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FOREWORD

Sublime indeed is the thought that Christian charity brings to our minds. We reach up to God, and God reaches down to us, and in divine love we are made sharers of the Divinity. All things we love in God, and because we love them in God we seek to realize in our use of them and relations with them the harmony of the divine will. Of its very nature charity is not quiescent but operative. The soul in the pursuit of the way of perfection labors tirelessly according to its state in life to bring all men to God. Were it to content itself with its own perfection, it would lose the very thing it seeks. How can we love God and not love with God? How can we find God without searching in love for the things which God loves? Certainly one of the fruits of the spiritual life is peace, but this peace postulates our conforming our wills with the divine will. All the noble aspirations of the heart of man, aspirations which so often seem unrealizable in our condition of human weakness, are answered in our seeking to be ever more and more perfect in the spiritual life.

Men are talking much these days about realism, and they tell us that in life idealism must yield to compromise. Yet in every circumstance in life we can be sons of God in supernatural union with Him. This fact is the very basis of true Christian realism. We must not and dare not be defeatists. What human nature can never do can be done in the supernatural power of divine grace. It is therefore opportune in these times to give us this translation of this classical work of the spiritual life because it strengthens us in our effort to work out more perfectly our vocation of sons of God. We can build a better world. Human weakness is not an impassable barrier. The Savior died on the cross for us and rose to glorious life. With the graces of Redemption we are strong enough to labor for the realization of God’s plan and on our way to heaven to love with an operative love all those whom we meet on our pilgrimage of life.

We hope that pious souls will read this book, ponder over its pages, and gain new strength from it. It is a challenge to Christians to arise and labor unceasingly for the kingdom of Christ—wherein there is peace and true progress.

Samuel Cardinal Stritch
Archbishop of Chicago

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THREE AGES OF THE INTERIOR LIFE

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John Mauburnus (Mombaer). Rosarium exercitationum spiritualium (1491), a great compilation in which methods of meditation are discussed.

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Juliana of Norwich (d. 1443). Revelations of Divine Love.

THREE AGES OF THE INTERIOR LIFE


The Modern Period

In the modern period, spirituality often takes a more active form and tends to radiate more beyond the cloister, into the world; new schools appear, while the older schools continue to show the value of the traditional teaching.

Benedictine and Cistercian Spirituality


Dom Delatte, of Solesmes. Commentaire de la Règle de Saint Benoît.


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INDEX
Some Terms Used in This Book
(Added by the Publisher to the 1899 printing.)

SENSIBLE, SENSITIVE—of the senses. These terms are used in reference either to the senses proper (external or internal, including the imagination) or to those movements of the appetites known as passions or emotions.

JUSTICE—1. the state of (Sanctifying) Grace. 2. the moral virtue by which one gives what is due to God, oneself and one's neighbor. (It is in the first sense that the term is usually used in the theology of the spiritual life.)

JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION—entering the state of grace. Sanctification also refers to the increase of Sanctifying Grace in the soul.

SUPERNATURAL—divine; pertaining to God or to Sanctifying Grace, which is divine life in the soul. Sanctifying Grace is described as "living water" in the Scriptures. By Sanctifying Grace the three Divine Persons dwell in the soul. The following accompany Sanctifying Grace and are likewise supernatural: the three Theological Virtues—Faith, Hope and Charity; the four infused moral virtues: prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude (these four virtues can also exist on the natural level); the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. All these supernatural gifts except Faith and Hope are lost by mortal sin; they are all regained through sacramental absolution.

THE JUST—a person in the state of Sanctifying Grace.

THE SINNER—a person in the state of mortal sin.

CHARITY—1) the supernatural virtue by which one loves God for His own sake and one's neighbor as oneself for the love of God; this virtue is infused into the soul in Baptism and also in absolution after sacramental confession of mortal sin. Charity is the highest virtue; it vivifies, "informs," or "forms the soul of" every other supernatural virtue. 2) acts of love of God or neighbor as defined above. A person in the state of mortal sin cannot exercise the virtue of Charity because he has lost Charity along with Sanctifying Grace. He can only perform acts of natural love of God and neighbor; these are not meritorious for salvation and heavenly reward, though God in His mercy may look upon them as a plea for the gifts of true repentance and return to Sanctifying Grace.

FAITH—the supernatural virtue by which one believes, on the word of God, all the truths He has revealed. This virtue is infused into the soul along with Sanctifying Grace. A person in the state of grace has living faith, because his faith is "informed" by Charity; a person in the state of mortal sin may still have faith, but it will be only dead faith.
HOPE—the supernatural virtue by which one trusts in God's promises to give him eternal life and the means to obtain it. This virtue is infused into the soul along with Sanctifying Grace.

SANCTITY—the possessing of a high degree of Sanctifying Grace, and living by the supernatural virtues, especially Faith, Hope and, above all, Charity.

MYSTICAL—pertaining to the higher levels of sanctity, in which the soul's supernatural acts are carried out in a divine mode, in intimate dependence upon the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Christians who have not attained to this degree of sanctity perform their supernatural actions in a more human mode; in them the seven Gifts are relatively dormant. Mystical prayer is called contemplation. Phenomena such as visions and revelations, though often found in mystics, are not of the essence of the mystical life.

CONTEMPLATION—the higher of the two forms of mental prayer (the lower being meditation). Contemplation is an infused loving knowledge of God. In contemplation, reasoning and discourse are left behind and the mind and will are fixed on God in a wordless act of love, resulting in close union with Him. Contemplation is also called mystical or infused prayer. It is a special gift of God and cannot be acquired by one's own efforts, even aided by actual grace. Nevertheless, one can and should prepare for this gift by humble and persevering efforts at meditation and by the practice of the virtues.

MEDITATION—the lower of the two forms of mental prayer. In meditation one employs his intellect and will in reflections, affections and holy resolutions.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST, THE SEVEN—Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, Fear (of the Lord). These Gifts are infused dispositions which make a man promptly docile to divine inspirations. They have traditionally been compared to the sails of a ship, enabling the ship to be moved by the wind—which represents the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

CHARISMS, OR GRACES GRATIS DATAE (“FREELY GIVEN”)—extraordinary spiritual gifts of God such as the gifts of miracles, prophecy and tongues. These are gifts given chiefly for the good of souls other than the recipient; graces gratis datae are greatly inferior to Sanctifying Grace and the virtue of Charity. The seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost are not graces gratis datae; rather, they are in the normal way of sanctity.

ACTUAL GRACE—a supernatural help of God which enlightens the mind and strengthens the will to do good and to avoid evil. Actual grace is a transient gift; it does not remain in the soul.
Books by the Author Translated into English

God, His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Agnostic Antinomies (1914)

Christian Perfection and Contemplation, according to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross (1923)


The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus (1929)

Providence (1932)

Our Savior and His Love for Us (1933)

Predestination (1936)

*The One God (1938)

The Three Ages of the Interior Life: Prelude to Eternal Life (1938)

The Three Ways of the Spiritual Life (1938)

*The Trinity and God the Creator (1943)

*Christ the Savior (1945)

The Priesthood and Perfection (1946)

Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought (1946)

Life Everlasting (1947)

*Grace (1947)

The Priest in Union with Christ (1948)

The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life (1948)

*The Theological Virtues—Vol. 1: Faith (1948)

*Beatitude (moral theology, 1951)

Last Writings (spiritual retreats, 1969)

Books by the Author Not Translated into English

Le sens commun: la philosophie de l'etre et les formules dogmatiques (1909)

Saint Thomas et le neomolinisme (booklet, 1917)

De Revelatione per ecclesiam catholicam proposita (1918)

De methodo sancti Thomae spectatim de structura articulorum summarum theologicae (booklet, 1928)

Le réalisme du principe de finalité (1932)

Le sens du mystère et le clair-obscur intellectuel: nature et surnaturel (1934)

Essenza e attualità del Tomismo

Dieu accessible à tous (booklet, 1941)

*De Eucharistia: Accedunt de Paenitentia quaestionis dogmaticae (1942)

Les XXIV Theses Thomistes pour le 30e Anniversaire de leur Approbation (booklet, 1944)

Verite et immutabilite du dogme (booklet, 1947)

De virtutibus theologiciis (1948)

*Commentaries on St. Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologiae.

About the Author

Father Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877-1964) was a philosopher and theologian of great wisdom, learning and holiness, one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century. Born in Auch, France, as a young man he studied medicine at the University of Bordeaux before entering the Dominican Order in 1897. He completed his ecclesiastical studies under the direction of A. Gardell. From 1909 until 1960 he taught fundamental, dogmatic and spiritual theology at what is now called the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum) in Rome, and he served during the latter part of his career as a consultant to the Holy Office and other Roman congregations. Beginning around age 27 he wrote more than 500 books and articles, many of which have been translated from the original French or Latin into other languages.

Father Garrigou-Lagrange was a zealous proponent of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas as expounded by the classical commentators of the Dominican school — Cajetan (Tommaso di Vito), Bénez, John of St. Thomas and Charles Billuart. He combined a great respect for the past with an understanding and appreciation of the intellectual and spiritual needs of his own time. His principal theses are set forth systematically in his La Synthèse thomiste (Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought). In philosophy his first outstanding work was Le sens commun, la philosophie de l'être et les formules dogmatiques ainsi d'une étude sur la valeur de la critique moderniste des preuves thomistes.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR (Cont'd.)

de l'existence de Dieu (1909), a work written against Modernism and its conception of the evolution of dogma. There he reaffirmed the validity of the philosophy of being of moderate realism, and of Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysics, which is simply the development of elementary and primordial ideas by natural intelligence. Then turning to dogmatic formulas, which he did not wish to tie to any philosophical system, he showed their rational value and stability. Knowledge of dogmas and of dogmatic expressions and formulas can progress, but the dogma remains always immutable in itself. Father Garrigou-Lagrange's most important philosophical work was God—His Existence and His Nature: A Thomistic Solution of Certain Apocalyptic Antinomies; in this work he laid great stress on the Thomistic doctrine concerning the identity of essence and existence in God and the real distinction of essence and existence in the creature.

The major part of Father Garrigou-Lagrange's work, however, was theological. His classic work entitled De revelatione ab ecclesia propo si (1918, rev. ed. 1932) presented apologetics as a theological rather than a philosophical science, as a rational defense of divine revelation made by reason under positive direction by faith. He endeavored to protect the notion of faith as an essentially supernatural gift that transcends by far the elaborations of human thought and cannot be the fruit of a rational syllogism, which can lead the mind no further than to the judgment of credibility; at the same time he strove to avoid the pitfall of a fideism that would ignore reason and human study. Father Garrigou-Lagrange's masterly commentary (7 vol.) on the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas is a comprehensive development and treatment of the truths of faith according to the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas.

It is probably for his theology of the spiritual life that Father Garrigou-Lagrange is most well-known; in spiritual theology the principal points of his doctrine were established in the light of Thomistic teaching. Adopting the position of Father John Arintero, O.P., he insisted vigorously on the universal call to holiness, and therefore to infused contemplation and to the mystical life as the normal ways of holiness or Christian perfection. Among his most fundamental works in this field are Christian Perfection and Contemplation; Les Trois conversions et les trois voies (The Three Ways of the Spiritual Life); The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus; The Three Ages of the Interior Life; De sanctificatione sacerdotum secundum exigentias temporis nostri (The Priesthood and Perfection); and De unione sacerdotis cum Christo Sacerdote et Victoria (The Priest in Union with Christ). He also wrote a book entitled Mere Françoise de Jésus, fondatrice de la Compagnie de la Vierge, as well as numerous articles for La Vie Spirituelle and Angelicum.

Other books of Father Garrigou-Lagrange which have been translated into English (in addition to those whose titles are given above in English) include: Christ the Savior; The Theological Virtues—all vol. 1: Faith; Grace; Life Everlasting; The One God; Our Savior and His Love for Us; Predestination; Providence; The Trinity and God the Creator; The Mother of the Savior and Our Interior Life; Beatitude (moral theology, on human acts and habits), and his retreat conferences, published posthumously as The Last Writings of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange.

The publishers of this present work look forward to publishing other works of Father Garrigou-Lagrange, in accord with the response received by this one.

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