh rise up, and wounding us with their vices and passions, they refuse altogether to allow us to remain in that state of purity wherein we delight, but drag us along that

cold and thorny path of pleasure which we dread. Again, if inflamed with the Spirit's fervour, we attempt without any regard for the fact of human frailty to throw ourselves in our elation of heart into an immoderate pursuit of virtue, the weakness of the flesh comes in and recalls us and holds us back from such excessive fervour of spirit which is to be blamed. And so it comes about that the desire of the flesh and of the spirit meeting in such a conflict and mutually contradictory, the will of the soul which is not prepared to surrender itself entirely to carnal desire nor yet to the toilsome labour of virtue, is moderated, so to say, by a just balance, while the struggle that goes on gives no place to that more dangerous free will of the soul, and puts a sort of equal weight into each of the scales which draws with accuracy a limit between flesh and spirit, and allows on the one hand the mind aflame with the spirit's fire to have no greater weight, nor on the other the flesh stung with the goads of sin to prevail. And while this warfare is daily occurring in us for our good, we are compelled to approach that fourth thing of which we would have none, namely, that we should attain to purity of heart not by idleness or freedom from care, but by constant toil and contrition of spirit, and that we should retain chastity of the flesh by strict abstinence and fastings, temperance and watchfulness, and acquire again right purpose of heart by readings, vigils, constant prayer, and the loneliness of solitude, and get patience by endurance of hardships; that we should serve our Maker amid blasphemies and reproaches, and follow truth at the cost of the hatred of this world, and its hostility, if need be. But a proper balance will result from these conflicts, and will open up before us a sound and temperate path of virtue between the two, teaching the soldier of Christ ever to walk upon the King's Highway. So it will be that, when on account of the lukewarmness of that cowardly will of which we have spoken, the mind is turned towards fleshly desire, it will be restrained by the desires of the spirit which is quite unwilling to acquiesce in earthly sin, and again, if by excess of fervour our spirit has been raised in the heart's exultation and carried off towards impossible and ill-considered goals, the frailty of the flesh will again draw down the balance to the just mean, and rising above that most lukewarm condition of will, our spirit, with duly moderated fervour and even course, will walk carefully in the way of perfection.