

# OUR LIGHT AND OUR SALVATION

*Blessed Antonio Rosmini's Supernatural Anthropology*  
*Edited and Explained*

*J. Anthony Dewhirst*

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## Foreword

Firstly, I need to say something about the subtitle of this book. The *Supernatural Anthropology* was not the only book which Rosmini wrote on theology. There are several others among which are one on Theological Language and another which is a Commentary on the Introduction to St John's Gospel. Rosmini did not complete either of these books due to various causes which included the many other tasks on hand, and also ill health which resulted in his early death. These books deserve to be treated separately and the present book is long enough already. The Supernatural Anthropology is in two volumes and has never been published in English. This would require extensive work and hopefully one day it will see the light. Meanwhile, I have endeavoured to extract from it the main topics of interest without some of the detail which accompanies them. I have also removed quotations from the Fathers of the Church to the end of the chapters. References are given in the main text; in this way the main text is simplified somewhat and they can be read as desired. However, I have kept references to St Thomas in the text to show the conformity of Rosmini's thought to the great Master apart from the intrinsic value of the quotations. Some readers may prefer the use of inclusive language: I regret this is not always possible and would lead to lack of precision in the text.

There are two Appendices. Appendix 1 deals with what Rosmini calls the 'instructive signs' of the Old Covenant which foreshadowed the realities to come with the Incarnation and the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. This section deserves to be included in the book if only to show the extraordinary thoroughness of Rosmini's treatment of the Scriptures. As regards Rosmini's extensive use of the Scriptures, there are some wonderful passages of spiritual interpretation including, The Woman at the Well (*Jn* 4), Jesus' conversation with Philip (*Jn* 14) and Rosmini's comments on St Paul's Letter to the Romans. Appendix 2 deals with Rosmini's philosophical approach to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This might prove too much for some readers and so I have relegated it to its present position.

I thought of titling the book 'An Anthology' but it is certainly not just extracts nor a straightforward translation. In this regard I have made extensive use of Fr William Lockhart's translation written in 1886, the manuscript of which lies in the archives at Stresa. It has been computerised from my typed script (1975) but not published. Moreover, in this present book there is much editing and commentary on my part. Maybe 'A Review' would fit the bill. I leave it to readers to assign the genre!

My grateful thanks to my seasoned proof-reader Janet Blackman. Alas, Norma Platts who has provided such valuable help in the past was unable to help at the present time due to ill health. Thanks also to Nigel Cave who provided the pictures for the cover.

J. Anthony Dewhirst  
St Mary's, Derryswood  
1 May 2010.

## Abbreviations

Translations and references to English translations in square brackets, thus: [...]

Antonio Rosmini	A.R.
<i>Antonio Rosmini, Introduction to his Life and Teaching</i>	Cleary
<i>Antropologia in servizio della scienza morale</i>	AM
<i>Antropologia soprannaturale</i>	AS
<i>A Vision for Challenging Times</i>	JAD
<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>	CCC
<i>Concilium Tridentinum</i>	<i>Conc. Trid.</i>
<i>Delle cinque piaghe della Santa Chiesa</i>	CP
Durham Translations	Durham
Edizione Critica	Ediz. Crit.
Epistolario Completo	EC
<i>History and Spirit</i>	De Lubac
<i>Introduzione alla filosofia</i>	<i>Introd.</i>
<i>La lettura biblica di Rosmini ne "l'introduzione del Vangelo secondo Giovanni Commentata"</i>	Losacco
<i>L'introduzione del Vangelo secondo Giovanni commentata</i>	IVG
<i>Nuovo saggio sull'origine delle Idee</i>	NS
<i>Principi della scienza morale</i>	<i>Principi</i>
<i>Summa Theologica</i>	ST
<i>New International Version</i> [of the Bible]	NIV
<i>The Holy Bible</i> , New Revised Standard Version	NRSV
<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i>	JB
<i>The New Jerusalem Bible</i>	NJB

(Article = art.; Book = lib.; Chapter = c. or cap.; Section = sez.; Volume = vol.)

## Introduction

Rosmini began writing the *Antropologia soprannaturale* at Trent on 4 May 1832 and worked on it till 1836. The work was never completed but two other books were envisaged, namely, *The Redeemer* and *The Mother of the Redeemer*. *L'introduzione del Vangelo secondo Giovanni commentata* [A Commentary on the Introduction to St John's Gospel] was begun on 18 October 1839 and was also unfinished at his death. We have two parts, *Concerning the Eternal Generation of the Word* and *Concerning Creation made through the Word* and we can conjecture that the third part would have been the *Incarnation of the Word*. This would have fitted into the scheme of the Supernatural Anthropology. Both these works are sublime in content and draw heavily on the Fathers and the Scriptures. The Supernatural Anthropology together with his masterpiece of metaphysics the *Teosofia* [Theosophy], also published posthumously, were specifically not published by Rosmini 'because I see only too well that these are not the right times for their being accepted; this age needs milk; it is not capable of taking solid food'.<sup>1</sup>

During these years Rosmini was concerned with approaching theological topics with a new method which would fill the gap left by what he saw as the lamentable teaching in the Seminaries of his day. He felt that the Church had lost the qualities which pervaded the theological teaching of the first centuries of the Church. In this early period theologians wrote with a warmth and conviction which sprang from their own holiness and this in turn influenced the students who read their books. 'Scriptures, fathers, scholastics, theologians: these are the steps by which we have arrived finally at the wonderful works we use in our seminaries today. Their would-be knowledge is on a par with their contempt for our elders. I believe that in the centuries to come, which contain the hopes of the imperishable Church, these books will be judged the most miserable, feeble works written in the eighteen centuries of the Church's history. They lack spirit, principles, style and method.'<sup>2</sup> Rosmini was intent on revealing the close bond between philosophy and theology, between faith and reason. A sound philosophy would provide a sound base for the theology at whose service philosophy was employed. This entailed a detailed treatment of man in both the natural and supernatural orders.

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Rosmini [=A.R.], *Epistolario Completo* [= EC], vol. X, letter 6365, to Father Giovanni Maria Caroli at Ferrara, p. 567.

<sup>2</sup> A.R., *Delle cinque piaghe della Santa Chiesa* [= CP], Edizione Critica [= Ediz. Crit.] 56, Roma 1998, n. 40, p. 57, note p. 57. (*The Five Wounds of the Church*, Rosmini House, Durham trans. Denis Cleary & Terence Watson, [= Durham] chapter 2, n. 40, p. 38). Rosmini goes on to say in a footnote that he has no desire to despise scholars and theologians; he recognises their worth and has made use of the principal ones in his works [note, 27, p. 200].

In 1838 he had written his *Antropologia in servizio della scienza morale* [Anthropology in the Service of Moral Science] dealing with the natural state of man. In his introduction he writes:

Human, moral states and means result partly from human nature itself and partly from positive relationships with the Creator. The first are known by observation of the internal and external facts of human nature which to some extent can be carried out with our natural light. The second must be obtained from what tradition teaches. Hence in my anthropology there must be a rational part and a positive part in conformity with the two orders to which human beings belong. Nature is one of these orders and the moral conditions deriving from it form the first part of the book. But because, according to the Christian system, human beings belong also to a supernatural order of grace, the moral conditions which flow to us from this higher order are the subject of the second part.<sup>3</sup>

In his *Rinnovamento della filosofia in Italia* [Renewal of Philosophy in Italy], he writes, “The Theological School started with the consideration of God, I started simply with the consideration of man and nonetheless I found that I arrived at the same conclusions.”<sup>4</sup> This procedure is typically Rosminian and shows the importance he allots to both nature and supernature, to philosophy and theology, both of which are inextricably intertwined. The basis of Rosmini’s theory of man’s natural moral state begins with his consideration of the idea of being.<sup>5</sup> From his meditation on the idea of being Rosmini saw that this idea possessed infinite characteristics and that it revealed itself as the possibility of infinite being and therefore demanded infinite real being as its fulfilment. This in its turn demanded an infinite moral being. With the help of revelation we find that these three beings find their completion and ultimate fulfilment in the three persons of the Blessed Trinity. “The pinnacle of philosophy is clearly shown here to be in God, the author of the light of human reason, the seat of the essences, the author of all things.”<sup>6</sup>

Now if infinite being, the author of all finite beings, revealed himself more fully, there would be another order, a supernatural order. If being was revealed to us no longer as purely ideal being but as real and subsistent being we should enter the realm of the supernatural, of

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<sup>3</sup> A.R., *Antropologia in servizio della scienza morale* (= *AM*), Ediz. Crit. 24, Roma 1981, Introduction, p. 24 [Durham, p. 9, n. 8, p. 9].

<sup>4</sup> A.R., *Rinnovamento della filosofia in Italia*, vol II, Ediz. Crit. 7, Roma 2008, p. 185 n. 472.

<sup>5</sup> Rosmini’s seminal and first major work the *Nuovo saggio sull’origine delle idee*, [New Essay on the Origin of ideas] was published in 1830. I refer the reader to my book *A Vision for Challenging Times* [= JAD], Short Run Press, Exeter 2009.

<sup>6</sup> A.R., *Introduzione alla filosofia* (Introduction to Philosophy) [= *Introd.*], Ediz. Crit. 2, Roma 1979, n.73, p. 141 [Durham, n.73, p. 148]. Cf. For this section, Umberto Muratore *AS, Introduzione*, pp. 18–20.



revelation, of faith, of grace. There is no longer merely an idea of being but the person of the Word which imparts to man a new feeling “the feeling of God” which permits us not just to reason about God but to perceive God.<sup>7</sup> Just as the light of the idea of being grows brighter through our own meditation, and instruction from others, the supernatural light also develops and multiplies either by our own reflection or by listening to the words of others. In both orders, then, the same pattern is seen, the same hand, the same maker, the same divine teacher.<sup>8</sup>

### Rosmini’s approach to Scripture

Blessed Antonio was familiar with the Bible from his early childhood. He was taught to read, using the Bible and he built up an astonishing knowledge of it. By the time he was 20 he had read the whole of the Bible twice and it was his custom whenever he could to read the Bible on his knees after Mass for an hour. In this way by 1851 he had read the Bible seven times. In his *Cinque piaghe* Rosmini writes,

Scripture, we know, is mankind's own book, *the* book (Bible), the writing, as its name tells us. In it, mankind is described from beginning to end. It opens with the origin of the world and closes with its destruction. Human nature perceives itself in all its moods, and discovers precise, sure and even evident answers to all the great questions it has posed itself. The mind can rest satisfied with the knowledge and mystery contained in the Bible, and the heart with law and grace. Scripture is “the large tablet” written in “common characters”. In it eternal truth speaks in every way known to human language. Truth narrates, teaches, judges, sings. Memory is nourished with history; imagination attracted by poetry; intellect enlightened with wisdom; feeling moved in all these ways together. The teaching is so simple that the uneducated believe it written for themselves; so sublime that the learned despair of grasping it. The text is human in form, but the vehicle of God's own word. Hence “Scripture”, says Clement of Alexandria, “enkindles fire in the soul, and simultaneously directs the mind's vision fittingly towards contemplation, broadcasting its seeds within us and bringing to germination the seed we already possess.” If words like this can rightly be applied to books in general, they are much more applicable to the divine word of Scripture.<sup>9</sup>

In his theological writings Rosmini brings the whole of his encyclopaedic knowledge to bear. It will not be surprising, therefore, to read that besides philosophy and theology (he was a Doctor of Theology and Canon law) his books are permeated with

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<sup>7</sup> A.R., *Antropologia soprannaturale* [= *AS*], Ediz. Crit. 39, Roma 1983, p. 18. Muratore, Introduzione.

<sup>8</sup> A.R., *Introd.*, n. 85, pp. 155–156 [Durham, n. 85, pp. 164–5].

<sup>9</sup> *CP*, cap. II, n. 38, p. 52 [Durham, ch 2, n. 38, p. 34].

Scripture as well as the Fathers of the Church with whom he was familiar from an early age.<sup>10</sup> In this he was following in the tradition of the Church.

At this point it is relevant to consider *how* he used Scripture. He was not a specialist in exegesis, not simply because he had many other occupations especially his philosophy, but because when he was studying in Padua biblical exegesis was not considered important; but he did study Hebrew and exegesis.<sup>11</sup> We should note, first and foremost, that Rosmini was a man of his time. The advance in biblical studies had not yet really started, but flourished only in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Exegesis in his time compared with that of today suffered from what would now be considered as serious shortcomings. ‘...Biblical theology lacked a historical sense, the texts of the Old testament were placed on the same level as those of the New, sometimes without taking into account their context, and the time of composition; and they relied without question on the Latin Vulgate.’<sup>12</sup> Rosmini had a thorough knowledge of Greek, so much so that when he wrote his book examining Aristotle<sup>13</sup> he used Aristotle’s Greek without any intermediary. He certainly made use of the Greek text of the Scriptures, but his preference was for the Vulgate. Maybe this was also due to the fact that he was familiar with Jerome’s works and had a high regard for him. Be that as it may, this led him into inaccuracies especially in a literal use of the Bible where nowadays his quotation sometimes does not fit the context in which he uses it. For instance, speaking of the difference between natural and supernatural faith, he quotes *Acts* 9: 5 ‘it is hard for thee to kick against the goad’. But these words in the Vulgate do not appear in modern versions of the Bible.<sup>14</sup>

So what sort of exegesis does Rosmini use? He employs both a literal sense, that is, what the author actually says, and a spiritual sense, that is, its interpretation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains this as follows:

According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church.

The *literal* sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: “All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.”

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Anthony Dewhirst, *Antonio Rosmini and the Fathers of the Church*, Short Run Press, Exeter 2005.

<sup>11</sup> I refer the reader to Luigi Losacco’s book, *La lettura biblica di Rosmini ne “L’ introduzione del Vangelo secondo Giovanni commentata”*[= Losacco], Stresa 1986. The author treats in depth of Rosmini’s use of the Scripture in the above-mentioned work but much of what he says applies also to the Supernatural Anthropology. Relevant here is: I. *Uso della S. Scrittura*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Losacco, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> A.R., *Aristotele esposto ed esaminato*, (Aristotle Explained and Examined) Ed. Crit. 18, Roma 1995.

### Introduction

The *spiritual* sense. Thanks to the unity of God's plan, not only the text of Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs.

1. The *allegorical* sense. We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism.]

2. The *moral* sense. The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written "for our instruction". (1 *Cor* 10–11, cf. *Heb* 3–4: 11).

3. The *anagogical* sense (Greek: *anagoge*, "leading"). We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem. Cf. *Rev* 21: 1–22: 5.<sup>15</sup>

Rosmini himself says, "The words of this Master are more than mere ideas: they are spirit and life. It seems to me that we have already mentioned at other times the same observation that man, who is a real being, cannot be satisfied with what is only ideal with which philosophy nourishes it."<sup>16</sup>

Rosmini's preferred method of exegesis is not surprising given his admiration and interest in the Alexandrian school of theology. This first appears in history c. 180 when it was directed by Pantaenus whose pupil was Clement. Other illustrious Fathers of the Church followed, such as Origen, Dionysius, Athanasius, Didymus and Cyril. The other great theological school was at Antioch which in general followed the literal sense of the Bible. Rosmini had a great reverence for Origen whom he called 'the most splendid light of the Church' and 'the great moulder of bishops and martyrs', 'the great Origen'.<sup>17</sup> Now Origen was a master of literary and spiritual exegesis and also of typology<sup>18</sup> following in the footsteps of Saints Paul, John, Justin and Irenaeus. Henri De Lubac says that it would not be an exaggeration to say that the whole exegetical tradition in the Church, in both the East and the West is the heir of the teaching of Origen.<sup>19</sup> Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine directly derived much from him.

Rosmini would like to have written a book on the School of Alexandria: he returns often to it in his works.<sup>20</sup> To sum up, his exegesis and use of the Scriptures is generally

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<sup>15</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* [= CCC], St Paul's 1995, nn. 115–117, p. 33.

<sup>16</sup> A.R., *EC*, Casale Monferrato, Tipografia Giovanni Pane 1891, vol. VII, letter 3908 to Marchese Gustavo Benso di Cavour, 5 December 1839, p. 244.

<sup>17</sup> A.R., *CP*, *Sopra le elezioni vescovili a Clero e Popolo*. Letter, I, p. 221, [Durham p. 166], c. 2, n. 31 note 7, p. 43, [Durham p. 197] and c. II, 28, n. 4; p. 41, [Durham 196].

<sup>18</sup> Typology is the prefiguring of events of the New Covenant by events and institutions of the Old Covenant.

<sup>19</sup> Henri De Lubac, *History and Spirit* [= De Lubac], Ignatius Press 2007, Conclusion, p. 472.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Antonio Quacquarelli, *La lezione patristica di Antonio Rosmini*, Centro Internazionale di Studi Rosmini, Stresa 1980, IV, p. 51. He refers to a letter of Rosmini to Andrea Fenner, *EC*,

literal but with a spiritual understanding in line with the Fathers and Church tradition. Losacco thinks that what De Lubac says can also be said of Rosmini, 'of course the literal sense is also from the Holy Spirit. Any real sense of Scripture is inspired and the inspiration is unique. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have not penetrated to the most profound level, we have not completely perceived the intention of the Spirit; if we deliberately stop this side of it, we are unfaithful to that intention. It is thus already that the spiritual sense supports a particular relation to the Spirit, a relation in virtue of which it appears once again well-named'.<sup>21</sup>

### **Rosmini's use of the Fathers and St Thomas**

I have written elsewhere a detailed study on Rosmini and the Fathers of the Church.<sup>22</sup> Suffice it to say that Rosmini's preferred Father was Augustine 'one of the two luminaries chosen as his guide', the other being St Thomas.<sup>23</sup> He also calls them 'the two pillars on which to build any knowledge'.<sup>24</sup> It is enough at this point to name a few — Ambrose, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, Dionysius the Areopagite and, of course, Origen. Rosmini was not professedly a patristic scholar, but, as with other sources he absorbed the Fathers whom he was reading from his adolescence drawing on the excellent library at home. He quotes them many times to support his approach to theology. Of course the number of times a Father is mentioned is not necessarily a measure of the importance of the quotation or the contribution, but it gives us an idea of how Rosmini revered the Fathers and the use he made of them.

Some Fathers of the Church	Times quoted or referred to in the Supernatural Anthropology
Augustine	140
Ambrose	42
Athanasius	12
Basil	26
Cyril of Alexandria	39
Dyonsisus the Areopagite	17
Jerome	24
John Chrysostom	27
Gregory the Great	15
Origen	10

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vol. IV, letter 3177, pp. 268–9 and *AS*, (1882 edition), vol. II, First Appendix to book III, pp. 284–5.

<sup>21</sup> De Lubac, *op. cit.*, Conclusion, p. 444.

<sup>22</sup> See p. 12, footnote.

<sup>23</sup> A.R., *Introduzione*, I, III, II, p. 208.

<sup>24</sup> A.R., *Pro-memoria per la Società degli amici di Udine*. Cf. *Annali*, vol. III, p. 184.

Other Fathers mentioned: are Bede; Boetius; Cyprian; Cyril of Jerusalem; Didymus; Eusebius of Caesarea; Gregory Nazianzen; Gregory of Nyssa; Gregory the Wonderworker; Ignatius Martyr; Hilary of Poitiers; Irenaeus; Isidore of Pelusium; Lactantius; Leo the Great; Prosper of Aquitaine; Tertullian; Theoderet of Cyrus; Theophilus of Antioch..

As for St Thomas one cannot emphasise too much Rosmini's admiration for this great theologian. He was reading St Thomas when a child and the rebuff given him by his tutor, who thought this was beyond him at the tender age of 8, did nothing to deter him. During his teenage years he was already absorbed in his works and recognised St Thomas as a genius. The latter had been neglected in the ecclesiastical schools and Rosmini wished to rehabilitate him. One day, when walking with Father Signini, he suddenly said, 'Oh, what would I give to have five minutes talk with St Thomas! I am sure we should understand each other and perfectly agree.' His works are peppered with quotations of the Angelic Doctor as will be seen in this book. Rosmini was the first writer of the nineteenth century to appreciate the importance of St Thomas and he was his protagonist well before Leo XIII in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879) exhorted that St Thomas be studied. In 1823 at the request of the local clergy he gave a series of lectures on the *Summa*. He also began to write a book on the neglect of St Thomas among modern theologians.<sup>25</sup> He mentions or refers to St Thomas 148 times in the *Supernatural Anthropology*.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Claude Leetham, *Rosmini, Priest, Philosopher and Patriot*, Longmans, Green and Co., London 1957, chap. 2, pp. 53–54.

## Chapter 1

### Nature and Supernature

#### Preview

In his New Essay on the Origin of Ideas Rosmini explains how our idea of being or existence enables us to think. This idea is innate and renders us intelligent beings. It is not part of us but the object of our understanding and the essential part of the thinking process. This occurs when external objects modify the fundamental feeling we have of ourselves. The impressions we receive from external things modify our feeling and the resultant sensations provide the material part of the idea we have of the object concerned. We judge that it exists because we already have an idea of existence of which this object is a determinate and contingent reality. We perceive only sensible things (including our body) and our own soul and form positive ideas of them. We can perform certain acts on these ideas, thus forming other ideas. These mental acts are: 1. *Analysis*, that is abstraction; 2. *Synthesis* forming complex ideas and 3. *Integration* by which we can rise to a new object not perceived previously. For instance, it is possible to rise from an effect to the necessity of a cause though we do not perceive it. This is the case in our discovery of a first cause, that is, God, from the many natural effects we perceive. But we do not have a positive idea of God, only a *negative* idea. We do not perceive God naturally. This integrating faculty is thus the source of *natural* theology and the principle of natural theology is the idea of being. It is obvious that the limits of this natural theology are severely restricted. When the faintness of this negative idea is lessened by God revealing to us a knowledge of 'new things' which only he can give us, and when we cling to these, even though we only partly understand them, our natural theology becomes revealed theology through our faith in God's revelation.

#### Our negative knowledge of God

Real beings act on the senses including our own body, ideas do not. They are simply present in the mind. We would not take kindly to a person who, when we said we could do with a beer, said 'think of it; it's just as good'. Being, has two modes, real and ideal. The sense perceives real being; the mind perceives ideal being. Of course these two modes of being are the same identical being in different modes. Rosmini gives the example of a house; we can see the house, and we can also retain the idea of the house. It is the same house that we really experience and also mentally experience in our idea of it. The human being, who at the same time feels and knows, who has intellect and sense, perceives complete being.

## Positive cognition

Positive cognition means that we have perceived the *real mode* of being by the senses and, because we already know what being is through the idea we have of it, we understand that the real experience through our sensations is a particular instance of the *ideal mode which we already intuit*. It is how we form ideas. Because we already possess the idea of being, the most universal and indeterminate of all ideas, the ideas we form on the occasion of our perceptions of a real thing are determinations of the idea of being. We have only to advert and compare the part of ideal being which corresponds to the real being perceived by our senses. The operation of comparison or noting the correspondence between the real being and the portion of ideal being, is the primitive judgement. '*That which I am sensing exists*'.

Cognition of a real being is the relationship seen between the *ideal mode* and the *real mode of the thing*, the first perceived by the mind, the second perceived by the senses. The first is the *form* of cognition, the second is the *matter* of cognition. Of course these two elements may remain effective even when the actual sensitive perception has passed away; we can have a memory of them.

## Negative cognition

The difference between negative and positive cognition lies in the fact that in place of the perception (sensations) there is only a *sign* or *indication* of the thing.

Now in order to say to myself 'a thing exists', and therefore to have a persuasion of its real existence, I must somehow think of this thing to which I apply the predicate of existence, and this thought of the thing is the subject of the judgement. But I may think of a *subject* to which I *predicate* existence even though I may not have perceived it. It may not have actually acted on me but in this case it is sufficient that I have an indication of the thing which fixes my attention on it even though this indication only reveals to me its mere existence. Rosmini takes the example of a man who holds something which I have not seen in his hand, stating that it contains something. This affirmation would be a sufficient indication to me that something existed and would take the place of my actually seeing the object he was holding.

In *positive* cognition the sensation produces three things in us:

1. it gives us grounds for being persuaded that a being subsists;
2. it determines a fixed point on which to direct our attention so that our mind can distinguish it from all other beings;
3. it causes us to have the *vision* of that being, that is to say a sample of its immediate power on us. This is an effect of a cause acting on us. It is this that gives light to the perception of the thing, which illuminates our cognition. It is this which produces the positive cognition of the thing.

But without all this illumination we may have some kind of thought or cognition, for we may think that a thing really exists if we only have some indication that such a thing exists and which determines and distinguishes it from all other beings, this is the

case of a cause which we do not see and remains completely hidden and is not perceived at all, yet we know it from a certain effect. A cognition of this sort is weak and dim as we lack the immediate and adequate impression which a thing produces and which affects our feeling. Rosmini calls this sort of cognition *negative cognition*.

Positive Cognition	Negative Cognition
1. Gives us grounds for being persuaded that a being subsists; 2. Determines a fixed point on which to direct our attention so that our mind can distinguish it from all other beings; 3. Causes us to have the <i>vision</i> of the being, that is a sample of its immediate power on us; this is an effect of a cause acting on us, thus producing a positive cognition of the thing.	1. <i>Grounds</i> on which to argue that a being exists and affirm its existence. 2. A sign, a relation of that being, enabling me to distinguish it from all others. 3. I am able to deny that it is any of the things that I really perceive.  <b>Example:</b> A person tells me he has something in his clenched hand. I believe him and form a <i>negative</i> idea that something exists. When he opens his hand and I see that the object is a walnut I form a positive idea of it.

### **Our knowledge of God is negative.**

The knowledge that we can have of God *naturally* in this life is negative. The first two parts of this cognition come to the same thing because the *grounds of our induction of the subsistence of God* is his *relation to the universe* as its author and principle. The sign, then, is a group of ideas which point out a divine being and convince us of the necessity of his subsistence. But they are not the divine being but only a proof. We do not perceive the Divine Being, God, himself. The name 'God' is the sign.

Of course there is an immense difference between the negative cognition we have of finite things, for instance something hidden by a curtain, and the negative cognition we have of God. Firstly the negative cognition of finite things has a similarity to other finite things which I have perceived. But God has no common essence with other things. Existence is the only thing we can predicate of God and of his creatures in one and the same sense or univocally: not in the same mode, obviously. Creatures *have* existence and God *is* existence; creatures are *part* being, but God is *all* being, that is, being itself. The concept of God can be composed of nothing else but *being*.

So one difference between the negative cognition of finite things and the negative cognition of God lies in the concept expressed by the word God which is the subject of the judgement '*God exists*.' The second difference regards the predicate '*exists*'. When I say a finite thing exists, the predicate '*exists*' refers to a partial and imparted existence. When I affirm the existence of God I give God all existence, all being. In



actual fact subject and predicate are identified. In the judgement God is the ideal subject, the predicate is real. So when I say 'God exists' I am saying 'being exists', or 'being which I conceive, is a real and subsistent being'.

### Philosophy and revealed theology

Rosmini defines 'theology as the science that treats about God.'<sup>1</sup> It is divided into natural and supernatural theology. *Natural* theology is that which can be known about God by the force of human reason, and he assigns this as part of philosophy. But *supernatural* theology deals with God, as he is known supernaturally; this is theology properly so-called.

It is important to reiterate that we form perceptions only about things which act on our senses. In the natural order these are the contingent things of this world. Our perception of things is a requisite datum for forming ideas of them. We also perceive ourselves, this is an internal experience. When I see a dress I like in a shop the external data is being fed in through my senses and I at once form an idea of it and am convinced of its real existence. I can also leave the shop with the memory of this perception and know very well the difference between the original perception and the mere idea of it. I may mull over the experience and decide on buying the dress so that I possess the real thing.

Through reflection we are able to analyse ideas, i.e. break up complex ideas into simpler ones, and also synthesise ideas by putting different ideas together. A student or research worker is constantly doing this. But we all do it without necessarily advertent to the fact. We exercise these faculties on positive ideas. But there is a third faculty which Rosmini calls the faculty of *integration*. This faculty can inform us of the existence of things without knowing their nature. When St Paul told the Romans that, 'ever since the creation of the world his (God's) eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made',<sup>2</sup> he was talking about the faculty we have of rising from the knowledge of *effects* to that of a *cause* which is not given to the senses but which the mind, rising from relative contingent things to absolute reality, knows must exist. This faculty produces negative ideas only and is the source of natural theology.<sup>3</sup>

In his *Nuovo Saggio*, Rosmini demonstrates that the most general idea of all is the idea of being.<sup>4</sup> This is innate in us and the intuition of ideal being renders us intelligent. It is the principle of Natural Theology. It is this idea which shows us the necessity of cause when we perceive the existence of created things. It gives us the

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<sup>1</sup> A.R., *AS*, lib. I, cap. II, art VII, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Rom* 1: 20.

<sup>3</sup> For Rosmini's teaching on the principle of cause and effect see his *Nuovo saggio sull'origine delle idee* (= *NS*), Ediz. Crit. 4. Tomo II, Parte Quarta, cap. IV, nn. 615–628, pp.179-191. [See Durham, *A New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas* 2001 vol 2, pp. 153–163].

<sup>4</sup> A.R., *NS*, Ediz. Crit. 4, Parte Prima, nn. 385–472, pp. 13–70, [Durham, nn. 385–472, pp. 10–50].

conviction of the necessity of a cause responsible for them.<sup>5</sup> But because we have no positive knowledge of the mode of being of this cause *natural theology is an ideal negative science*.

### Formal and material revelation

Theologians teach that among things revealed by God, some do not exceed the limits of human reason but it would have great difficulty in discovering them with certainty and free from error, and could only have done so after considerable time. But we needed to know these things from the beginning. Therefore it is most useful that these truths have been revealed. Certain other truths were revealed because, though they might be reached by human reason alone, nevertheless they are connected with supernatural truths. These suppose and require truths of the natural order and we could not perceive them unless we were reasonable beings. We can call this revelation *formal revelation* because though their manifestation is supernatural their *matter* does not exceed the limits of human reason.

Revealed theology is distinguished from natural theology by reason of the *matter* of revelation. Revealed theology is also composed of negative cognitions but natural reason cannot attain to this material part which is positively communicated to man by God. A *material* revelation therefore is necessary so that we may have a *revealed theology which is distinguished as to its matter* from *natural theology*.

Now a problem arises here because unless we have new perceptions we cannot have new cognitions. We have said that perception is the foundation of all positive cognitions. But we cannot have a perception of God in this life.

‘But’, he said, ‘you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.’<sup>6</sup>

‘No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.’<sup>7</sup>

Now, if we receive no new perception through revelation how can we have any cognitions which are new and essentially different from those of natural theology? The answer is that we can have cognitions which are *negative*. Negative cognitions can be reinforced by divine revelation and give rise to revealed theology.

We are like a blind person who has no positive perception of light and colours, but who has heard a lot about them. Just as a blind man has faith in those who explain to him what they see regarding the properties and nature of light, so we have faith in Jesus revealing God to us, a revelation of God which is part clear and part obscure, hidden and inexplicable. Just as the blind man has faith, so we too believe Jesus with a blind faith.

<sup>5</sup> See JAD, Short Run Press 2009, ch. 2, *The Origin of Ideas*, pp. 44–46.

<sup>6</sup> Ex 33:20.

<sup>7</sup> Jn 1: 18.

Revelation tells us many things about God, of a being whom we do not perceive by nature in this life. There is a mixture of obscurity and clarity in revealed truths and so *faith in revelation is the basis of revealed theology*.

‘All those things are mysteries of faith which for their full understanding would require the perception or positive cognition of the Divine Nature. We can never fully understand: 1st the mode in which creation has been produced by the Creator; 2nd the mode in which the Trinity of persons is united with the oneness of substance of God; 3rd the mode in which the Divinity is united with the humanity in Christ. Regarding these things one may indeed meditate, and may say many beautiful, true and sublime things, but if we examine this well we shall find that these are always negative concepts, namely composed of universal ideas, but never of specific and positive ideas.’<sup>8</sup>

We believe these things by ‘blind’ faith. We can understand the terms taken separately, and conceive the connection of these terms but we cannot explain nor understand how these connections really exist, because to understand the ‘how’ would require the perception of the object in itself of which it is the affirmation, but the perception of this object is lacking to us.

### **Natural and supernatural faith**

The ideas given us by *external* revelation contain nothing in them that exceeds natural reason because whatever they have in them of the supernatural is negative, that is, indicated by natural signs or ideas that are known to us. Anyone can receive them even if they have not received supernatural grace. No new perceptions are given with the doctrine, nor any new specific ideas but simply relations of ideas already known. But in order to have faith a person must form a judgement by which an assenting judgement is given and which gives credence to these truths. This can also take place by the natural faculty of judgement and the power of the will. So that the *external* revelation to which assent is yielded is not a supernatural act (natural powers being used).

Like the blind man mentioned above who believes in the word of those who talk to him about colours, external revelation speaks in human language and cannot express more than a negative concept. Words are the signs of the concepts we have of things. Language is incapable of communicating positive concepts concerning God.

Now what is the difference between natural and supernatural faith, because there can be natural love, and naturally good works springing from this love?

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<sup>8</sup> A.R., *AS*, *ibid.*, cap. III, art. III, note 33, p. 63.

Just as there are two kinds of faith, there are;

1) two practical judgements; 2) two loves; 3) two kinds of actions natural and supernatural. So what is present in the essence of the practical judgement, love and the supernatural action which is lacking in those of the natural order?<sup>9</sup>

An *act of the natural order* is that which is performed by the force of a person's nature, whether spontaneously or stimulated and moved by natural agents, such as all the things that constitute this universe and which influence man through the medium of his senses. Our assent given to naturally revealed truths constitutes natural faith. Like the blind man who believes what others have told him about sight and colour.

But if God were to enter by his action, (which is not an action of created beings) into this order such an action has a supernatural characteristic, that is to say, a genus of its own. It cannot be confused with nature and is infinitely superior to it.

When man conceives truths, practically assents to them, loves the actions corresponding to them, produces them and does all this of his own force, or moved by natural stimuli such as the natural beauty of those truths and actions, the good he expects to obtain, he acts naturally. But if our will is subjected to the action of a stimulus different from all these natural objects, that is, a *supernatural* stimulus, in respect of which the will is passive, and by which it is moved, in this case a new state begins within us. We have entered into the supernatural order, the *order of grace*. Our action, under this stimulus, though our own, is now a supernatural one.<sup>10</sup> This action of God is a dogma of Christianity with which supernatural religion begins. There is nothing in this similar to natural faith.

St Paul, speaking of the supernatural order says '*for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure*'.<sup>11</sup> And St Stephen, speaking before the Council says, '*You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are for ever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do*'.<sup>12</sup>

'The essence of Christianity is to be a supernatural religion, and the essence of supernatural religion in human beings is the real action of grace in the human soul.'<sup>13</sup> The person who believes that God is working within him is a Christian not just in name, but in fact.

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<sup>9</sup> For an analysis and explanation of human actions see J. Anthony Dewhirst, *Rosmini's Theory of Ethics*, Durham 2000, pp. 57–58.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. A.R., *AS*, *ibid*, pp. 67–68.

<sup>11</sup> *Phil* 2: 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Acts*, 7: 51.

<sup>13</sup> *AS*, *ibid*, p. 69.

We are talking here of a living faith. Rosmini says that two effects spring from living faith and faith in general: a) a type of omnipotence given to the true believer, '*Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father*'.<sup>14</sup> b) the effectiveness which prayer acquires with such a faith and this prayer is the most universal means of every grace, '*I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it*'.<sup>15</sup> These effects come from *faith* itself. c) The third effect is good works; these come from a *living faith*, joined to charity, '*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*'.<sup>16</sup> d) The fourth effect is union with God through the Holy Spirit, '*You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you*'.<sup>17</sup> The properties of this last effect are, *consolation, perseverance, an unceasing love of truth, a light* (or supernatural cognition) *a closeness, a possession*.

What makes this assent to these truths supernatural is that it is *practical* and *operative*, whereas the assent given naturally to revealed truths is purely speculative and sterile.

Rosmini quotes the letter of James. '*For if any are bearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing*'.<sup>18</sup> The one who looks into the mirror and perseveres is, says Rosmini, the one whose assent is practical whereas the one who glances into the mirror and walks away gives a simply speculative assent. This steady gaze arouses our love of the beauty of the law: divine grace makes us meditate on it. St Paul says that this is the '*faith working through love*'.<sup>19</sup> It is the faith by which the just live.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Jn* 14: 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>18</sup> *James* 1: 23–25.

<sup>19</sup> *Gal* 5: 6.

<sup>20</sup> Cf, *Rom* 1: 17.

## Chapter 2

### Grace

#### Preview

In the previous chapter we considered our negative knowledge of God and natural and supernatural revelation and our assent to them. Our assent to supernatural revelation issues in a living faith. This is shown in our actions. St Gregory in one of his homilies says, 'If we put our faith to the proof by good works, we are blessed. Those who give expression to their faith are genuine believers'.<sup>1</sup> Rosmini has just said that the result of all this is that we have entered the realm of grace. He now goes on to spell this out in more detail. He becomes somewhat philosophical, not surprisingly, as he wishes to show that reason and faith work together and a sound philosophy will underpin a sound faith. Persevere with your reading! His reasoning is not difficult, and it is interesting to see his references to St Thomas together with Scripture to back up his theory. St Paul tells us we are 'a new creation'. What is going on within us? Rosmini now explains what takes place in the soul and the effects in our life.

Rosmini begins by telling us that he is going to refer to St Thomas who is 'the great summariser of Christian tradition'.<sup>2</sup> Firstly, though, it might be better to explain his thought more simply. The essence of the soul possesses many powers which are derived from it, like branches of a tree. The soul is the common principle of these powers just as each power is a principle in its own right of the actions which belong to it. (Soul—powers—actions). These acts can be good or bad, moral or immoral and the powers concerned are the root of virtues or vices. *Grace* is the principle and root of all the supernatural virtues which means that it informs the essence of the soul.

St Thomas says, 'Grace is reduced to the first species of quality; and yet it is not the same as virtue, but is a certain disposition which is presupposed to the infused virtues, as their principle and root'.<sup>3</sup> 'Hence it remains that grace, as it is prior to virtue, has a subject prior to the powers of the soul, so that it is in the essence of the soul. For as man in his intellectual powers participates in the Divine knowledge through the virtue of faith, and in his power of will participates in the Divine love through the virtue of charity, so also in the nature of the soul does he participate in the Divine Nature, after the manner of a likeness, through a certain regeneration or re-creation'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory the Great, *Homily* 26.

<sup>2</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, cap., IV, art II, p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> St Thomas, *Summa Theologica* [= ST], I II, CX, art. III, ad 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, art. IV.

What is this ‘re-creation’, the effect of divine grace, which St Thomas talks about?

Rosmini quotes the letter of St James from the Vulgate. The Douai-Rheims version states, ‘*For of his own will hath he begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of his creature*’,<sup>5</sup> the last phrase meaning ‘a kind of first fruits’. This agrees with modern translations, for instance, ‘*By his own choice he made us his children by the message of the truth so that we might be a kind of first fruits of all that he had created*’.<sup>6</sup> Rosmini says that James is not content with saying just that we *become* by grace a creation of God but we *are the beginning* of a new creation which we receive from the hands of our Creator. We do not simply pass from one state to another or become something different from what we were before. St Paul states that we are ‘*created in Christ Jesus for good works*’.<sup>7</sup> He speaks of ‘*the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*’,<sup>8</sup> and he often repeats that we are a ‘new creation’.<sup>9</sup> So the operation of grace is in the essence of the human soul, in the *Ego* (I) which is the identical subject of all its powers, because it is I who think, and the same self that wills and that loves and that acts. The operation of grace takes place in the essence of the human soul in so far as it is intellectual. It is proper to human beings alone and perfects them in the most noble part of them.

St Thomas says, ‘The soul is the subject of grace, as being in the species of intellectual or rational nature’.<sup>10</sup>

The human soul differs from that of animals by reason of its essence, not because of some different power or particular accident.

### Grace is a real action from God in the soul

Grace is a real action done in us by God. It is not simply a negative idea in the intellect but something real. An ideal action accompanies ideas in the mind; a real action is the action of subsistent things. I drew a comparison in chapter 1 between our idea of a glass of beer and actually drinking one, of seeing a dress in a shop window and actually wearing it. Drinking the beer is more powerful than thinking about it, though we can retain the perception, and the phantasms ever present in our mind are true sensations and can move us far more vividly than ideas on their own. The soul can make use of these internal stimuli. Of course I am talking here of positive ideas. Here we take our imagination into account. So ideas can appear very powerful when they are accompanied by the memory of the perception which accompanied them.

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<sup>5</sup> *Jas.* 1: 18 (Douai).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* (NIV).

<sup>7</sup> *Eph* 2: 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 24.

<sup>9</sup> 2 *Cor* 5: 17; *Gal* 6:15 also *Ps* 104: 30.

<sup>10</sup> ST, I II, CX, art. III, ad 3.

Ideas of themselves are cold and the more abstract they are, the colder they are: compare the idea of a house and the idea of wisdom.

### The Law of Moses and the Grace of Jesus Christ

Rosmini says that the difference between an ideal and real action is the same as the Scripture gives us between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. The reason that the law of Moses was ineffective is that the law presented ideas and therefore the cold knowledge of duties to be observed. But the grace of Jesus Christ adds a force which these ideas have not got in themselves, infuses a warmth and makes them a power in us. John says, *‘The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.’*<sup>11</sup>

We are now in a position to see how difficult it is for human beings to give the honour and glory due to God, known simply by negative ideas in the natural state, when confronted by so many contingent and real perceptions of worldly things which absorb us and give us pleasure sometimes in direct conflict with the love of God. On the purely natural level there is really no contest. Reality wins every time. Adverts continually bombard us with illusions of pleasure, beauty, health and wealth which we know full well are never going to be fulfilled at least in their entirety. Market forces build their wealth on the weakness and self-delusion of human beings. Qoheleth says: *‘I said to myself, “Come now, I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But, again, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?”’*<sup>12</sup> All this is not helped by the fact that we still suffer from the effects of original sin, and concupiscence causes us to satisfy our need for the absolute good by resorting to contingent ones. ‘Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you...’<sup>13</sup>

It is therefore impossible for the natural forces of man to love God, of whom he has nothing but a cold *idea*, in preference to creatures of which he has the *perception*, and to restrain and keep well-ordered by means of this love of God, the seductive love of creatures. St John tells us that it is easier to love our neighbour than to love God, since we see and perceive man but not God. *“those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen”*.<sup>14</sup> Complete morality, especially in what pertains to God is impossible. A society which loses its belief in God lapses into natural or social morality. The people who constitute such a society see decent living

<sup>11</sup> *Jn* 1: 17. See also St Paul’s Letter to the Romans.

<sup>12</sup> *Ecc* 2: 1–2.

<sup>13</sup> St Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford University Press 1998, chap. X, XXVII (38).

<sup>14</sup> *AS*, lib. I, cap. 5, art II, p. 86. *Jn* 4: 20.



as their aim; a utilitarian or pragmatic way of life. This is happening today in European society.

### Grace provides us with a new power

Grace does not only move the will to do moral good like an external stimulus which is a transitory action ceasing when it has fulfilled its purpose. We say that sanctifying grace is habitual (as opposed to actual graces given for specific acts which cease with the act). God, by sanctifying grace, unites himself permanently with us. Something divine exists within us that did not exist previously. *‘Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.’*<sup>15</sup> This gives a permanent energy to the soul. Rosmini follows St Thomas seeing God as *formal cause* giving the essence of the soul a new form and activity, a new power of action.

At this stage Rosmini explains the philosophy which underlies his theological teaching. He points out that there are certain powers which do not have to be moved by other powers and these are called *active principles*. Others need to be moved by other powers. For instance, the *intellect* is a passive power which needs to be moved by the *will* or by *instinct*. Every passive power has an active power corresponding to it, to set it in motion. So to every feeling there is an instinct or consequent activity.

In the natural person there are two fundamental feelings, the animal and the intellective or rather two parts of the same fundamental feeling which we have of ourselves and which we express by the word ‘Ego’ or ‘I.’ It is very difficult for us to advert to the corporeal fundamental feeling and the idea of being. But it is easy to advert to sensations which are modifications of the animal feeling, and to acquire ideas which are determinations of the idea of being.<sup>16</sup>

We are passive to two natures which act upon us. These are *bodies* and the *idea of being*. The corresponding activities are the *animal instinct* and *will*.

But in the state of grace God acts with a *real* action in the essence of the soul and produces a *new feeling*. The corresponding action is what Rosmini calls the *instinct of the Holy Spirit*. This feeling is different from the other two natural feelings because the agent (God) is essentially different from the others (bodies and the idea of being). It is a *new principle of action* created in us by God by the influence he exercises in the soul. This feeling which invades the soul increases its fundamental feeling and therefore its greatness and force. This explains the great acts of the saints.

The human spirit or soul is our rational principle which as corporeal feels our body, and as intellective intuit (feels) the idea of being. Rosmini defines the human soul as ‘a feeling principle which has being in general as the term of its feeling’.<sup>17</sup> Of course, the intellective feeling is a spiritual feeling and must not be confused with a bodily feeling.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Jn 14: 23.

<sup>16</sup> See JAD, chap. 4, p. 62 ff.

<sup>17</sup> A. R., *Antropologia in servizio della scienza morale*, Ediz. Crit. 24, Roma 1981, lib. IV, cap. V, n. 820, p. 453 [Durham, *Anthropology as an Aid to Moral Science*, n. 820, p. 443].

As I have said earlier, grace acts in the intellect which alone is capable of receiving it, that is, in the essence of our soul and since this is a feeling, grace acts in our fundamental feeling. Just as it is difficult to advert to our rational fundamental feeling so it is also difficult to advert to the supernatural fundamental feeling, but it is easy to advert to its effects namely the fruits of the Spirit.<sup>19</sup>

### **Faith, the first effect of grace**

‘Augustine calls "faith that works by charity" grace, since the act of faith of the person that works by charity is the first act by which sanctifying grace is manifested.’<sup>20</sup>

The action of grace in the soul is to produce a living faith in things revealed. Our negative concept of God without grace is cold and without power but faith moves our mind to fully adhere to the things contained in our negative concept of God. Faith, then: 1. makes this negative concept effective. 2. the graced individual is enabled to see something in the negative-ideal concept of God which is hidden within it. Whereas the negative idea in a person without grace is cold and ineffective, it now becomes most powerful in comparison with the ideas of sensible things and Christians are able to prefer God to everything else, even when faced with worldly attractions. But although the action of God through grace is *real* this is not the same as *unveiled*. It is exercised by means of negative ideas given to human beings through revelation, and also by means of a desire to see that positive being implied by ideal being present to our intellect. So these negative ideas are reinforced. Grace therefore infuses a feeling, a profound conviction, that in that hidden positive being is contained *all good*. The hidden part of God is the object of faith with which God touches the Christian.

For in this hidden part man perceives the concept of the whole; and although he distinguishes little or nothing of what is contained in this whole he knows that the whole is there. The whole, the all-being, the all-good are synonymous terms. This concept which although indistinctly the whole, may become vivid and powerful in man, and this also without any limitation, precisely because in the concept of the whole there is no limit: and it is this concept properly speaking that Divine Grace employs in its dominion over man and by which it raises him up and gives him the most complete mastery over all his passions. Man therefore has not got by supernatural faith a distinct perception of God, but perceives him indistinctly as the whole, the all-good. This perception although obscure, embraces nevertheless all that man can desire, because it embraces the whole, and therefore he has nothing outside this to desire, but only that this very thing may be made more distinct and clear and perfect. When

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<sup>18</sup> See *AS*, *ibid* cap. V, art V, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> *Gal* 5: 22–23.

<sup>20</sup> St Thomas, ST, I II, CX, art III, ad 1.

this perception becomes vivid and more sensible to man he then feels that contentment of which St. Teresa speaks so often as where she says precisely on this very point, 'There is such satisfaction and content in the most intimate part of the soul, and it knows not whence and how it comes, and often does not know what it ought to do, or will or ask. It seems to find here everything at once, and knows not what it is that it has found'.<sup>21</sup> And again speaking of a certain state of the soul she says: 'The soul well knows that it desires nothing but God: but it does not love particular things in him, but only the whole altogether and it knows not what it desires'.<sup>22</sup>

In supernatural faith there is therefore a perception of God, although it is initial and indistinct only; and this is the basis of the whole spiritual and supernatural life.<sup>23</sup>

The author of the letter to the Hebrews says, '*And without faith it is impossible to please God*'.<sup>24</sup> And again, '*but my righteous one will live by faith*'.<sup>25</sup> St John summarises all this: '*But to those who did accept him [Jesus Christ] he gave power to become children of God [this is that grace which gives power], to those who believed [faith is the first act of this power] in his name*'.<sup>26</sup> The negative idea of God, Rosmini says, is appropriately called in Scripture, the name of God.

Both natural and supernatural cognitions have a common origin, namely the pure and negative ideas of God. Rosmini likens ideas in natural cognition to a light tracing a design in outline. But in supernatural cognition a certain feeling issues from them, a perception, which gives them vividness, something positive. We now understand with the heart. Nevertheless they remain negative ideas. By nature we do not see what is perceived in the supernatural state. Rosmini explains it like this: the object is the same in both states but the object is not revealed in the same mode in the natural state. Rosmini quotes the prophet Isaiah: '*Go and say to this people, "Listen and listen, but never understand! Look and look, but never perceive!" make this people's heart coarse, make their ears dull, shut their eyes tight, or they will use their eyes to see, use their ears to hear, use their heart to understand, and change their ways and be healed*';<sup>27</sup> and also the words of Christ, '*To you has been given the secret [that which remains concealed from us by nature] of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables [only by abstraction, in an enigma]; in order "that they may indeed look but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven"*'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Allison Peers, *Complete Works of St Teresa*, vol. I, *Life*, London, Sheed and Ward 1949, chap. XIV, p. 85.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. XX, p.123.

<sup>23</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art. VI, pp. 97–98.

<sup>24</sup> *Heb* 11: 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 10: 38.

<sup>26</sup> *Jn* 1: 12 (NJB).

<sup>27</sup> *Is* 6: 9–10 (NJB).

<sup>28</sup> *Mk* 4: 12.

### A Summary

1. Supernatural faith results from the *incipient* divine perception and the *assent* of our will.
2. A new fundamental feeling is created by God in the essence of the soul.
3. By this feeling we begin to have a perception of God as the **WHOLE** subsistent being in himself.
4. This feeling constitutes the supernatural human being just as intellective-animal feeling constitutes the natural human being.
5. Both these feelings are formed by the union of Being with the human spirit.
6. The former is the union of ideal being, the second real being.
7. The idea of being given to humans renders them intellective. Being himself (God) raises this intellective being to a new species of intelligence — the supernatural state.
8. The first is a *conception*; the second a *perception* (though incipient).
9. The first is, as it were, a faint outline; the second a completion of the sketch, the *realisation of being* in us.
10. This new fundamental feeling is a new passive power to which corresponds a new active power, a new will.
11. The first act of this will is faith.

In infants the first element of faith is infused by God in baptism. In adults actual faith is required as well.<sup>29</sup>

So God gives us an incipient perception of himself, a direct cognition in face of which we are passive but the will inevitably responds to this perception making a practical judgement in which we not only affirm God and divine things but esteem them. This is not a mere cognition but a voluntary *recognition* of this cognition and this recognition is the beginning of all morality in the Christian.<sup>30</sup> This incipient vision generates in holy people the desire to be with God. Augustine says, ‘You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you’.<sup>31</sup>

The light of reason is *ideal being* : the light of faith is *real being*.  
The light of reason is *initial being*; the light of faith is *complete being*; absolute being; God.

<sup>29</sup> ‘The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.’ Mk: 16: 16.

<sup>30</sup> In his *Principi della scienza morale* A.R., Ediz. Crit. 23, Roma 1990, [*Principles of Moral Science*] Rosmini defines morality as ‘a relationship between what is good and the intelligent nature which wills the good’. cap. V, art I, p. 117 [Durham, *Principles of Ethics*, 1988, p. 64.].

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *op. cit.*, book I, p. 3. See also Psalm 63.

## Conclusion

We conclude this section on grace by once again pointing out that we have an imperfect perception of God; it is indistinct though we are aware that we perceive in it all being, all good.<sup>32</sup> Rosmini illustrates this by referring to Moses who wished to see God. Like Moses we see only God's back; in the next life we shall see God face to face; this will form the light of glory. 'Moses said, "*Show me your glory, I pray*". And he said, "*I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. "But", he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."* And the LORD continued, "*See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen*".'<sup>33</sup>

Rosmini likens the apprehension of real being (a perception of it) to the expression 'union with God'. Examples in scripture are the union of the vine with its branches in John chapter 15, the union of husband and wife, Ephesians chapter 5, the union of Father and Son, 1 John chapter 3 and the most perfect union of all, that of the Father with the Word, St John chapter 17.

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<sup>32</sup> William A. Barry S. J., in his book *Finding God in all Things*, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame 2008, comments on the Principle and Foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises*. In it he deals with life-enhancing experiences which draw people closer to God. On page 34 he quotes a book of Sebastian Moore (*Let This Mind Be in You*) who suggests that we all have experiences of desiring "I know not what". Such an experience includes a feeling of great well-being, and speaks of desire. Barry suggests that such experiences mediate the creative touch of God. I suggest that these experiences arouse in the soul an awareness of God as 'all-being, all-good'. Barry suggests that God is inviting all persons 'to enter the community of life of the Trinity'. I shall refer to this in the next chapter. However it does seem that the experiences mentioned by Barry are basically an awareness of our perception of God dwelling in us by grace. This is even more interesting when one considers the close connection between Ignatius' spirituality and the spirituality of Antonio Rosmini.

<sup>33</sup> Ex 33: 18–23.

## Chapter 3

### Deiform and Triniform Grace

#### Preview

We have seen that to have a real perception of God is quite beyond our natural powers and can only be given to us by God himself, offering it to us by acting in the human spirit. This action freely given on God's part is called 'grace'. This is a real efficacious action in us. It operates in the intellective essence of our soul because the supreme being can communicate only with what is most noble in the human being. This real immanent action of God in the human spirit produces a supernatural feeling which is passively received but produces in the human being an action corresponding to the nature of the feeling. Rosmini calls this new principle of action an 'instinct of the Holy Spirit' arising in the essence of the soul and allowing us to speak of a 'new creature' able to enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>1</sup>

We now move on to consider two perceptions of God in the soul: that of God as all-being and all-good, *deiform* grace, and the perception of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, which Rosmini calls *triniform* grace. The latter is reserved to the New Covenant with the revelation of the Word made flesh and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

#### Deiform grace

Rosmini calls grace 'a *deiform* operation'.<sup>2</sup> He adopts the term which comes from Dante who speaks of the kingdom of the saints as *deiforme regno*, the kingdom of the blessed because there the form of the blessed is God.<sup>3</sup> This is consistent with Christian tradition and common to many of the Fathers of the Church who interpret the kingdom of God as the Holy Spirit reigning in our souls. St Maximus says as much.<sup>4</sup> Rosmini also refers to Gregory of Nyssa and Cyril of Alexandria. Finally he

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<sup>1</sup> AS, lib. I, cap. V, art. IV, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Rosmini uses a term which comes from Dante who speaks of the kingdom of the saints as *deiforme regno* [deiform kingdom] because there the form of the blessed is God. (*Paradiso*, canto II, v. 20).

<sup>3</sup> Dante Alighieri, *La divina commedia*, *Paradiso*, canto II, v. 20.

<sup>4</sup> He states that what is mentioned as kingdom in Matthew's Gospel is called the Holy Spirit elsewhere by another evangelist, saying 'may the Holy Spirit come and purify us'. However, Rosmini says, it is strange that these words are no longer found in Luke's gospel but must have been in some copy quoted by St Maximus.

quotes Didymus of Alexandria who says that some people are filled with the Holy Spirit<sup>5</sup> (**Ref. 1**).

Rosmini states that God performs many operations which are obviously divine since they come from him, for instance, creation and the government of created things. In fact, God is in all his creatures and all creatures in him. St Paul quotes the poet Aratus saying, ‘*In him we live and move and have our being*’.<sup>6</sup> These operations begin in God and terminate in something different from God. They do not constitute the intimate action of God in his creatures which Rosmini calls *deiform*. So what does Rosmini mean by this?

Rosmini defines a deiform operation as, ‘an operation which not only has God for its principle (beginning), but the action itself and its term (end) is God.’ God is the cause and effect.<sup>7</sup>

The prime deiform operation is the Incarnation of the Word; the cause and principle was the Holy Trinity, the effect and term was the incarnate Word. The gift of grace implies the gift of the divine substance which can only be communicated to beings endowed with feeling and intellect. The only way to know this divine action is to perceive it and experience it. ‘We must feel God, feel him acting in us. We must feel in ourselves something which cannot be confused with any creature and something which is evidently beyond any partial being, which can only be God himself. Those who feel within themselves an operation as great as this, which is comparable to nothing else...an operation which is *All Being, All Power*, have within them a certain perception of the Supreme Being...’<sup>8</sup>

Rosmini goes on to explain that the Fathers prove that the action of grace is *deiform*, from the feeling that we experience. They say that we cannot be content except with complete and infinite good, that is, God himself. But upright people in a state of grace feel that they possess something within which does satisfy and fully content them. Therefore they have within them God, they possess God. However, this real perception of God is incipient and imperfect; it is *indistinct*. We perceive something in our feeling which contains *all being, all good* without our being able to distinguish any particular good, similar to the other real goods we perceive. This is supported by philosophy. We know that on the purely natural level we have a desire for infinite good because we intuit ideal being which is unlimited, so we are never satisfied by any finite good. Our natural appetite for good is never satisfied by any particular good on this earth. Only the perception of *Being itself* will satisfy us. And this is what we find in the spiritual life. We feel we have a perception of the plenitude of being which is God. In the *Nuovo saggio* Rosmini shows that the idea of being exhibits divine characteristics,

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<sup>5</sup> Didymus of Alexandria, *Liber De Spiritu Sancto*, n. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Acts*, 17: 28.

<sup>7</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. XVI, p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

for example, immutability, eternity, universality, etc.<sup>9</sup> But we know that the action of grace is *deiform* from its impressing on our souls signs that are wholly divine because it imparts a feeling of God himself. So the objection can be raised why does this not happen in the natural order through our intuition of the idea of being?

This confusion comes about through identifying the idea of being with real being. This was the mistake of the Platonists and even of some of the Fathers who followed the Platonists' doctrine. However Rosmini has made it clear that the idea of being (which is object and can never be confused with the mind which is subjective) is not God. It is in fact an *appurtenance* of God or, as Rosmini also calls it, a similitude of God.<sup>10</sup> But in the *light of faith* we perceive and feel God himself and not a similitude. We perceive a real and subsistent being, not an idea (**Ref. 2**).

By grace God is formally united to human beings raising them to a supernatural level. We thus say that God is the formal cause of the modification of the soul.

Formal Cause
God operates on the soul in the order of grace as efficient cause, that is one by whose action an effect is produced. The formal cause, or form of a thing, is what constitutes the thing itself, its proper activity and which with other parts added is the thing itself. Thus the energy by which a body subsists is its substantial form; its accidental forms are the particular activities inherent in it. So the soul is the form of the body. God cannot be the form of any creature like this. For instance, in the incarnation the Word was not transformed into the human substance but united to the human nature. One person, two natures, the nature of God and the nature of man. Another type of formal cause is that by which an extraneous body imparts a modification, a new form, to another. The example Rosmini gives is fire igniting a piece of iron. Here we must distinguish the modification in the body from the extraneous cause which produced it. These are distinct but the latter impresses the new form which the iron has. It is acting as efficient cause. Rosmini quotes examples from Basil, Cyprian and Maximus <sup>11</sup> ( <b>Ref. 3</b> ).

Rosmini says that God is the *objective formal cause* of grace.

In saying that he is the form of the understanding it might seem that Rosmini leaves himself open to pantheism. But Rosmini holds that God is the *objective* formal cause. He 'is present to the [human] spirit without being part of it (just as light allows us to see without its becoming part of ourselves).'<sup>12</sup> But it is important to note that God is

<sup>9</sup> See *NS*, vol II, parte I, c. III, nn. 414–437, pp. 29–41, [Durham, pp. 19–32]. Also *JAD*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *EC*, vol. IX, letter 5200 to Michele Parma, Domodossola, 9 December 1844, pp. 146–147 and *L'Introduzione del Vangelo secondo Giovanni commentata* [A Commentary on the Introduction to the Gospel of John (= *IVG*)], Ediz. Crit. 41, 2009 Roma, lib. I, lezione XXI, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 122–123.

<sup>12</sup> Cleary, chapter 3, p. 57.



not present to the spirit in the way that ideal being is present to it in the natural order. Ideal being allows us to intuit being in an initial form only. Through this (idea of being) we perceive intellectually only real contingent things. The idea of being is indeterminate and can only be determined by external things modifying our feeling. But if being itself comes to be perceived not only initially but completely in its term, this perception is the perception of God and in such a case God is the form of the understanding. "This perception of being made finite or determined, is either *indistinct*, and then it is that of grace, as we perceive God in this life; or it is *distinct*, and is that of glory, as we shall perceive God in the next life."<sup>13</sup>

### The light of grace and the light of glory in Scripture

Rosmini makes several references to Scripture regarding the light of grace and the light of glory:

*'Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'.<sup>14</sup>*

*'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God'.<sup>15</sup>*

*'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us'.<sup>16</sup>*

He speaks of the present state as *'the glory of his grace'.<sup>17</sup>*

But through grace we *do* perceive God (Being in its term) so that the substance of God becomes the form of our supernatural reality.

Moreover, grace is not the final action of God in the human spirit. The supreme Being reveals himself through grace indistinctly, not clearly. The certainty of the interior presence of the ALL is not accompanied by a perception which is total: *totum sed not totaliter*, as the theologians say. Faith begins with the indistinct perception of God, and draws us on to what remains hidden of God.<sup>18</sup> "The perception of God is not only difficult to notice, but it is also indistinct. We perceive ALL Being, ALL Good, but we do not succeed in perceiving any particular good; we find nothing with which to compare this perception. By grace God does not communicate himself openly to human beings. He is satisfied to infuse into them the certainty that the true Good is hidden in that mysterious and secret ALL, and to increase in them the desire to behold this Good one day unveiled."<sup>19</sup> This mysterious presence is the object of faith in this present life drawing us on to an ever-closer union. But when God is perceived distinctly in the next life we pass from a state of grace to a state of glory. *'For now we see*

<sup>13</sup> AS, *ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>14</sup> Rom 3: 23.

<sup>15</sup> Jn 11: 40.

<sup>16</sup> Rom 8: 18.

<sup>17</sup> Eph 1: 6 NJB.

<sup>18</sup> Cleary, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Umberto Muratore, *Conoscere Rosmini*, Edizioni Rosminiane, 1999, *La Teologia*, p. 185. (Capitals mine).

*in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.*<sup>20</sup> As we have seen, Rosmini points out that grace acts through our negative idea of God (faith) reinforcing it and rendering it effective. In the meantime we feel God operating in us, though we might not always be aware of this, and then only with difficulty **(Ref. 4)**.

The mode of God's operation in man is described in Scripture and the Fathers under the likeness of a seal impressing its image on wax. It is united with the wax by contact but it is always distinct in its own nature. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul says, '*and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*'<sup>21</sup> Rosmini says that he who is the image of the Father, and unites himself to us, is felt by our soul and thus our souls receive the impression and image of him. He quotes Jerome and Basil **(Ref. 5)**.

A final point in Rosmini's treatment of Deiform grace deals with the fact that we do not have an idea of God but only a perception of him. Real beings inform the human mind by means of *ideas*, that is, *ideal being*. We conceive them independently of their reality. When I affirm that this diamond ring really exists, I do not have the actual diamond ring in my mind but only the idea of it together with the persuasion that the reality corresponds with my idea! But in God the real mode of being is so united with the ideal mode that we cannot imagine any division without destroying the concept of God. In other words we cannot have the idea of God (ideal mode) without having the perception of the substance of God himself (the real mode). God cannot inform our mind with the idea of himself without informing us of himself. As we have seen, we do not have a positive idea of God but only the perception of his substance.

God is *subsistent* being, he exists by necessity and by essence. In order that we may know God we must know his subsistence. But by pure ideas we know only the *possibility* of things so it is impossible to know God by pure ideas. In God there is no distinction between subsistence and essence (the ideal mode of being), whereas in all other things we can distinguish between its essence and its existence. We can distinguish the idea of the diamond ring (in our mind) and the real diamond ring. In conclusion we must accept that the human spirit, elevated to the state of grace, has an immediate perception of God, that is, God himself with his own proper substance makes himself the objective form of the soul. Rosmini again quotes Cyril of Alexandria and Basil in support of his teaching<sup>22</sup> **(Ref. 6)**.

### **Triniform grace**

God unites himself to us formally through grace. But God subsists in three persons each of whom is the divine substance itself with a relation which constitutes it a person. Therefore it follows that the three persons of the Holy Trinity unite themselves formally to the just person. Rosmini calls this operation by which such a

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<sup>20</sup> 1 *Cor*, 13: 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Eph* 4: 30.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *AS*, *ibid*, pp. 137–139.

person has this threefold feeling a *triniform* one. Rosmini begins his treatment of Triniform Grace by considering the traces of the Trinity in the natural and the supernatural order of things.

### **Traces of the Blessed Trinity in the natural order of things**

Rosmini starts by quoting St Thomas:

<b>Creation belongs not just to the Divine Nature but also to the Divine Persons</b>
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<p>‘The Divine Persons have causality respecting the creation of things, according to the <i>mode</i> of their procession. For as we have seen above when speaking of the Divine knowledge and will, God is cause of things through his intellect and through his will, as a craftsman is cause of the things that he makes; he is such through a word conceived in his intellect and through a love of his will directed towards those works. So God the Father makes the creature through his Word which is his Son, and through his love which is the Holy Spirit. Hence the processions of the three persons, are the type of the production of the creatures in as much as they include the essential attributes of knowledge and of will.’<sup>23</sup></p>
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The action of God, then, is *one*, but the *mode* is *threefold*. Rosmini quotes Athanasius, Hilary and Cyril of Alexandria on this **(Ref. 7)**.

Now if the universe is the work of the three persons it is to be expected that the effect will be like the cause and it is consistent that vestiges of the Trinity will be found in the universe. St Thomas states this in his Summa.<sup>24</sup>

<b>The vestiges of the Trinity will be found in the universe</b>
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<p>Every effect in some degree represents its cause, but differently. For some effects represent only the causality of the cause, but not its form; as smoke represents fire. Such a representation is called a ‘trace’: for a trace shows that someone has passed by but not who it is. Other effects represent the cause as regards the similitude of its form, as fire generated represents fire generating; and a statue of Mercury represents Mercury; and this is called the representation of ‘image.’ Now the processions of the divine Persons are referred to the acts of intellect and will, as was said above (27). For the Son proceeds as the word of the intellect; and the Holy Ghost proceeds as love of the will. Therefore in rational creatures, possessing intellect and will, there is found the representation of the Trinity by way of image, inasmuch as there is found in them the word conceived, and the love proceeding.</p>
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<sup>23</sup> ST, I, XLV, art. VI.

<sup>24</sup> ST, I, XLV, art VII.

In accordance with his teaching on being which is the universal essence of created being, Rosmini reminds us that this exists in three modes, *real being*, *ideal being*, and *moral being*. *Real being* consists in *feeling* (bodies are its matter), *ideal being* (ideas) constitutes *knowledge* and *moral being* constitutes practical *recognition* or reflection. Real being is being in so far as it is subsistent; ideal being is being in so far as it is knowable, moral being is being in so far as it is loveable. We normally reserve the word *being* to real being; we give the word *truth* to ideal being and *good* to moral being. Rosmini goes on to say that ancient philosophy reduced the nature of the universe to these three elements and that, therefore, he believes that this is the formula which most completely expresses the trace of the Trinity on the universe.

Augustine says, 'When therefore we regard the Creator, who is understood by the things that are made, we must needs understand the Trinity of whom there appear traces in the creature, as is fitting'.<sup>25</sup> Rosmini refers to Augustine at length.<sup>26</sup>

Having said all this it is important to realise that without divine revelation humanity would be unable to infer from the vestiges of the Trinity in the universe the Trinity itself. There is a difference between inferring the threefold form of things and threefold activity in the cause of things (which St Augustine and St Thomas admit) but a very different thing to deduce the mystery of Three Divine Persons in one Divine substance! The trinity of cause inferred from the trinity of effect would be the same species. The Holy Trinity is entirely different from the threefold mode in which created things exist. *Real being*, *ideal being* and *moral being* do not form three persons nor are they united in one sole substance. This is obvious when we consider that ideal being in us is object with relation to our intellect and does not subsist by itself. Similarly moral being is only the *accidental form* of real intelligent being and so has no subsistence in itself apart from real being. That leaves real being which in us subsists as a person who *alone* subsists in one substance. 'The mystery of the Blessed Trinity, on the contrary, as proposed by the Catholic faith, consists of one Substance, in which there are three Personal Subsistences, that is to say, three distinct persons. It was therefore impossible for man to know from the effect viz. from the universe, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity in God, which is its cause.

It was impossible therefore for natural reason to have recourse of itself to this mystery in order to explain the universe, because it could never have thought that one substance in three persons was possible, just as a man born blind could never have thought of the possibility of colours unless someone who has the use of sight had told him of them; and the reason is that if he had never heard colours spoken of, the man born blind could never have had recourse to colours as an explanation of certain facts

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<sup>25</sup> Augustine *De Trinitate*, lib. VI, cap. X, n.12.

<sup>26</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 142–146.

of nature which might have come to his knowledge although the existence of colours is the only hypothesis capable of accounting satisfactorily for the facts in question.<sup>27</sup>

### **Traces of and sharing in the Blessed Trinity in the supernatural order**

Rosmini begins by re-iterating the difference between a divine operation and a deiform operation. Every action which has God for its principle and cause is a divine operation. But an action which has God for its principle and cause *and its term i.e. its effect* is a deiform action. Creation is a divine action but not a deiform one because creatures (the effect) are not God and God is not united formally to them in the natural order. When St Paul said in his speech in Athens: ‘For “in him we live and move and have our being”’, he was not necessarily referring to the supernatural order but rather referring to the divine action. He simply says that God is not far from us, not *in* us.<sup>28</sup> But in the case of grace the action of God is deiform because God unites himself *formally* to human beings. This action belongs to the supernatural order.

But, as I have said above, the divine substance which communicates itself formally subsists in three persons. Therefore the three persons formally unite themselves to the soul. Such individuals will have within them a threefold deiform feeling which can correctly be called *triniform*.

The deiform operation is experienced through the feeling it produces, and in the same way, according to the Fathers of the Church, we experience the triniform operation that is a feeling of the Most Holy Trinity which makes us perceive and experience the Holy Trinity, though in an imperfect way in this life.

Rosmini quotes St Augustine ‘There is an interior manifestation of God of which the impious know nothing, because to them no manifestation has been made of God the Father and of the Holy Spirit’, and again ‘Lest anyone should suppose that it is the Father and the Son alone who take up their abode with those who love them, let us remember what is said about the Holy Spirit. “The world cannot receive him because it does not see him or know him; but you know him. He shall dwell with you and shall be in you”. See therefore that the Holy Spirit also makes his dwelling in the saints together with the Father and the Son: interiorly indeed as God in his own temple. God the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit come to us, when we go to them: they come to help us, we go by obedience: they come to illuminate us, we go by contemplation: they come to fill us, we go to receive them: so that there is in us a vision of them, not indeed an external one but an INTERNAL VISION and their abiding in us may not be transitory but eternal.’<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *AS, Ibid.*, p. 147. Rosmini supposes that a man born blind knows that an astronomer measures the size of a heavenly body, although it is so far off, without hearing anything and without the aid of smell, taste, touch. If he has heard nothing about light he could not have recourse to it to explain the fact. Yet light is essential to the hypothesis. *Ibid.*, art. XVII, pp. 147–8 and note 260.

<sup>28</sup> *Acts*, 17: 28. Cf. *AS, ibid.*, note 276, p. 155.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *In Johannis Evangelium tractatus centum viginti quatuor*, tract. LXXVI, 2.

It is not necessary that we should always be conscious of this feeling. It exists often without people reflecting on it. Sometimes also it is not a distinct and developed feeling but hidden in the soul and unknown to the person possessing it.

Even though this feeling is indistinct it is a force acting in us and which fills us perfectly and satisfies and contents us completely so that we feel (and are sometimes conscious of perceiving) *all being, all good*. This totality has three forms or modes.

**The first mode** of feeling *all being* is that of a *power* or *force* which acts in us. It is invisible but a supreme creating force which pervades our personality. In the greatness of this force we feel *all being* and this force is the source of our fear of God.

**The second mode** of feeling *all being* is by means of a *knowledge* of God, an idea which, though negative, constitutes faith. 'In this notion and thought of God we see such beauty, that it ravishes and overwhelms our intellect: we feel that this idea is superior to all else because it is at once substance and food for the soul, which it so satisfies and fills that nothing remains for it to desire except to plunge deeper and deeper into that ocean of light, more and more to grasp this knowledge and so enter into full possession of it. This overwhelms us with happiness.'<sup>30</sup>

**The third mode** of *all being* is when this knowledge diffuses and spreads in us a light which draws to it our will and love by its ineffable beauty. 'We experience a love so great that it has a plenitude of substance, a manna which nourishes, a wine that exhilarates; it is the food of the soul of incomparable delicacy which it finds intoxicating, in which it drowns, as in an ocean of love, where it reposes, satisfied in all its desires, feeling that no more remains for it to desire and that in this love alone it possesses all.'<sup>31</sup> This feeling then is a feeling of *force*, a feeling of a *truth* (a subsistent truth which illuminates), and a diffusing *love*. Jesus speaks of this indwelling when he says: '*Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them*'.<sup>32</sup> And: '*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever*'.<sup>33</sup>

Rosmini expands on his explanation of this feeling saying that the soul perceives the same thing three times, that is, in the feeling of *force*, in the feeling of *knowledge*, in the feeling of *love*, the person is always persuaded that he perceives the *all*. He goes on to quote the Scriptures and explains that the saints when they speak of one or other of these three feelings use the same expressions saying that they comprehend *all* in this feeling, yet the feeling of a *power* would seem to be something different from the feeling of *truth* and from the feeling of *love*. We come up against the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the Three in One and the One in Three (**Ref. 8**).

It should be pointed out that for those in a state of grace the *totality* of God may be shared in different degrees. But of course not *totally* because God is incomprehensible.

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<sup>30</sup> *AS, Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157–8. I have retained Rosmini's own words here as they reveal his own mystical appreciation of union with the Blessed Trinity. Italics in Scriptural references are mine.

<sup>32</sup> *Jn* 14:23.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

### *Deiform and Triniform Grace*

Not even our Lady can perceive all the divine substance which surpasses the capacity of every creature. I may be able to penetrate this totality more deeply but it will always be *all being*. When, then, we experience this sublime infinite feeling we comprehend essentially all being. This is a deiform operation of God. But when we perceive the divine persons, when this feeling which we experience is threefold we feel in us three subsistences and feel that in each there is *all being*. This distinction can be clearly understood if we consider that there are religions which do not accept the Trinity, for instance the Jews and the Muslims. Their perception of God will be Deiform but not Triniform. This is due to a limitation of knowledge of the divine nature.

It is true that human feeling is threefold because we can experience the force in receiving the knowledge of the object of the feeling, the knowledge itself and the affection that comes from the possession of the knowledge. But this is just a threefold form of one feeling. The only thing that really touches the soul is the perception or the idea of the object of this human feeling; the love it experiences is simply a consequence. However, the supernatural feeling is Triniform, the soul perceiving the same thing three times, in the feeling of the force, in the feeling of the knowledge and in the feeling of the love and is convinced that it perceives *all being* in each, and that it is impossible to imagine anything greater than this.

In feeling the deiform action of God we may feel God as power, wisdom and love, but these are what theologians call attributes of God, that is to say, although we attribute power to the Father, wisdom to the Son and love to the Holy Spirit all three persons share in these attributes. To feel the triniform action within us we must feel the *property* of the persons, that is, an infinite being acting with subsistent force, the Son acting with subsistent knowableness and the Holy Spirit acting with a subsistent love and lovableness, three subsistences and in each one the same totality of being, all being in three modes, the generator, the generated and the spirated. These three modes of feeling are proper to the New Covenant.

The Blessed Trinity	Properties	Attributes
God the Father (Generator)	<i>Subsistent Force</i>	Power
God the Son (Generated)	<i>Subsistent Knowableness</i>	Wisdom
God the Holy Spirit (Spirated)	<i>Subsistent love, loveableness</i>	love

One or other of these feelings is described in Holy Scripture saying that they possess *all* but seemingly distinct, *power* from *truth*, truth from *love*. Rosmini gives examples,

Proverbs (Wisdom: Knowledge)	<i>'Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those</i>
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	<i>who hold her fast are called happy.</i> <sup>34</sup>
John (Knowledge)	Also in the New Testament Jesus Christ makes eternal life consist in knowledge and the source of all good for he says ' <i>And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent</i> '. <sup>35</sup>
Song of Songs (Love)	<i>'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.'</i> <sup>36</sup>
1 John (Love)	<i>'God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.'</i> <sup>37</sup>

The revelation of divine truths has been made known to humanity, not all at once, but through successive stages in proportion to the need and capacity of the human race.

In the letter to the Hebrews we read: '*Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and in various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*'<sup>38</sup>

The knowledge of God, therefore, begins with the unity of God and his attributes, and knowledge of the three persons which perfects this knowledge is experienced only with the coming of Christ.

### Grace and faith in the Old and New Testaments

Rosmini goes on to say that the *triniform* operation of grace belongs to the time of the Gospel and that before the time of Christ the operation of grace was *deiform* only.<sup>39</sup> Human beings who are in a state of grace partake of God in varying degrees though, of course, never fully. This degree does not depend on God but on the part of us human beings, that is, on our own capability. So we partake of *all* God in a more or less complete way *totum sed non totaliter* as I said above. The unity of the Divine nature was the basis of the Jewish revelation and that of the evangelical revelation is the

<sup>34</sup> *Prov* 3: 13–18.

<sup>35</sup> *Jn* 17: 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Song* 8: 7.

<sup>37</sup> *1 Jn* 4: 16.

<sup>38</sup> *Heb* 1: 1–4.

<sup>39</sup> In the deiform action of God we may feel the appropriations (attributes) of the persons only, not the feeling of the persons themselves.



Trinity in which knowledge given by God to man has been completed. So 'it is clear that the grace which sanctified man before the coming of Christ may properly be called *deiform*, the title of *deitriniform* grace being reserved for the grace of the Redeemer.'<sup>40</sup> The books of the Old Testament suppose the Holy Trinity and allusions are continually made to it, but it is the appropriate titles of the persons that are mentioned and not the properties of the persons. The Three Persons in One God is not taught in the Old Testament because not revealed at that stage in the history of the human race (**Ref. 9**).

The grace of the Old Testament 'manifested itself in man by a divine power which made the law of God superior to all other things in his heart, and by a feeling of expectation, a feeling of hope which promised him the possession of the *totality of being* and gave him a certain pledge of that possession.'<sup>41</sup> Not all the Jews served God through a base fear. Some were influenced by a reasonable fear and through love, being made free through grace, as Augustine says.<sup>42</sup> We know from the New Testament that the saints of the Old Testament acted through faith. We call Abraham 'our father in faith',<sup>43</sup> and '...Abraham "*believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness*", so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham'.<sup>44</sup>

Those holy men acted through faith and faith is a feeling of God. But not faith in three distinct persons subsisting in the divine nature. This came with Christ's revelation. He manifested firstly himself, then the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Gregory Nazianzen looked for a reason why the person of the Holy Spirit was not expressly mentioned in the Old Testament and concluded that Christ has to be known first and Christ was not clearly known in the Old Testament.<sup>45</sup> St Augustine says that even the just of the Old Testament were saved through implicit faith in Jesus Christ, that is, the Incarnate Word, not yet revealed but hidden. Thus the hidden word was the principle of revelation even in the Old Testament.<sup>46</sup>

Faith, the first act of grace, was rooted in the unity of God in the Old Testament but in the Trinity in the New Testament. In the latter the Gospel is based on faith in the knowledge and faith in the Divine Word. Rosmini quotes the long prayer of Christ in John chapter 17. '*I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given*

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<sup>40</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art, XVIII, p. 171.

<sup>41</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine *Epistulae*, LXXXIX, 15 and XCV. Cf. *AS, ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Eucharistic Prayer I.

<sup>44</sup> *Gal* 3: 6–7.

<sup>45</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Carmina*, Lib I, sectio I, carm III, vv 10–22. Cf. *AS, ibid.*, note 322, p. 172.

<sup>46</sup> Augustine, *Epistolae*, LXXXIX, 14.

*me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them.*<sup>47</sup>

Rosmini comments as follows: Christ compares his dwelling in us with his dwelling in the Father: Christ as God is substantially one with the Father and as man he is united personally with the Word, who is of one substance with the Father. His union with the Father is the type to which we ought to conform in our union with each other, a union which finds its completion in the Word. He wills that where he is we also may be and that as he delights to be in us so we should delight to be in him. He wishes to give us the glory that the Father has given him before the world began, this is nothing less than the Divine Substance.<sup>48</sup>

Likewise the symbol of the vine and branches: *‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.*<sup>49</sup> Jesus speaks here of a union of substance. It is the complete fulness of grace of which St John says: *‘The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*<sup>50</sup>

The holy people of the Old Testament shared in the grace of the Redeemer in whom they had faith but this faith was implicit only. The person of the Word was not communicated to them but only certain spiritual gifts because the incarnation of the Word had not yet taken place. He had not yet revealed himself<sup>51</sup> **(Ref. 10)**.

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<sup>47</sup> Jn 17: 20–26.

<sup>48</sup> AS, *ibid.*, p. 177–178.

<sup>49</sup> Jn 15: 1–5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 17.

<sup>51</sup> Rosmini allows that some of the greatest saints of the Old Testament, such as Abraham may have had a perception of the divinity of Christ, exceptionally and transiently, by an extraordinary favour, an explicit faith in him. But this is very different to the habitual indwelling of the Word in the souls of the baptised. Rosmini quotes St John 15 again: *‘I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you’* (Jn 15: 5–7). See also Jn 5: 38; 6: 54, 56; 8: 31.

Ref. 1.	The action of grace is Deiform
Didymus of Alexandria	<p>‘Some men are said to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But no one either in Scripture or in common speech is said to be filled by a creature. For neither in Scripture nor in common speech is it allowable to say that anyone is filled by an angel, or by one of the Thrones or Dominations. Certainly such a phrase belongs to the Divine Nature only.’ And a little further, ‘The presence of an angel or some other excellent nature which has been made, does not fill the mind and the feeling of man, because this very nature itself has to seek outside itself for its own fullness. Hence when anyone receiving into himself from the plenitude of the Saviour is made full of wisdom, fortitude and justice and of the word of God, so he is who is filled with the Holy Spirit is filled immediately with all the Divine gifts, of wisdom and science, faith and other virtues. He therefore who fills all creatures who thereby are enabled to receive virtue and wisdom, is not one of those things who is Himself filled, whence we infer that he cannot be any other substance except that by which all creatures subsist.’<sup>52</sup></p>
Ref. 2.	Grace is a real action on the soul
Cyril of Alexandria	<p>God acts on the soul with his very substance and not simply by way of ideas. ‘We are called and we are in truth “temples of God” and “Gods”. I ask our adversaries why they say that this is true, namely that we partake of a naked grace destitute of subsistence. But it is not so: God forbid! For we are temples of the existent and subsistent Spirit, and for this reason it is that we are called “Gods” and being those who have been made partakers of the ineffable nature, by means of conjunction with it.’<sup>53</sup></p>
Basil of Caesarea	<p>‘If men do not know how to inform the various matters according to certain similitudes except by making them partakers of their ideas; how can the creature rise to the similitude of God except by being made partaker of the divine character?’ And since the divine character is not seized by a pure idea he adds ‘Now the divine character is not such as is the human (idea); but it is living and an image which truly exists having the power of effecting the image, by which all the things that partake of it are constituted images of God.’<sup>54</sup></p>
Didymus of Alexandria	<p>Distinguishes between the ideal and the real order to which the Holy Spirit belongs. ‘Seeing that the Holy Spirit can be imparted as wisdom and discipline may be imparted, we must observe that it possesses a substance that does not consist in empty words of science but the selfsame good subsists with such a nature that it sanctifies and fills all things with good,</p>

<sup>52</sup> Didymus of Alexandria, *Liber De Spiritu Sancto*, lib. II, n. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *de SS. Trinitate* dialogus VII.

<sup>54</sup> Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium*, lib. V.

	according to which nature some are said to be filled with the Holy Spirit as it is written in the Acts of the Apostles (Ch. II) “and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the words of God with confidence”. <sup>55</sup>
Origen	Rosmini also quotes Origen showing that he distinguishes the real from the ideal. The Holy Spirit is not a mere idea but an <i>intellectual substance</i> . <sup>56</sup>

<b>Ref. 3.</b>	<b>God acts on the soul as the formal cause</b>
Basil the Great	“The life which the Spirit emits from itself in producing any other does not separate itself from itself. But as the fire is partly heat which it retains within itself and partly heat which it gives to water or any other material so in like manner the Spirit has both in itself its own individual life, and those who share in it possess the same divine and heavenly life.” <sup>57</sup>
Cyril of Alexandria	“If the fragrance of scent communicates its own power to clothes and in a certain way transforms into itself those things in which it is found, why cannot the Holy Spirit which has its own existence by nature from God, of itself make those share in the Divine Nature in which it is found.” <sup>58</sup>
Maximus	Says that Christ ‘reinvigorating our nature to immutability, made it not in nature but in quality divine, informing it constantly with his own Spirit: as if water mixed with wine so that it has a power given to it by reason of the qualities added to it.’ <sup>59</sup> (Note in this simile the wine does not change only the water).

<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>The Fathers confirm that God is the objective form of human beings by grace</b>
Basil	“Therefore the Holy Spirit in as much as He has force to give perfection to his rational creatures and fill up the sum of their perfection obtains the concept of form. For he who lives now no longer to the flesh, but is guided by the Spirit of God, such a one is called a spiritual son of God and becomes conformed to the image of the Son of God. In the same way as the faculty of seeing is in the sound eye, so the operation of the Holy Spirit is in a purified soul.” <sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Didymus of Alexandria, *de Spiritu Sancto*, Lib. I, n.8.

<sup>56</sup> Origen, Lib I, Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, cap I, n. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Basil, *Adversus Eunomium*, lib. IV.

<sup>58</sup> Cyril, *In Joannis Evangelium*, lib. XI, cap. II.

<sup>59</sup> Maximus, *capitulum quinquies centenorum*, centuria II, n. 26.

<sup>60</sup> Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto*, cap. XXVI, n. 61.

Athanasius	<p>‘St. Athanasius dwells on the saying of St. Peter that we are made partakers of the Divine Nature. These words in fact taken simply and literally imply that the Divinity becomes the form of our spirit... “The Spirit is an ointment, a seal which anoints all things and stamps the impression of the Word’ and again ‘in this way, we having received the impression as St. Peter says, are justly made partakers also of the divine nature. And thus the whole creature becomes partaker of the Word, and by the Spirit we are said to be all partakers of God. ‘Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple’.”</p> <p>Hence he argues that the Holy Spirit is God.’<sup>61</sup></p>
Cyril of Alexandria	<p>‘Shall those be partakers of the Divine Nature, according to the saying of the saints, to whom the Holy Spirit is communicated, if this Spirit is to be numbered among things created and does not rather proceed to us from the Divine Nature; nor is it as if it passes into us as from something separated from us, but rather that he is in us, after the manner, so to speak, of a certain quality of divine being (this is the formal union) and inhabits the saints and remains with them perpetually if indeed they purge the eye (of their soul) with all diligence and preserve the grace with the unwearied labour of every virtue’.</p> <p><sup>62</sup></p> <p>‘This Father also uses the not inappropriate similitude in regard to that quality of the Divine Nature that man receives by grace, comparing God to the gold and man to the gilded statue because in the gilding there is the gold itself and not any other substance but that which is produced on it by the action of the gold.’<sup>63</sup></p>

Ref. 5.	The mode of God’s action in us
Jerome	<p>‘We are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God in order that our spirit and our soul may receive the impression of the signet of God and that image and similitude, according to which we were formed in the beginning. The signet of the Holy Spirit, according to the words of the Saviour is impressed and impressed by God himself.’<sup>64</sup></p>
Basil	<p>[God is] ‘an image that effects an image’.<sup>65</sup> The Word who is the image of the Father unites himself to us and is felt by our soul and thus our soul receives the impression and image of Him. This is the distinction we ought to make between subject and object. When we the subject contemplate an object (the Word) we experience a modification from the object and this passion suffered</p>

<sup>61</sup> Athanasius, *Epistola I ad Serapionem*, nn. 23, 24. 2 *Pet* 1: 4 and 1 *Cor* 3: 16–17. *AS ibid.*, 128–129.

<sup>62</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, lib. IX.

<sup>63</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>64</sup> Jerome, *Commentaria in Epistolam ad Ephesios*

<sup>65</sup> Basil, *Adversus Eunomium*, lib. V.

	from the perception of the object, is the image which is produced in us and which we may call subjective. St Basil expresses the distinction which always subsists between the object operating (God) and I myself (the subject who receives this operation). <sup>66</sup>
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<b>Ref. 6.</b>	<b>We have a perception of the substance of God within us by grace</b>
Cyril of Alexandria	‘Man cannot partake through means of any creature of that which is superior to any creature.’ <sup>67</sup> He says in another place that when we are made partakers, as the Holy Scripture says of the Holy Spirit, ‘we are not made partakers of a creature but of the Divinity. For if the creature dwells within us we are truly made sharers of creatures but not of the Divinity.’ <sup>68</sup>

<b>Ref. 7.</b>	<b>The action of God is one but the mode is threefold</b>
Athanasius	Affirms the unity of the Divine Operation, he nevertheless shows in what different modes each of the Divine Persons concurs in that operation according to the proposition we have indicated — speaking of the Trinity he says: ‘It is like to itself, one undivided nature, and one in its operation. For the Father, THROUGH the Son, IN the Holy Spirit does all things; and the unity of the Holy Trinity is preserved; and so we preach in the Church one only God who is ABOVE all, and THROUGH all and IN all things.’ <sup>69</sup>
Hilary	‘as this Holy Trinity is of one individual substance, so is it individual also in its operations: although there are things in the works of God, which in a singular mode belong to one or other of the persons.’ <sup>70</sup>
Cyril	But this threefold Divine Operation does not take away the unity of that operation, because St. Cyril of Alexandria reflects where there is identity of nature, under no respect divided, there also the action cannot be divided even though we understand such action to be done by one or other of the Persons in modes that are various and diverse. <sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. *AS*, *ibid*, p. 132.

<sup>67</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *De SS Trinitate*, Dialogus VII.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, *In excerptis dialogis de Spiritu Sancto*, Dialogus VII.

<sup>69</sup> Athanasius, *Epistola ad Serapionem*, n. 28. Cf. *AS*, *ibid.*, art XVII, p. 140.

<sup>70</sup> Hilary, Work not mentioned. See *AS*, lib. I, cap. V, art. XVI, footnote p. 141.

<sup>71</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *in Joannis Evangelium*, lib. X.

<b>Ref. 8.</b>	<b>The perception of the three persons</b>
Cyril of Alexandria	‘As he who receives the Son who is a most exact image of the Father, receives the Father also; so he that receives the image of the Son, that is to say, the Holy Spirit <sup>72</sup> has thereby the Son likewise, and in the Son the Father also’. <sup>73</sup>
Ambrose	‘The Holy Spirit comes in the same way that the Father comes; for where the Father is, there is the Son and there the Holy Spirit’. <sup>74</sup>
Athanasius	‘As that which the Son beholds, the Father also beholds: so he who has the Holy Spirit, has the Son, and he who has the Son is a temple of God. As St. Paul writes: “Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you since you received him from God”’. <sup>75</sup>
Basil	‘The Divine Persons are never found separated one from the other; so that he who draws the end of a chain draws also the last link as well. Therefore for example he who has truly received into himself the Son will also have the Father and the Holy Spirit who are drawn by the Son himself. For he who is always in the Father cannot withdraw from him neither will he ever be separate from his own Spirit which in him worketh all things. So also he who admits within him the Father, by this very fact, admits the Son also, and the Holy Spirit. It is impossible even to think of any schism or division so as to understand the Son to be without the Father or the Son without the Holy Spirit: but in these things we find an ineffable communion, so that a separation cannot be expressed in words or mentally conceived’. <sup>76</sup>
<b>Ref. 9.</b>	<b>The Fathers describe how only deiform knowledge of God was possible under the Old Covenant.</b>
Hilary	Rosmini recounts how St Hilary describes these steps in stating how he arrived at the Catholic faith. From philosophy and paganism he passed through the light of faith to the unity of God and thence to the reading of St John’s Gospel, in which he read of the generation of the Word and finally the whole mystery of the Trinity was revealed to him. <sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The Holy Spirit is called the *Image*, not properly, but in a certain way, namely because he partakes of the same essence and nature.

<sup>73</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus*. Lib. XXXIII.

<sup>74</sup> Ambrose, *De Spir. Sanct.*, Lib. I, c. X.

<sup>75</sup> Athanasius, *Epistola*. III, *Ad Serapionem* n. 3.

<sup>76</sup> Basil, *Epistola*. 43, n. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Hilary, *de Trinitate*, lib. I, n. 10.

Epiphanius	In the more recent books of the Old Testament, namely in the prophets, the traces of the Trinity are clearer. This is what he says concerning this progress. 'In Moses we find chiefly set forth a divinity, one and singular: in the Prophets, a twofold personality is suggested, finally the Trinity was demonstrated in the Gospel and in the New Law.' <sup>78</sup> Rosmini also quotes Tertullian, Isidore of Pelusium and Augustine.
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<b>Ref. 10.</b>	<b>The knowledge of the Word belongs to the Gospel</b>
Cyril of Alexandria	'The law of Moses cried out to the children of Israel; "the Lord thy God is one only Lord", it proposed not to the ancients the dogma of the Son, but aimed at drawing them from the worship of many gods, and calling them to the worship, to the adoration of the one only God. But afterwards when our Lord Jesus Christ was made man, he himself made known with many miracles and operations and manifested that the one nature of the divinity was understood and subsisted truly in Trinity.' <sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, lib. III, haeresis LXXIV; Ex Ancorato ercerpta quaedam, n. X.

<sup>79</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis evangelium*, lib. IX, cap. XIV, verse 7.



## Chapter 4

### The Holy Spirit

#### Preview

In this chapter we consider the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Theologians call this ‘the spiration of the Holy Spirit’. The Holy Spirit is subsistent love. Whereas the Word acts in the *intellect*, the Spirit acts on the *will*. The Word only enters into a person if the latter is willing to receive him. The Holy Spirit does not always act on the soul personally but through his gifts. These are appropriated to the Holy Spirit whereas the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit is proper to him alone.<sup>1</sup> Before the Incarnation and descent of the Holy Spirit the persons of the Word and the Holy Spirit were not given to those in a state of grace. The Word was given when the Word became flesh through his physical presence. The person of the Holy Spirit was not given until Pentecost. Rosmini explains that the disciples did not always completely understand Christ’s words to them because the Holy Spirit who would make clear the teaching of Christ had not yet come. He cites a favourite passage of his in John’s gospel, when Philip asks Jesus to show them the Father (*Jn* 14 v.8 ff.). The Word teaches in a direct fashion but the Spirit teaches through reflection on these truths. In demonstrating that the perception of the Holy Spirit is that of a real and subsistent being Rosmini comments on the beautiful scene of the woman at the well in John (*Jn* 4: 1–42). He concludes this section with an explanation of the order in which the divine persons reveal themselves to us, taking the words of Jesus ‘*No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me*’ and ‘*No one comes to the Father except through me*’. This part is somewhat philosophical but some of the explanations have already been given previously so it shouldn’t be too difficult.

The Son in Scripture and Tradition is named, word, reason, speech. Speech and reason are the means by which truth is manifested and revealed so that we may apprehend it. Rosmini refers to St Augustine, St Cyril and Theophylact (**Ref. 1**). The third person of the Blessed Trinity is called the spirit of holiness or Holy Spirit. The Spirit infuses sanctity (**Ref. 2**).

Theologians explain that the Holy Spirit issues forth as given, not born: in other words, to use a theological term, the Holy Spirit is *spirated*, not generated as is the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 39 ff.

Son.<sup>2</sup> Christians are made partakers of this same love by which Father and Son love one another, the same sanctity by which the Father and Son are holy. There is no distinction of acts in the Spirit so the act by which he exists is the same act by which he is given to us. 'It is therefore an intrinsic and constitutive property of the Holy Spirit according to the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church, that in as much as the Holy Spirit is the notional sanctity and charity of the Father and of the Son, so also is he the principle of our sanctity and charity.'<sup>3</sup>

**St Bernard of Clairvaux on the Holy Spirit**

'If the Father is understood as the one who kisses and the Son as the one who is kissed, it will not be inappropriate for the kiss to be understood as the Holy Spirit, since he is the imperturbable peace between Father and Son, the firm adhesive, the indivisible love, the indivisible unity.'<sup>4</sup>

'The Spirit is the indissoluble bond of the Trinity through which just as the Father and the Son are one so also are we one in them.'<sup>5</sup>

In a rather complicated passage Augustine explains that the Holy Spirit is not generated as the Son, but he proceeds from the Father and the Son as capable of being given. And he was already 'gift' before there was anyone to whom he could be given.<sup>6</sup> Rosmini expands on what was said above, 'I say then that the being giveable to man, the being the diffuser of sanctity, must be that same act by which the Holy Spirit exists, by that act by which he proceeds from the Father and from the Son, because there cannot be in him any distinction of acts; but the act by which he exists makes him to be the notional love of the Father and the Son, their sanctity. It is therefore this same love by which the Father and the Son love one another, that same sanctity by which the Father and the Son are holy, of which Christians are made partakers; so that the principle of sanctity in God and in us is one.'<sup>7</sup> He again quotes St Augustine and also St Fulgentius saying, 'that our charity is a participation of the charity which God has in regard to himself and as we have said with St. Augustine and St. Fulgentius, we love God with God, and with nothing else could we love him, because with any other but himself we cannot even conceive him. Hence Christ expresses his desire to his heavenly Father that his disciples should receive the Holy Spirit, saying 'I

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. St Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Lib. V, cap. XIV. The union of the Father and the Son is intrinsic to the Holy Spirit. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica*, sermo VIII, n. 2 *AS*, lib. I, Cap. V. art XVIII, p. 182.

<sup>3</sup> *AS*, *ibid*, p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> St Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica*, serm. VIII, n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, *Sermones de Tempore*, In Octava Paschae, serm I, n. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate* caps. XIV and XV.

<sup>7</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, p. 183.

*made your name known to them and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*<sup>8</sup>

St Fulgentius says. 'In these words the Blessed Augustine does not hesitate to say that the Holy Spirit as he is the Charity and the Sanctity so he is the unity of the Father and of the Son; and he confidently maintains not only that there is something common between him and them, but they have one and the same consubstantial and co-eternal communion.'<sup>9</sup>

Just as the Word acts in the essence of the human soul, that is, the intellect, so the Holy Spirit acts in the essence of the soul in the *will*. Remember that the intellect is a passive power receiving ideas, which are determinations of the idea of being, the objective light of reason, whereas the active power of the soul is the will with which it loves being, irrespective of itself.

St Thomas says: 'For the name spirit in corporeal things seems to signify impulse and motion; for we call the breath and the wind by the term spirit. Now it is the property of love to move and impel the will of the lover towards the object loved'.<sup>10</sup>

**The Word does not enter our person except through an act of our will welcoming him.**

Rosmini wishes to explain how the action of grace begins in us under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He begins with a recapitulation and a reference to his previous teaching.

In the order of nature we perceive external things with an act of cognition which is *direct* and *necessary* and to which we are passive. This is a basic judgement which we make that, 'such as such exists'. Then with cognitions which are actively *reflective* and *voluntary*, we can see the excellence and defects in things and can make a valued judgement about the object.<sup>11</sup> We see this in our appraisal of other people and in particular of one person becoming increasingly fond of another in courtship. The one who longs for wisdom or virtue loves it the more he thinks of it and the better he knows its value. All this is communicated by the force of the will which is moving the intellect.

Now in the supernatural order the Word begins the action in our intellect, but he does not by this enter the *person* because our personality resides in our intellectual *will*. The Word must, therefore be received by our *will* in order to enter our *personality*.

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<sup>8</sup> *Jn* 17: 26. *AS*, lib. 1, cap. V, art. XVIII, p. 184.

<sup>9</sup> Fulgentius, *Epistola XIV ad Ferrandum*, reply to *quaestio quarta*.

<sup>10</sup> ST, I, XXXVI, art. I, in corp.

<sup>11</sup> JAD, chapter 5, *Fundamentals of Rosmini's Teaching on Ethics*, pp. 89–91.

St Thomas says: 'Wisdom which is a gift has its cause which is charity in the will but it has its essence in the intellect'.<sup>12</sup>

Rosmini quotes from the Book of Revelation : '*Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.*'<sup>13</sup> He applies this quotation to the person who voluntarily hears the voice of Christ but he cannot enter without the person willingly receiving him: it is not enough to hear; we have to open the door. This hearing is itself a beginning of the practical judgment, a disposition to it: and this word is used in other places by Christ; as when he reproves the Jews for not '*hearing the voice of his Father*'<sup>14</sup> and when he says that '*the sheep hear the voice of the shepherds*'.<sup>15</sup> St John says, '*He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.*'<sup>16</sup>

In another place also Christ says '*He who receives me, receives him who sent me*'<sup>17</sup> namely, his Father. To *receive*, therefore according to Scriptural phraseology is to adhere to Christ, *voluntarily, to recognise him* as Redeemer and to make that *act of faith* by which, as we have seen, grace begins in us, and which is an action that belongs to our will.

Those who do not have this reflex, voluntary and practical knowledge of the Word, are said in Holy Scripture to be in darkness. '*The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.*'<sup>18</sup> St. Paul also says: '*For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light — for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.*'<sup>19</sup> The effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth because by means of that first act, the practical judgment which follows the will, all good affections and good works follow. This mode of speaking is very common in Holy Scripture which gives the name of *darkness* to the will that refuses to recognise and adhere to the truth because of its own voluntary blindness;<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> ST, II II, XLV, art. II.

<sup>13</sup> Rev 3: 20.

<sup>14</sup> Jn 5: 37.

<sup>15</sup> Jn 10: 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 12. These quotations and the following ones together with Rosmini's commentary on them is a good example of Rosmini's spiritual interpretation of Scripture.

<sup>17</sup> Mt 10: 40 (NIV).

<sup>18</sup> Jn 1: 5.

<sup>19</sup> Eph 5: 8–9.

<sup>20</sup> This darkness in which man keeps himself is also called *blindness of heart*. St Paul says about such people, '*Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts*' (Eph 4: 18). Douai. This exegesis is a good example of the limitations that the Vulgate translation has imposed on Rosmini. The word 'blindness' does not appear in other modern English translations. On the other hand the basic meaning of his thought would be applicable. The text refers to 'hardness of heart' (NRSV). On the other hand Jn 9: 39–41 would surely typify his thought.

it gives the name of *light* to the will that enters into the truth and takes delight in it. This expression is most appropriate for we cannot be said to be enlightened by the ideal cognitions of our intellect, but only by our voluntary cognitions, by which the light of the truth enters into us; since the human person is not *intellect*, but the *will*. The person consists in an active principle and in the highest active principle in any nature. Jesus teaches us this when he makes a person's being wholly enlightened or dark depending on his *eye* being either luminous or darkened: *'If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness.'*<sup>21</sup> The eye is the will of man, in as much as it fixes the glance of the intellect on truth and thus enlightens it; or takes off its glance from the truth and refuses to receive the light, and therefore to love and follow it in the actions of life. So the Word does not enter us unless by the action of the Holy Spirit. The latter, as Athanasius says, is like a signet ring that impresses on souls the image of the Word thus representing a real not an ideal action. His other simile is that the Spirit is like oil that anoints the soul with the divine Word (Ref. 3).

### **The Holy Spirit and his gifts**

In the sanctification of the soul the *person* of the Holy Spirit does not always act so as to unite himself as a form of the soul but sometime leaves in it only some of his *effects*, that is to say, *gifts*. These are *appropriated* to the Spirit, and do not belong to him as a *property*. When the Holy Spirit personally informs the soul, its sanctification is then the *property* of the Holy Spirit.

In the case of the gifts of the spirit these are due to a divine not a deiform operation, that is to say, they are effects of God's action, *ad extra*, as the theologians say and outside the Holy Trinity. They are therefore to be attributed to the action of all three persons but to the Holy Spirit through appropriation only. Rosmini reminds us that it is the same in the Old Testament where the Word did not communicate himself *personally* but through external revelations. These were not the personal wisdom of God; they were the effects of God's action but not of the Word personally, though we attribute them to him through appropriation only. Rosmini cites both Scripture and the Fathers to illustrate the difference between the persons of the Word and of the Spirit and their gifts. St Paul says: *'he gave gifts to his people'*<sup>22</sup> and *'the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers'*<sup>23</sup> and again, *'but each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift'*.<sup>24</sup> In the letter to the Romans Paul says: *'He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?'*<sup>25</sup> Here we have Paul talking about the gift of God's Son (personal Wisdom) and the gift of everything else, that is, the various gifts.

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<sup>21</sup> *Lk* 11: 34.

<sup>22</sup> *Eph* 4: 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Rom* 8: 32.

The same can be said of the Holy Spirit. Rosmini quotes St Epiphanius and St Basil the Great **(Ref. 4)**.

The gifts of grace are really charity under different forms. Rosmini takes the theologians' distinction between essential and personal love. The essential love is the love of the Trinity; the personal love is the love which constitutes the person of the Holy Spirit. This last love is the subsisting love, the person. The first love is communicated in the gifts, the latter in the gift of the person in which the soul shares. When the Holy Spirit acts substantially in the soul and produces a feeling of which the Holy Spirit is the form and by which the soul feels the loveableness of God which is subsistent in itself, the soul experiences the personal love of God. As I have said, when speaking about triform grace, we are not always aware of this feeling within us, much less be able to explain it.

The communication of the gifts of the Spirit will vary according to the recipient: *'The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.'*<sup>26</sup> It is the same with the Word. Rosmini quotes the letter to the Colossians where it is said that in Christ *'are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'*<sup>27</sup> They are not hidden in Christ but rather hidden from us! Rosmini concludes: when the *feeling* of supernatural charity is not the feeling of the totality of being revealing itself to the soul as something subsistent, it cannot be called the formal feeling of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed a divine love but the essential love of God common to all three persons, a deiform feeling. But we appropriate this feeling to the Holy Spirit but not as a feeling proper to the Holy Spirit.

### **The Persons of the Word and the Holy Spirit were not given to people prior to the coming of Christ.**

In further explaining that the persons of the Word and Holy Spirit were not given before the coming of Christ, Rosmini refers to Patavius<sup>28</sup> who comments that St Gregory Nazianzen, St Basil and St Cyril of Alexandria taught that the person of the Holy Spirit was not given to those who lived before Christ<sup>29</sup> **(Ref. 5)**.

Rosmini quotes St Cyril of Alexandria saying that the saint, after quoting St John *'for as yet there was no spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified'*,<sup>30</sup> adds 'if then the prophets had not the Spirit; or if they had him by what mode did they have him? He answers the question, by distinguishing between the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit himself **(Ref. 6)**.

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<sup>26</sup> *Jn* 3: 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Col* 2: 3.

<sup>28</sup> Dionysius Petavius or (Petau)1583–1652), Jesuit historian and theologian. Cf. *De Theologicis Dogmatibus*. Tom. II. *De Trinitate*.

<sup>29</sup> *AS*, *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 39.

## **The gift of the Word**

Jesus revealed himself as the only begotten of the Father. To this external revelation corresponded an internal revelation by which he revealed himself to the souls who had faith and gave them a perception of himself. *‘The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’.*<sup>31</sup> The Word became the form of souls, giving them a perception of himself. The action of grace that so far had been *deiform* now became, in Rosmini’s term, *verbiform*.<sup>32</sup> The communication of the Word prior to Christ’s death was effected through his personal presence and his instruction. He says to the disciples: *‘you have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you’.*<sup>33</sup> And then says *‘abide in me as I abide in you’.*<sup>34</sup> He thus attributed this supernatural union to the effect of his words. Rosmini comments on Christ’s conversation with Philip to show how grace came from his person and the vision and perception of the Word:

Let us hear the words of Christ in his talk with Philip to which I have already referred and now recall again. The Apostle Philip had asked our Lord to show them the Father. Christ expresses wonder that his disciple did not understand that the one who saw him, saw the Father himself. This vision must not be taken to be the simple vision of the humanity of Christ but rather to the interior vision of his divinity, because the Father is not immediately visible in the body of Christ, but in the Word, the vision and perception of whom was inspired and impressed through the vision of the humanity of the Redeemer, from whom there came a supernatural and mysterious virtue. Christ therefore answers the request of Philip in this way: *‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works’.*<sup>35</sup> He says *‘do you not believe’* in order to indicate that this vision he was speaking of was founded on faith, it was a vision imperfect, incipient, in a word it was that knowledge of which St. Paul speaks when he says *‘For we know only in part and we prophesy only in part’*<sup>36</sup> *that is to say we see by signs and enigmas’.*<sup>37</sup>

To emphasise this Rosmini goes on to consider the two characteristics of the feeling which the divine action produces in us, namely the *totality of being* and a *subsistence*.

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<sup>31</sup> *Jn* 1: 17.

<sup>32</sup> Coined from the Latin *verbum* = word.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 15: 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 14: 9–10.

<sup>36</sup> *1 Cor* 13: 9.

<sup>37</sup> It may seem surprising that Philip did not know that he had the feeling of the Word, but he might feel without knowing that he felt it, without reflecting upon it. It is the Holy Spirit that moves us to this reflection as we shall see later on. *AS, ibid.*, pp. 198–199.

Christ communicates both these to his Apostles. He quotes the verse from St John: '*I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.*'<sup>38</sup> According to the Fathers by 'everything' Jesus means to communicate his person to the apostles and not just certain cognitions as in the time of the Old Covenant. St Augustine says that 'heard from my Father' means 'to know' and this in turn means 'to be or proceed from the Father' because knowledge of the Son is not different from his being'<sup>39</sup> (Ref. 7).

This is borne out by our own experience. In uniting himself to us, then, the Word gives himself to us in his totality, but we do not have this totality of knowledge distinctly; there are various degrees of perception of the Word not only here on earth but also in heaven. We perceive what is *formally* in the Word but not *eminently* as the theologians say, as would be the knowledge of all possible and contingent things. The second characteristic of the verbiform feeling is the feeling of a subsistence.

The following passages deserve to be quoted in full. It is another example of Rosmini's spiritual exegesis:

St. John says in fact that '*in him (the Word) was life and the life was the light of all people.*'<sup>40</sup> Now the life is feeling and he who feels nothing has no life; *feeling* is the power of perceiving real and subsisting being. The light therefore of the Word is not an ideal light but subsistent being perceived by us. Nowhere however does this truth shine so clearly as in those places in which Christ compares himself to food, and speaks also of the food of the Holy Eucharist. A food that truly satisfies the soul cannot be an ideal thing; the feeling of satisfaction and contentment is nothing else than the feeling I have in myself of a *subsistence*, a good which fills me. '*I am the bread of life*', says Christ, '*Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes*'<sup>41</sup> *in me will never be thirsty*'.<sup>42</sup> And he explains that he calls it '*bread of life*' because it gives the true life, the fullness of life which is the same as saying *feeling* in its fullness, and feeling, life in order to be full, must be immortal; he therefore adds '*Whoever eats of this bread will live forever*' and a little after,<sup>43</sup> '*Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have*

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<sup>38</sup> Jn 15: 15.

<sup>39</sup> Rosmini quotes another passage from St John 'Now they know that *everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them*, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.' Jn 17: 7-8. The words of Christ given by the Father are those things he has heard from the Father, meaning his essence as Son, his Person, the Divine Word. He now communicates this to his disciples. (Italics are mine).

<sup>40</sup> Jn 1: 4.

<sup>41</sup> He says 'comes to me' with his will and 'he who believes in me' showing that faith is that act which incorporates us with him.

<sup>42</sup> Jn 6: 35.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.



*eternal life*<sup>44</sup> and on the contrary he says ‘*unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.*’<sup>45</sup> What then is this *life*? A life founded on the very action of Christ, a life which we receive from Christ, as Christ receives it from his Father. We should not dare even to think of this exalted and sublime comparison if Jesus Christ himself had not said ‘*Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.*’<sup>46</sup> To be sent by the Father is to receive being from the Father. He says therefore as it is an operation of the Father which gives me being and life, so it is my operation in my disciples which gives life to them. This life is that which is the thing most sublime in the disciples of Christ and constitutes therefore their supernatural personality; hence it is that the simile of Christ appears supremely true and expressive as if he should say ‘as the Father gives me personal existence so I give to my beloved their personal existence’, and this personality which we receive from the union with Christ, is signified very appropriately in many places of holy Scripture and amongst them, in those words of St. Paul when he says ‘*it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.*’<sup>47</sup> It is not that we are changed into the person of Christ, or the person of Christ into us, but yet Christ lives in us, in our personality and therefore our personal life is no longer produced solely by our natural forces, but by the force of Christ who with his substantial presence operates sublimely in us and excites in us a completely new feeling, an activity more noble by far than all our own natural activities; an activity which is a supernatural personality.<sup>48</sup>

**Before the death and resurrection of Christ the perception of the Word was united to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

‘The Word is not perceived except by an action of the Holy Spirit, which sweetly moves our will and the eye of our intellect to contemplate and perceive the beauty of the substantial truth’<sup>49</sup> but this action is not always the person of the Holy Spirit but we attribute the spiritual effects to the divine person by *appropriation*. If the perception of the Word is made by faith, these spiritual gifts and effects had to exist even before the death of Christ and the gift of the *person* of the Holy Spirit.<sup>50</sup> The energy of the Holy Spirit which illuminates the Word in the mind of human beings was attributed to the Son himself before the coming of the Holy Spirit. Hence the Word is even called

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<sup>44</sup> *Jn*: 54.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> *Gal* 2: 20.

<sup>48</sup> *AS, ibid.*, pp. 202–203.

<sup>49</sup> *AS, ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> ‘...for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified’ *Jn* 7: 39.

consoler or paraclete when he said: '*And I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to be with you forever*'.<sup>51</sup>

Christ here uses the words *be with you* to indicate that he also was their consoler so long as he remained visible in his mortal body; but that he would be with them in another way, namely invisibly or with his divinity: so they would not be lacking all fullness of consolation, since the person of the Holy Spirit would be in their souls a fountain of perennial and inexhaustible joy redounding and springing up within them through the vision of the Word which would be no longer external but internal. So he says '*I will not leave you orphaned, I coming to you*',<sup>52</sup> and afterwards '*in a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live*'.<sup>53</sup> These words express that the internal vision of the Word remains in them, even when they no longer experience his humanity; because he is living and they also live, that is to say, partake of the same life, feel in themselves the life of Christ and so see Christ.<sup>54</sup>

When Jesus said, '*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love*'<sup>55</sup> this love is attributed to the Holy Spirit; it is a divine love but not yet a *subsistent love* dwelling within them. The love of Christ, though, as we have said, was certainly personal and communicated by his presence. Also Christ communicated his joy to his disciples. But this joy is not the same in us as it is in him. It is complete in him but our joy is not always or necessarily subsistent. The joy in the disciples was from hearing his words but their joy would not be full until the gift of the Spirit, '*I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete*'<sup>56</sup> (Ref. 8).

The joy which comes before the descent of the Holy Spirit comes from the disciples' perception of Christ, but the gift of the Holy Spirit will be a new perception. In the same way the light which issues from the Word is undivided from the perception of the Word himself, but there are degrees of this light which will be full when the Holy Spirit is personally present.

In the perception, therefore, of the Son, light and love are inseparable but this light and this love do not of themselves constitute a different perception from that of the Son until the light and the love become so great that they are felt to be full and subsistent. It is then that this light and love form of themselves alone a certain perception which we call the perception of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless even before

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<sup>51</sup> *Jn* 14: 16.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>54</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>55</sup> *Jn* 15: 8–10.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

this light and charity reach their term they are referred to the Holy Spirit by *appropriation*, because the soul is on its way to the Holy Spirit and it is also in this sense that the divine Word says “I am the way”.<sup>57</sup> Rosmini also quotes the famous passage of St Paul in his letter to the Galatians: ‘*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children*’. Our salvation is assured. Afterwards the Holy Spirit comes to perfect his work. ‘*And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba!” Father!*’<sup>58</sup> Firstly God sends his Son and then, because we are his children, he sends the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. This occurred at the time of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the formal cause of holiness, on the day of Pentecost.

### **The gift of the Holy Spirit**

Although in the perception of the Word gifts and graces are united and attributed by *appropriation* to the Holy Spirit because they belong to the will such as love, the Spirit himself was promised by Christ and sent only on the day of Pentecost.

The characteristics of the feeling of a divine person within us, as we have seen, are a) *totality* and b) *subsistence*. Jesus says, ‘*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you*’.<sup>59</sup> So the Spirit will be able *per se* to infuse all knowledge and they will be the things which are taught by the Son. ‘*...he will take what is mine and declare it you*’.<sup>60</sup> But Jesus taught his disciples all things. ‘*I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father*’.<sup>61</sup>

Both the Word and the Spirit teach those in whom they abide *all things*. But they teach them in a different mode. The Word teaches them in a *direct* mode. The Spirit teaches them in a *reflex* mode enabling the person to reflect on what he or she has been taught. Indeed Jesus said, ‘*I still have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now*’.<sup>62</sup> It would be by reflecting on all that he had taught that things would become distinct. This power would be given by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would lead the disciples into all truth.<sup>63</sup> When Jesus says, ‘*On that day you will know that I am in Father, and you in me and I in you*’<sup>64</sup> he is telling his disciples that they will then understand what is now a fact. They already have the perception, the vision, the feeling of Christ but on that day when the Spirit comes they would reflect on this and understand its significance.

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<sup>57</sup> *Jn* 14: 6. *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 205–206.

<sup>58</sup> *Gal* 4: 4–6. *AS*, *ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>59</sup> *Jn* 14: 26. *AS*, pp. 206–7.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 16: 15.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 15: 15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 16: 12.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 14: 20.

To illustrate that the Holy Spirit acts by means of reflection on Christ's teaching, Rosmini returns to the conversation of Christ with Philip. Philip asked to see the Father because he did not know that he saw him in the Son. Christ asks him how is it that he could ask this question since he had seen the Son for so long. Jesus says, '*Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?*'<sup>65</sup> Another example of the disciple's not grasping the full significance of their perception of Jesus is in the same chapter when Jesus tells them that they know the way to the place where he is going. Thomas said to him, '*Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?*'<sup>66</sup> He did not know that he knew! Jesus said to him, '*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.*'<sup>67</sup> Another characteristic of the gift, that is, the perception of the Spirit is a feeling in which we do not merely possess an idea but a true *subsistence*. We do not feel more ideal being but something that is real and subsistent. This springs from the feeling of the totality of being. Rosmini quotes Christ's wonderful conversation with the woman of Samaria in John chapter 4 where, '*Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water"*'.<sup>68</sup> The living water of which Jesus speaks is the Holy Spirit, the gift of God. The word 'gift' is proper to the Holy Spirit.

Rosmini also comments on the same chapter verses 13–14.

Listen how Christ describes the water which he desired to give to this woman and which she so much desired to receive 'Jesus said to her, "*Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life*"'.<sup>69</sup> In the words we note the word 'well' or 'spring': the water is one thing, the 'spring' is another: Christ gives the water and this becomes a *spring* of water in the soul. The water that Christ gives are those gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit of which we have already spoken; but the spring is the Holy Spirit himself, the first is a way to the last, a pledge of it, but the last is the fulfilment of the first. The spring is perennial, established in perpetuity, it can be sufficient for all needs which expresses that potential totality of knowledge and of graces which are comprehended in the person of the Holy Spirit and which wait on the good will of man continually without end, that is to say, without the spring ever running dry. He says a spring inside him welling up into eternal life, because this water comes from on *high* and returns on *high*: on *high* is the Father himself from whom this

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<sup>65</sup> *Jn* 9–10.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–7.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 10.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14.

stream of water is derived. This *on high* is the place of which Christ speaks “*I go to prepare a place for you*”<sup>70</sup> namely when he ascended into heaven that he might send down the Holy Spirit. And this abundance and continuity as it were of this living water, namely the water that gives life and extinguishes thirst of soul is proper to the person of the Holy Spirit and is many times spoken of by Christ, as where he says ‘*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.” Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*’<sup>71</sup> So also in many other places the same property of fully satisfying the soul is attributed to the Holy Spirit, as where Christ distinguishes joy, from the ‘complete joy’, “*and I say these things in the world to share my joy with them to the FULL*”<sup>72</sup> and life from the ‘more abundant life.’ “*I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the FULL*”.<sup>73</sup>

A second argument that the perception of the Spirit is that of a real and subsistent being is drawn from the fact that ideas have hardly the power to move the will but only the action of a real being can do this. Christ promised the apostles that they would be clothed with power when the Holy Spirit came. ‘*And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high*’.<sup>74</sup> And this is precisely what happened as we read in Acts. Christ also had said to the Apostles, ‘*When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning*’.<sup>75</sup> The Spirit would testify to the Apostles about Christ and they, in their turn would testify, this is proper to a person and not to things.

A third argument that we feel something real and subsistent is that *personal* acts are attributed to him in the Scriptures for example, ‘*the Spirit intercedes [for us] with sighs too deep for words*’;<sup>76</sup> ‘*when we cry Abba, Father! It is the very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God*’;<sup>77</sup> ‘*for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God*’<sup>78</sup> A final quotation cited by Rosmini is taken from the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, ‘*What is born of the flesh is flesh, and is born of the Spirit is spirit*’.<sup>79</sup> By these words Rosmini understands that a will attached to the flesh receives a carnal instinct. But a will in which the Holy Spirit acts has a higher principle excited in him by the action of Holy

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<sup>70</sup> *Jn* 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 38–39.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 17: 14. JB.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 10: 10. JB AS, *ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>74</sup> *Lk* 24: 49.

<sup>75</sup> *Jn* 15:26–27.

<sup>76</sup> *Rom* 8: 26.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–16.

<sup>78</sup> *1 Cor* 2: 10.

<sup>79</sup> *Jn* 3: 6.

Spirit himself, which is identified with the principle operating in him creating a new personality acquired through the sanctification communicated to him by the Spirit. *'But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him'*.<sup>80</sup>

Rosmini concludes this section on the Holy Spirit by quoting St Augustine and also makes the point that the presence of the person of the Holy Spirit is permanent, whereas actual graces and gifts are transient, coming and going in greater or less abundance. This is evident in our own spiritual journey. The graces and gifts which preceded the gift of the Spirit in the Old Testament are, as said above, attributed to him by appropriation. On the contrary those which follow the gift of the person of the Spirit can be considered one with the perception of the Spirit, and can be attributed to the person. Rosmini quotes Didymus of Alexandria, pointing out that Didymus mentions that the Holy Spirit is prior to his gifts and this he interprets as gifts as united with the personal gift of the Spirit; but there are gifts and graces which precede the personal coming of the Holy Spirit and they are attributed to him by appropriation, as happened prior to Pentecost **(Ref. 9)**.

### **Of the order in which the Divine Persons reveal themselves to us**

This section is characterised by a great deal of exegesis. Typically Rosmini explains the subject by referring many times to the Gospels.<sup>81</sup>

Jesus says to us, *'No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known'*.<sup>82</sup> And in reply to Thomas he says, *'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'*.<sup>83</sup> We have already seen in his reply to Philip in the same chapter that Philip should have known the Father because to have seen Jesus is to see the Father.<sup>84</sup>

On the other hand who is it that draws us to the Son? Who gives us the divine subsistent truth in which we see the Father? The answer is that it is the Father himself that does this. Jesus says, *'No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me'*<sup>85</sup>, and again *'Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me'*.<sup>86</sup> Later in this same chapter Jesus re-iterates this fact, *'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father'*.<sup>87</sup> Jesus constantly tells us that he is sent by the Father, does his work and gives us the true bread from heaven, namely, himself.<sup>88</sup> In this world, then, the Father is not visible but we experience his action in us and

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<sup>80</sup> 1 Cor 6: 17.

<sup>81</sup> AS, cap. V, art XIX, pp. 218 ff.

<sup>82</sup> Jn 1: 18.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 14: 6.

<sup>84</sup> Rosmini reiterates the difference between direct knowledge and reflective knowledge. The apostles already professed grace, the feeling of God, but they had not yet *consciousness* of this. Cf. AS, Ibid., note 502, p. 218.

<sup>85</sup> Jn 6: 44.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 32; 8: 28; 7: 16.

believe with faith. When Jesus says, ‘*Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them*’<sup>89</sup> he does not say that the Father alone would come but he and the Father would come because the Father comes in the Son. Again when he says, ‘*those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them*’<sup>90</sup> instead of saying that he will manifest the Father he says rather that he will manifest himself, that is, the Father will be manifested in him. We believe in the word of his Son and one day, in future glory, we shall see the Father, too. Briefly, then we can say ‘1<sup>st</sup> The Father sends the Word into souls who in the Word know the Father. 2<sup>nd</sup> that the Father draws souls to the Word’ (Ref. 10).

<b>Deiform and Triniform grace — a recapitulation</b>	
Deiform Grace	God grants the soul a perception of himself as ALL BEING. We thus perceive his <i>nature</i> in an initial manner in this life, ‘in a glass darkly’.
Triniform Grace	The three <i>persons</i> of the Blessed Trinity grant us a perception of each individually. The Father as generator — subsistent force (power) The Son as generated — subsistent knowledge (truth) The Holy Spirit as spirated — subsistent love. These are proper to each person (properties not attributes: e.g. love is attributed to each person but not the personal <i>subsistent</i> love which is proper to the Holy Spirit)
The men and women who were in a state of grace during of the Old Covenant perceived God in a Deiform manner only because the Son and Holy Spirit had not yet been revealed. Jesus’ disciples would have perceived him in a <i>verbiform manner</i> through his bodily presence. They would have perceived the Holy Spirit when he came down on them at Pentecost. The Church (New Covenant) would, from now on, be gifted with Triniform Grace.	

We are speaking here of a triniform feeling, the threefold feeling, or the three modes of this subsistent feeling, of all being, of God. ‘Granting this it is clear that we must distinguish the *mode* of this feeling which we call the *feeling of totality*, from the totality itself which we feel in all the modes alike. These modes of feeling correspond to the different modes in which the TOTALITY subsists and TOTALITY subsisting in three modes, that is to say, as a principle knowing and loving (the Father who generates); as knowable (the Son generated) and as loveable (the Spirit spirated), hence the three

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<sup>89</sup> *Jn* 14: 23.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

modes are felt.<sup>91</sup> So we cannot know the *complete knowable* (the Word) unless with the *principle* from which it proceeds as the former supposes and demands the latter. We thus see the relation of *paternity* which is that of *generating*, knowing, the mode in which the known object subsists as known. So we speak of the Word as being sent, and the Father as the sender.

It is therefore necessary for the Word to come into our minds as *sent* in order that we may be able to say that we have him in our soul; and it was also necessary that as *sent* he should become Incarnate. Hence Christ could speak of his Incarnation in these words “*I came from the Father and have come into the world*,”<sup>92</sup> and again “*I have come in my Father’s name*,”<sup>93</sup> that is to say he was able to express in the selfsame phrase both his *eternal generation* and his *generation* in time, because he appeared in time as *sent* by the Father: so that the Incarnation was a communicating of himself to human nature as *generated* from the Father; it was, as we might say, a generating of himself or rather a showing of himself as generated in human nature. Christ therefore speaks of himself as *sent*, because he comes into humanity, operating and giving himself to be known in his quality of *eternally sent* which is equivalent to the Son of God.<sup>94</sup> “*This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent*.”<sup>95</sup> “*My teaching is not mine but his who sent me*.”<sup>96</sup>

We do not see the Father as generating but only believe this by faith because we believe in the words of Jesus, though we experience his action in us. We shall see the Father in an unveiled manner in the next life. We cannot understand in this life the mode of this *generation* or of the *spiration* of the Holy Spirit (**Ref. 11**). Rosmini cites several places in the New Testament to support his teaching.

We have already mentioned that the Spirit teaches us everything, he testifies to the Word who is revealed in a more vivid light and we are witnesses to the Word. ‘*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*’<sup>97</sup> To call the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, is the same as calling him the Spirit of the Word, because he emanates from the Word. The impression of the Holy Spirit is an affection of love, of joy of the

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<sup>91</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>92</sup> *Jn* 16: 28.

<sup>93</sup> *Jn* 5: 43.

<sup>94</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>95</sup> *Jn* 6: 29.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 16.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 16: 13–16.



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truth which the soul imbibes. This feeling of love is full of truth which alone can satisfy the intelligent soul. The divine Spirit gives glory in souls to the divine Word **(Ref. 12)**.

Ref. 1.	The Fathers on the titles given to the Son
Augustine	The Son is called the speech or Word of God 'because through it the Father is made known'. <sup>98</sup>
Theophylact	He 'is called Word because he speaks to us the divine secrets'. <sup>99</sup>
Cyril of Alexandria	He is called character of the paternal substance because through him and in him we are enabled to contemplate the nature of the Father. <sup>100</sup>

Ref. 2.	The Greek Fathers and Augustine on the Holy Spirit
Basil	The Greek Fathers give the 'force of sanctification' as a property not as an appropriation of the Holy Spirit. He is called, 'the fount of sanctification' <sup>101</sup> and also 'the living substance' and 'the arbiter of sanctification'. <sup>102</sup> He speaks here of a property and not an appropriated quality. He is the 'sanctifying virtue'.
John Damascene	He is 'The sanctifying virtue subsisting by itself'. <sup>103</sup>
Augustine	Says that it is proper to the Holy Spirit to be <i>gift</i> , sanctifying love. <sup>104</sup>

Ref. 3.	Athanasius speaks on the Holy Spirit impressing the Word
<p>'The Spirit is a balm and a seal which anoints and impresses the Word on us, and being thus signed, we are made, as St. Peter says, truly sharers of the Divine Nature; and it is thus that we are all made sharers of the Word in the Spirit, and by the Spirit we are all said to be sharers of God. Because he says "Didn't you realise that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? If anybody would destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple". For this reason (the Holy Spirit) is in human beings, and by him they are made Gods. Now if he makes Gods no doubt his nature is the nature of God.'<sup>105</sup></p>	

<sup>98</sup> Augustine, *De Fide et Symbolo*, cap. III, n.3: 40.

<sup>99</sup> Theophylact, *Enarratio in Evangelium Joannis* cap. I, v. 1.

<sup>100</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *De SS.Trinitate*, Dialogus VI.

<sup>101</sup> Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto*, cap IX, n. 22.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. I, cap. XIII.

<sup>104</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, lib. V, cap XIV.

<sup>105</sup> Athanasius, *Epistola I ad Serapionem*. Saying that people are made Gods means raised to the supernatural order by a real union with God.

<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>The Fathers speak of the gifts of the Spirit and the gift of the Spirit himself</b>
Gregory Nazianzen	‘The Old Testament openly preached the Father, but the Son obscurely’ <sup>106</sup> These words must be understood in the sense that by Father we are to understand one God; for the knowledge of the Father comes solely in consequence of the knowledge of the Son, it is the Son who makes known the Father. The Jews therefore considered the one God as Father not thereby understanding that he was the Father of the only begotten Son. We on the contrary call him our Father because we know him also as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has assumed our very nature and has thus adopted us as his brethren. Hence St. John Chrysostom excellently observes ‘that if the Jews called God their Father they did this of their own accord by their own choice: but in the law of grace this is done by an instinct of the Holy Spirit and by the command of God.’ <sup>107</sup>
Epiphanius	The Holy Spirit alone proceeding from the Father and the Son, is named the spirit of truth and the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ and the spirit of grace. For he imparts good to each in different ways; to some the spirit of wisdom,... to others the spirit of prophecy, to others the spirit of discernment, to others the spirit of interpretation and so also of the other gifts; but, as the apostle says, ‘it is one and the self-same spirit that distributes different gifts just as he chooses.’ <sup>108</sup> The spirit therefore that imparts gifts is one thing and the gifts imparted is another.
Basil	Speaking of the Holy Spirit St. Basil says, “This is the source of the goods we have named. But the Spirit truly emanates from God and subsists in himself: the goods, however, which emanate from him are effects. This Spirit pours forth into us God through Jesus Christ. He pours him forth, he does not create him, he gives him, he does not form him.” <sup>109</sup> In this passage the effects or goods or gifts of the Spirit are clearly distinguished from the Spirit himself, and it is said that not only the former but also the latter are given to souls.
<b>Ref. 5.</b>	<b>The Persons of the Word and of the Holy Spirit were not given prior to the coming of Christ</b>
Rosmini on Cyril of Alexandria <sup>110</sup>	When Jesus said: ‘Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he’, <sup>111</sup> Cyril draws from these words the meaning that Christians, who belong to his

<sup>106</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, XXXVII, n. XXVI.

<sup>107</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Romanos*, homil. XIV, cap. VIII, vers. 15. *AS*, vol. I, lib. I, cap. V, art. XVIII, note, pp, 191–192.

<sup>108</sup> Epiphanius, *Ancoratus*, n. LXXII; *Adversus Hereses*, lib. III, haer. LXXIV, n. 9.

<sup>109</sup> Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium*, lib. V.

<sup>110</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, lib. V, cap. II.

<sup>111</sup> *Mt* 11: 11.

	<p>kingdom, that is, the Church, have in them the Holy Spirit personally but the holy men of the Old Covenant, even John the Baptist, did not yet possess the Holy Spirit because he had not yet been sent and heaven not opened.</p> <p>‘A man who has within his soul the perception of the Holy Spirit and thereby of the Holy Trinity cannot, if he dies free from stain of sin, fail to be admitted at once to the Beatific Vision. It is to this the Apostle seems to refer when he speaks of a revelation within us which will be made on occasion of our death, by which revelation the face of God shall be entirely revealed, and so we shall have the Beatific Vision. He speaks of “<i>the glory about to be revealed to us</i>”<sup>112</sup> as if he would say “we are temples of God”. We have the contact of the most august Trinity; only our body, like a veil in between hinders our uniting ourselves to God entirely, hinders our seeing him distinctly. When this body shall be broken up, this veil withdrawn, nothing else will be required, but the divine Trinity will be presented to our view, without shadow or mystery. To possess the Holy Spirit is therefore the same as to have our place prepared in heaven. But since it was not fitting that this place should be given before Christ ascended into heaven therefore our Lord speaking of his approaching death says that he went “<i>to prepare a place</i>” for his disciples<sup>113</sup> viz. to open to them the gates of heaven. He continues, “<i>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also</i>”;<sup>114</sup> which words indicate clearly that he went, by his death, to open the gates of heaven. He went by his death, and returned to take them, by his Resurrection, and he invited them, and showed them the way, by his Ascension and assigned them the place they were to have in heaven, by the mission of the Holy Spirit. This therefore was to come only after the Ascension of Christ into heaven; so that our Lord in speaking of his coming, uses the very same expression he had used before when saying that he went “<i>to prepare the place for them</i>”, or to “<i>open the gates of heaven</i>”. He says “<i>Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.</i>”<sup>115</sup> There is therefore a strict connection between the two phrases “<i>I go to prepare a place</i>” and “<i>I go to send the Holy Spirit</i>”. It is as if he meant to say “in order that you may go to heaven, to take the place prepared for you from all eternity, you have to make two steps, viz. to receive the Holy Spirit by which the trini-deiform operation is performed within you; after this you have to be admitted into the glory which is a more distinct and full revelation of the same Holy Trinity, to the perception of which you have already begun to be admitted”. It was for this that Christ descended into Limbo in order to communicate to these Holy Fathers, himself, the person of the Word, then the person of the Holy Spirit, and finally to reveal to them the face of his heavenly Father. In this we must therefore consider that he who was admitted to the perception of the Word, when the obstacle of the body is removed ought to</p>
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<sup>112</sup> *Rom* 8: 18.

<sup>113</sup> *Jn* 14: 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 14: 3.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 16: 7.

<sup>116</sup> *AS*, lib. I, cap. V, art XVIII, note, pp. 196–197.

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	attain immediately the perception of the Holy Spirit and the vision of the Father, as in the case of the penitent thief and the Fathers in Limbo.’ <sup>116</sup>
<b>Ref. 6.</b>	<b>The Holy Spirit and his gifts</b>
Cyril of Alexandria	‘But if so in what way was the Spirit in the prophets? We think that, in the holy prophets, there was a certain abundant irradiation and illumination of the Spirit, which was able to give them the perception of future things and the knowledge of hidden things. But in those who believe in Christ we have faith that the Spirit himself dwells in them, makes them his domicile and that they have not merely a simple illumination derived from the Holy Spirit. Hence we are rightly called temples of God; whereas none of the holy prophets was ever called temple of God.’ <sup>117</sup>
<b>Ref. 7.</b>	<b>Christ proceeds from the Father</b>
Augustine	To Him hearing is knowing; but knowing is being, as has been discussed above. Because, then, He is not of Himself, but of Him from whom He proceeds, and of whom He has essence, of Him He has knowledge; from Him, therefore, He has hearing, which is nothing else than knowledge. <sup>118</sup>
<b>Ref. 8.</b>	<b>Augustine on the joy which Christ gives</b>
	‘His joy, therefore, in us is the grace he has bestowed upon us: and that is also our joy. But he rejoiced over it even from eternity, when he chose us before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4. Nor can we rightly say that his joy was not full; for God’s joy was never at any time imperfect’. <sup>119</sup>
<b>Ref. 9.</b>	<b>The gift of the Holy Spirit</b>
Augustine	‘The Holy Spirit on this day rained down on the temples which have been well prepared of his apostles, like a sanctifying rain; not indeed as a momentary visitor but as a perpetual consoler and an eternal cohabiter. For as he had said to his apostles “And know that I am with you always; yes to the end of time”; so also he said of the Holy Spirit “he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever”. He was with his faithful on this day not by means of the grace of visitation and of operation, but by the Presence of His Majesty himself: and into these vessels he poured not the odour of balm only but the very substance itself of the sacred unction.’ <sup>120</sup>
Didymus	‘No one ever receives the spiritual benefactions of God unless the Holy Spirit has preceded. For he who shall have received the Holy Spirit will consequently

<sup>117</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, lib. V, cap. II. Cf. *AS, ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>118</sup> Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium*, tract. XCIX, n. 4.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, tract. LXXIII, 1 and LXXXIII, 1.

<sup>120</sup> Augustine, Appendix, *Sermo CLXXXII de Temp I de Fest 2, Pentec.*

	have the blessings, namely wisdom, intelligence and the rest.’ <sup>121</sup>
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<b>Ref. 10.</b>	<b>The order of the divine revelation of the persons- a philosophical explanation</b>
<p>Rosmini explains all this philosophically. The Word is the knowableness of God, the divine light which is manifested to us and of which we are the passive recipients; this is because a hidden and infinite power presents it. This infinite power is felt by us; it is the feeling of the Father. We know by external revelation that this light proceeds from the Principle which sends it. We make an act of faith and see the Father in the Word. We see him because external revelation tells us he is there and because interior feeling distinguishes the light and the force, the cause, by which this light began in us. The cause of the feeling is anterior to the feeling itself but in the order of ideas or perceptions, the feeling precedes the knowledge of this force, just as we go in thought from effect to cause. This feeling is, as we have said, a deiform feeling. The force (power) and the Word are distinct but we come to know that we find each in the other. The Word is the knowableness of the Father. In support of all this Rosmini quotes the Latin Vulgate: ‘<i>Principium qui et loquor vobis</i>’, translated in the Douai version of the Bible as ‘<i>The beginning who also speak unto you</i>’. Rosmini would translate ‘principium’ as ‘principle’. (Jn 8: 25). He says Jesus says not just ‘Principium’ but ‘Principium qui loquor’ to indicate that he is the Principle of all knowledge and that whatever we know of the Father can be known only through him.<sup>122</sup></p>	

<b>Ref. 11.</b>	<b>The Word is sent by the Father</b>
Augustine	‘As to be born, is nothing else than to be from the Father; so to be sent is only to be known to be from him.’ <sup>123</sup>
Gaudentius	‘The economy of our salvation demands’, says St. Gaudentius, ‘that we preach a sender and a sent: because without this the human mind would not know how to believe that the Father is the Father, the Son is the Son and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit, unless it should learn to distinguish these terms of sender and sent’. <sup>124</sup>
Ambrose	‘We ought to understand Him to have been sent in such a way that the Word of God, out of the incomprehensible and ineffable mystery of the depths of His majesty, (this secret of the majesty is the hidden God the Father) gave Himself for comprehension to our minds, so far as we could lay hold of Him, not only when He “emptied” Himself, (in the Incarnation) but also when He dwelt in us, (through the operation of grace) as it is written: “I will dwell in them”.’ <sup>125</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Didymus of Alexandria, *De Spiritu Sancto*, n. 10.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. *AS*, lib. 1, cap. V, art. XIX, pp. 221–222

<sup>123</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, lib. IV, cap. XX. N. 28.

<sup>124</sup> Gaudentius, *Tractatus vel Sermones*, tract. XIV, de diversis capitulis quartus.

<sup>125</sup> Ambrose, *De Fide*, lib. V, cap. VII, n. 98.

Ref. 12.	Those who share the Spirit have divine and heavenly life
Basil	St. Basil says that the Holy Spirit gives <i>life</i> , a feeling and a life not different from his own. 'The life which the Spirit emits, in producing another thing does not separate itself from the Spirit. But in the same way as the fire is partly heat which remains in the fire and partly is heat which communicates itself to water or any other thing, so the Spirit also has life in himself and those who share the Spirit also have divine and heavenly life'. <sup>126</sup>
Cyril of Alexandria	'That the fullness that emanates from the Father and from the Son through the Holy Spirit only is in us: not as if he impressed on us as if he were a servant, things which belong not to himself but to another exercising the office of a servant with respect to us but because he bears in his own nature, the nature proper to the other two persons.' <sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Basil, *Contr. Eunom.* Lib. V.

<sup>127</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *De SS Trinitate*, Dialogus III.

## Chapter 5

### On Mystical Theology

#### Preview

Rosmini concludes book 1 of the Supernatural Anthropology with chapters on Mystical Theology and the State of the Religious Question in his time. The latter is hardly applicable to us and those interested can read it for themselves. However his chapter on Mystical Theology is applicable. Rosmini points out that only those who have the feeling of grace can understand it. The wisdom of this world is different from the wisdom of the Christian. Worldly wisdom which is unspiritual sees all this as foolishness. Supernatural knowledge does not depend on learning. There are many saints who were not knowledgeable in the world's eyes but God was at work in their souls. *'We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.'*<sup>1</sup> Jesus said, *'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.'*<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the intrinsic value of this topic, it is also helpful as Rosmini recapitulates his teaching on revelation.

*External* revelation is made to everyone and requires for its perception only natural powers. It consists solely of *negative ideas*. But *internal* revelation is proper to the supernatural life of grace and consists in a *real* action within us of perceptions and feelings. This is an experience and a communication of God's own substance whereas the former is simply knowledge through certain relations of things. Rosmini quotes Jesus' words to Nicodemus *'If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?'*<sup>3</sup> He has talked about heavenly things using earthly images, likening the effect of grace to a person being born again. But Nicodemus completely misunderstands him taking his words literally and Jesus points out that he if he did not believe that human beings could be born again, what hope had he of understanding spiritual regeneration (even negatively) to which earthly rebirth might have some resemblance. It is instructive to realise that *we* have no difficulty in understanding Christ's words.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess 2: 13.

<sup>2</sup> Mt 11: 25.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 3: 12.



## Natural and supernatural knowledge

In the natural form of things we understand words because they signify positive ideas and we get these ideas from our perceptions of things. Now on the supernatural level no one can understand the feeling of grace unless they have this feeling or perception because there is no idea corresponding to it on the natural level. There is no word for it which has a positive value for those who have not had the experience.

The wisdom of the world is different from the wisdom of the Christian. This is seen in the comments and works of agnostics who deny God. Richard Dawkins speaks about the God delusion, and the inability to prove that God exists. It reminds one of Yuri Gagarin, the first man to orbit the earth, who said that God was 'not up here'. He was speaking in worldly terms and completely misunderstanding the nature of God. Each type of wisdom is contrary to the other.

Thus the wisdom of the world judges the wisdom of the Christian to be foolishness, and the wisdom of the Christian judges the wisdom of the world to be madness. This arises from the fact that the world and the Christian have not the same *feelings* nor the same perceptions; for the divine things communicate themselves sublimely and secretly to the soul of those who are elevated to the supernatural order and diffuse a new and wonderful feeling, of which the person of the world is utterly deprived, whose feeling does not go beyond the bounds of nature so that they have nothing but a negative idea of God and of divine things: hence the words of the Apostle that *'Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are discerned spiritually.'*<sup>4</sup>

The person of the world simply has no understanding of grace but only a negative idea of God and divine things. This enables us to understand several mysterious passages of Holy Scripture, for instance when it is said *"To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it."* (Rev 2: 17) This hidden manna is the secret feeling of grace hidden from all but those who experience it: and the new name indicates that new nature which we receive when we passed from the natural order to the supernatural: and this name not being able to be read except by us alone expresses that we alone are conscious of that which passes in the most secret recess of our spirit, where no created eye can scan what takes place there. This is completely impenetrable except to God alone, because this is the intellective essence of man on which no created substance is able to act.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I Cor 2: 14. *AS*, lib. I, cap. VI, art II, p. 230.

<sup>5</sup>*AS*, *Ibid*. The name written on the counter is not legible except to him who has the counter; this means those unusual and incommunicable graces that are bestowed on some extraordinary saints.

## **Holiness does not depend on learning**

For the same reason a person who is holy as well as learned is a true theologian. Such a person will not only be intellectually gifted but also experience what he or she teaches; such are the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Holy people are attuned to spiritual things in a way which is lacking to a person who is not holy (**Ref.1**).

Rosmini distinguishes common theology and secret theology. Common theology depends on natural knowledge and negative ideas whereas those who are living in a state of grace have a supernatural knowledge imparted by the *Word* whom they perceive through a real action done in them. This knowledge does not depend on learning and is given to all irrespective of intellectual accomplishments. Even the young can experience a relationship with God which a clever intellectual person who does not believe in God will never be able to understand. This is readily observable in the lives of the great saints such as St Thérèse of Lisieux and St John Mary Vianney (the Cure of Ars who was not intellectually gifted) but it is also exemplified in less well-known individuals whose holiness is evident in their lives. Rosmini harks back to his example of the blind man who will never understand colours in the way a person who has sight experiences them, even given the most sophisticated arguments. The person who sees has no need of intellectual theories, though, of course these are invaluable in the study of sight. Rosmini quotes the author of *The Imitation of Christ*,

### **Thomas à Kempis speaks on true wisdom**

‘Oh to be one of those to whom Truth communicates itself directly not by means of symbols and images whose meaning changes with time, but in its very nature! ... We get away from this tangle of guess-work when once the Eternal Word speaks to us. From him alone all creation takes its origin, and therefore all creation has but one voice for us; he who is its origin, is also its interpreter. Without him nobody can understand it, or form a true judgment about it. Until all things become ONE for you, traced to ONE source and seen in one act of vision, you cannot find anchorage of heart, or rest calmly in God. O God you are the TRUTH; unite me to yourself by an unfailing act of love! I am so tired of reading about this and that, being lectured to about this and that, when all I want, ALL that I long for is to be found in you. If only they would hold their tongues, these learned folk! If only the whole of creation would be silent in your presence and you, you alone speak to me!’<sup>6</sup>

## **Errors in the history of natural learning**

The history of philosophy is riddled with errors where philosophers have not been guided by an experience of the supernatural life and a theology of which philosophy

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, Trans. Ronald Knox and Michael Oakley, London, Burns and Oates 1960, Book 1, chapter 3: nn. 1, 2, pp. 19–20. *AS*, cap. VI, art. VI, pp. 233–234.

should be the handmaid and not the master. Rosmini mentions ‘the offspring of Platonism’, those that originated in Aristotelianism beginning with Arius up to the reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and also the unbelief of later centuries, arising out of the confusion produced by the modern schools<sup>7</sup> (Ref. 2).

Rosmini reiterates that the philosopher who does not enjoy the supernatural life has no hope of understanding it. Philosophy is not a bad thing in itself and he quotes the *Imitation of Christ* again: ‘No reason why we should quarrel with learning, or with any straightforward pursuit of knowledge; it is all good as far as it goes, and part of God’s plan’.<sup>8</sup> What is blameworthy is to refuse faith in what we do not know; at least we should suspend judgement. Rosmini quotes the letter to the Colossians: ‘*See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.*’<sup>9</sup> And ‘*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.*’<sup>10</sup> Here the author speaks of supernatural wisdom, not based on vain ideas but true supernatural perceptions. He desires that his converts ‘*may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*’<sup>11</sup>

Rosmini also quotes at length from St Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians.<sup>12</sup> ‘*When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.*’<sup>13</sup>

In distinguishing the principle of religion, namely grace, from that of natural morality, the law, Rosmini points out that people are able up to a point to practise natural morality because they have a perception of laws and ideas, but because the part which pertains to God is ignored they will lapse when speaking of morality into mutual relations. We see this more and more in governmental directives which, because of increasing secularism, ignore true Christian morality and simply look to what it is decided by man-made institutions and rules. These very often depend on pragmatic judgements and therefore can infringe the true rights of others.

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<sup>7</sup> *AS*, *Ibid.*, p. 234. Rosmini mentions the Simonians, the Valentinians, the Marcionites, and the Manichaeans. The Platonists admitted too many innate ideas which they believed to be eternal principles; the School of Aristotle, understood by Aristotle’s disciples, denied all innate ideas. Note 559. Rosmini quotes Gregory the Wonderworker and Gregory Nazianzen, together with Tertullian, and Prudentius. Hopefully the reader has seen how important to Rosmini is a sound theory of philosophy which underpins his theology.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *Op. cit.*, Book I, chapter 3, n. 4. p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> *Col* 2: 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 16.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 2.

<sup>12</sup> 1 *Cor* 2. Cf. *AS*, lib. I, cap. VI, art. VIII, pp. 239–40.

<sup>13</sup> 1 *Cor* 2: 2–5.

<b>Ref. 1.</b>	<b>The Fathers demand holiness in the complete theologian</b>
<p>Holy persons will have experience of eternal truths and they will not be too attached to earthly things which obscure a relish for the things of God. Such people will have faith in God. Cyril of Alexandria says: ‘The eye of the body, if pure from dust, smoke and other impurities which obscure its vision, applies itself to objects with subtlety and clarity. But if it is wounded by some affection, it can fix its glance all the less on the soul’s interior and there is no wonder if it errs and goes astray. If however man’s understanding is quiet and tranquil and accustomed to expel vain images and evil thoughts, it sees with an acute and clear vision and receives free from error, the certain knowledge of things. Whereas if it is engulfed by any affection, it can no longer perceive the divine beauty, but lies as it were prostrate under the weight of earthly things; much as we see in the case of birds whose wings are drenched with water and are weighed down and hindered from spreading their wings and flying aloft.’<sup>14</sup></p>	
<b>Ref. 2.</b>	<b>The Fathers lament that philosophy which obscures and gets in the way of sound teaching</b>
<p>St. Gregory Thaumaturgus says on this matter: ‘We do not wish to investigate the evangelical scriptures with human curiosity strictly adhering to certain cut and dry sentences, and we do not go about sowing inextricable and captious questions of words by which the word of faith is rendered so knotty and hard, which of its own nature is plain, simple and perfectly straightforward.’<sup>15</sup></p> <p>St. Gregory Nazianzen also deplores the fact that sophistic fallacies crept into the Church and an unwelcome artifice of Aristotelianism, and other evils which he likens to the plagues of Egypt, and in the story of his life he depicts the philosophers and their disputations introduced into the Church to the great injury of theology.<sup>16</sup></p>	

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<sup>14</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *De SS Trinitate*, Dialogus I.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory the Wonderworker, *De Incarnatione et Fide*, quoted by St John Damascene in *Eclogae*, littera a, tit. LXXVI (this quote attributed to Gregory is actually of Apollinaris of Laodicea).

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, or. LXVI.

## Chapter 6

### Made in the Image and Likeness of God

#### Preview

We begin with a recapitulation of Rosmini's teaching on the idea of being. The idea of being is an appurtenance of God and must be a likeness to God because it is 'something divine' having divine characteristics. Created and contingent beings can be called 'non-beings' in so far as they are created by God and held in being by him. This section is philosophical for the most part and Rosmini cites the Fathers to support what he says. Our ability to contemplate being gives us our dignity as human beings and marks us out as intelligent. We then go on to distinguish between 'image' and 'likeness'. God created us in his image and likeness. Rosmini sees the word 'likeness' as referring to our intelligence and 'image' as referring to our supernatural state. But some of the Fathers take the opposite view. Rosmini quotes Fathers supporting each view.

#### Recapitulation

1. Thinking depends on making judgements. Judgements are made up of ideas. Where do these ideas come from?
2. Abstraction presupposes that we have ideas from which to abstract a more generic idea. Judgements presuppose that we possess universal ideas.
3. Maybe some universal idea pre-exists all judgements.
4. We think of 'being' in a general way. Where does this idea of being come from?
  - a. *Not from corporeal sensations.* The characteristics of ideas (objectivity, possibility, simplicity, unity, identity, universality, necessity, immutability and eternity) are totally opposed to the characteristics of sensations which are subjective, contingent and real. The final characteristic which is peculiar to the idea of being is *indetermination*. This idea is outside any genus and cannot be placed in any class less determinate than itself.
  - b. *Not from the feeling (sensation) of our own existence.*
  - c. *Not from reflecting on my sensations* as Locke taught.
  - d. *It does not begin to exist in the act of perception.* It is not created by God every time I wish to make a judgement nor does it emanate from my soul which is subjective and personal.
  - e. *Therefore the idea must be innate.* In other words it has been present to the mind, which contemplates it, from birth. This must be so because we have exhausted every alternative.

The subject, the human being, is called the 'Ego', 'I'. We say, 'I think', 'I have a body', 'I walk' and so on. I see being but I am not the being I see. In philosophical

language we say ‘I intuit being’. This being I intuit is objective. It is not to be confused with me, the subject. It renders the human being intelligent. Without it we should be animals like the rest of the beasts. Rosmini shows that we are conceived with the idea of being. There is never a time when we did not have it. It is God given.<sup>1</sup> The above table gives briefly the reasoning from the *Nuovo saggio*.

In his *Principi della scienza morale* [Principles of Moral Science], Rosmini says ‘that universal being present to rational creatures enlightens them ‘with its own spark of divine fire’.<sup>2</sup>

The application which we make of the idea of being to the various feelings we experience is called *reasoning*. This results in perceptions and ideas. As explained earlier, in the natural order we see *being* only imperfectly, in its ideal form, in a universal and indeterminate mode.

### The idea of being is an appurtenance of God

The knowledge and perception of any contingent thing is seeing the relationship of this thing which acts upon my senses with the innate idea of being in my mind. I perceive that the action which I feel in my sense supposes a being that causes it. The idea of being is an appurtenance of being which leads me to infer that the being corresponding to it must subsist. I recognise an act of real being. ‘There is something out there which really exists’. But note we do not perceive the ‘being’ of the external thing, we argue to it. Rosmini quotes St Bonaventure and concludes: ‘This argument of the holy Doctor has an invincible force proving that the idea of being in our mind is an appurtenance of God, is the concept of God as it were in germ: so that when God shall present himself to us in his truth, we shall not find him different from being which we see by nature but shall find that same being seen completely and as subsistent. It is precisely because we see the ideality only of being, that we do not see God and to see him we must see a subsistence, as we have so often declared. Yet it still remains true that if the being which we see by nature cannot as yet be called God, it may nevertheless be termed a divine being, because it is the first rudiment, so to speak, of God that is conceived by our mind.’<sup>3</sup> The idea of being can also be called initial being because it is seen by us in an initial way only but it is like to the divine being which is complete being because both are being pure and simple (**Ref. 1**).

But in the supernatural order this same being acts in us in a *substantial* and *real* mode. We experience the action of a real being, not simply the possibility of being, but its subsistence. ‘The *real being* which man in this supernatural state perceives, is not therefore limited but yet it is determined by his own subsistence; it is not *possible* but yet it is *universal* in as much as it is the *totality* of being; it is not initial, but on the

<sup>1</sup> NS, Tomo II, Sezione Quinta, Parte Prima, cap. III, 29–70 [Durham, vol.2, *ibid.*, pp. 19–50].

<sup>2</sup> A.R., *Principi*, cap. IV, art VIII, p. 114 [Durham, n. 103, p. 60].

<sup>3</sup> AS, vol. I, lib.II, cap. I, art. II, note 21, p. 285.

contrary it is complete. This complete and real being is God himself, who shows himself to this world only, as it were under, a veil, and only in the other world and in heaven is he seen unveiled in his completeness.<sup>4</sup>

### **The idea of being is a likeness to God**

Ideal being is a likeness to God though not God himself.

St Thomas says, ‘And since the intellective power of the creature is not the essence of God, it follows that it is some kind of participated likeness of Him who is the first intellect....Therefore, in order to see God, there must be some similitude of God on the part of the visual faculty, whereby the intellect is made capable of seeing God.’<sup>5</sup>

In what does the concept of likeness consist? Two things are alike when they have a common quality. We say that two people are alike if they are, for example, both tall. But nothing common exists outside the mind. We can say that both John and Mary are tall but the ‘tallness’ is part of each individual and, so to speak, tied, to them as individuals. What prompts us to make a judgement that both are tall is the concept of ‘tallness’ that we possess in our mind. The word ‘tallness’ denotes an abstract idea. Now we know God through our vision of *being*. We have said that we can have a negative idea of God in the natural order. So this *being* of which we make use to know God must be a likeness of God. This *being* which forms the light of our mind has more likeness to God than to creatures because creatures are contingent and limited and possess potentialities, they are not pure act. God is being. ‘*God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, I AM has sent me to you.”*’<sup>6</sup> Rosmini quotes Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor (**Ref. 2**).

God is all Being and even in ideal being we find *totality*. If we had the dialectic power to do so we could deduce the knowledge of all things. Innate being has the power of causing things to be recognised and to be recalled to the memory. Rosmini likens this to the reminiscence of the Platonists. The fact of cognition, he says, seems rather a remembrance of something already known and afterwards forgotten, than the reception of entirely new knowledge because of the presence of the idea of being within us that renders contingent things intelligible to us. Rosmini again refers to St Bonaventure (**Ref. 3**).

If all things in as much as they are possible are already contained in the idea of being how is it that we cannot bring to mind this universal knowledge? It is because of the weakness of our minds which requires contingent things to strike our senses and move us to recognise these things and attribute being to them. ‘Now the degree of

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<sup>4</sup> *AS, ibid.*, lib II, cap. I, art I, p. 278.

<sup>5</sup> ST, I, XII, art. II.

<sup>6</sup> Ex 3: 14.

perspicacity given to human nature by the Creator is not such that it can penetrate into being so far as to see in it determinate and complete things, but it has need in order to see this, that the things themselves should act in our *sense* or *feeling* and should have these modifications, which are so many traces and signs of them by the aid of which we interpret the order and the nature of the being which corresponds to them in us.<sup>7</sup>

**All contingent things depend on God for their continual existence.**

Rosmini is very conscious of the danger of falling into pantheism; this would be to destroy God who is pure being. Indeed contingent things exist because God holds them in existence. We do not perceive the *being* of anything, but simply their action on us, and it is only by our perception of their action that we attribute being to them by an act of our own mind: and thus those things that are actions in us, become so many beings, not because we perceive them as beings, but because we suppose them to be such. We ourselves so to speak supply by our intelligence *being* to all things, and thus as it were constituting the things, and causing them to exist. In fact, if intelligent being of one species or another did not exist, no being would exist. This to some extent explains the dogma of theology, that the creation of beings takes place by an act of the divine intelligence, or of the Word, the light of all intelligences for, in fact, the knowableness of things is that which constitutes them as things and by which we call them *beings*. Hence the conservation of things is truly a continual creation, and as scripture says '*For in him we live and move*'<sup>8</sup> and God '*sustains all things by his powerful word*'<sup>9</sup>; and all things apart from God are vanity; they are drawn from nothing and are nothing. There is therefore a sense in which we can say that contingent things are non beings compared with God who is being, and without whom they would not exist. If God did not perceive us they would lapse into nothingness. Rosmini refers here to the words of Gregory the Great where he speaks of the nothingness of created things (Ref. 4).

All this leads us to see the necessity of being, that is to say of a first act which is immovable and universal, which has created them and continues to create and sustain them, that they may not fall back into nothing. 'This seems to me to be a demonstration of the existence of God, so firm and invincible that nothing can go beyond it: for the Supreme Being is far more certain, evident and necessarily existent than the universe itself whether spiritual or material, which in fact no one doubts, because no one can or will in the end deny himself.

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<sup>7</sup> The angelic nature is distinguished from human nature through its having a greater degree of perspicacity by which it is able to penetrate further into the vision of being and therefore to discover those cognitions which we cannot have without the use of the senses, and which in the angelic nature flow as consequences of being itself. *AS, ibid.*, art. II, p. 285.

<sup>8</sup> *Acts* 17: 28.

<sup>9</sup> *Heb* 1: 3.



All this proves that the idea of being, which shines in our minds, has a true likeness to God rather than to creatures, because creatures are *not being* and God is *being*, and being is that which shines to our minds.<sup>10</sup>

In his *Nuovo saggio* Rosmini demonstrates how the characteristics of the idea of being are divine.<sup>11</sup> Here, in his Supernatural Anthropology, he mentions two of them, namely the *immutability* and *eternity* of the idea of being. Simple being cannot be non-existent. This contradicts its nature. Hence it is immutable and eternal, two characteristics in which it is like to God. But all other things which are contingent would not subsist unless held in subsistence by God. We change, we are born and we die. The philosopher Heraclitus allegedly said that just as we cannot enter twice into the same flowing water, so our mortal substance constantly changes. In the same instant it exists and finishes it comes and goes. So, he says, only the eternal really exists, that which has no vicissitudes, has no mutations!

Rosmini cites Augustine and Eusebius<sup>12</sup> (**Ref. 5**). The following passage from Rosmini is enlightening and sums up all that has been said regarding how intelligent beings are made in God's likeness.

It is by means of this operation of the mind that we predicate *being* of God and of creatures *univocally* as I have elsewhere shown. This univocation of the name of *being* as applied to God and to creatures must be understood in the sense that *being* thus affirmed as common, is only such in the concept we are able to form of creatures and of God: because we can form no concept of anything unless we unite to it the notion of being which in that case becomes common. If then we wish to consider God and created beings, in themselves, and in their own proper subsistence, we must clearly understand that being cannot be applied to creatures except as their sustainment and cause, but not as an element that enters into their composition because Being is the property of God alone.<sup>13</sup> It is therefore the result of the imperfection of the way in which being subsists in our mind that we apply it indifferently to God and creatures; for if being were seen by us in a perfect way, we could not apply it to creatures as if they had it in themselves, but we should see it in God, incommunicable as he is and indivisible, and we should see that creatures subsist in it as in their cause and root. This is because *being* which is in our mind, is seen by us in so slight a way that it is rather a beginning of being, than being itself, and therefore under this aspect is so different from *being* that we may not improperly apply it to creatures, whereas in applying it to God it fails to give the full notion of him for this, as we have seen, we cannot have except through having the

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<sup>10</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>11</sup> See pp. 79–80 above.

<sup>12</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>13</sup> This reflection enables us to rectify our subjective and imperfect thoughts of things and it is by this reflection that, as St. Thomas acutely observes, our reason is not necessarily deceived.

perception of the very subsistence of God, wherein *ideal being* comes to be completed and unified with *real being*.<sup>14</sup>

### **The dignity of the human being**

The dignity of the human being lies in the fact that we intuit ideal being. We contemplate truth and if this ideal being were revealed in its reality we would see God. This, therefore, supposes union with and possession of absolute being, the source of heavenly bliss. This is why human beings tend towards happiness in this life and are never satisfied with contingent goods. We find in ourselves a paradox. Our lives are restricted by obvious limitations, finite as we are; yet we possess the initial vision of the infinite and pine for its realisation. This explains the incessant struggle of our human nature; there is nothing so weak and frail as our subjective humanity and yet there is nothing greater than human nature whose intellect gazes on the possibility of infinite being.<sup>15</sup> In the book of Psalms we read, ‘O God, you are my God, for you I long; for you my soul is thirsting. My body pines for you like a dry, weary land without water. So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory’.<sup>16</sup> Because of this God-given element that renders human beings intelligent they should never be treated as means but as ends.

### **Image and Likeness<sup>17</sup>**

‘You are never satisfied!’ How often we have heard these words especially from parents to their children. Yet there is a real truism in these words. We are made for God and no matter how many good things we strive to possess in this world they will never reach the infinite, namely God. Our very nature is, so to speak, programmed to be satisfied only by the possession of all good. In his *Principi della scienza morale* Rosmini explains that *being* and *good* are the same. The notion of good is the relationship between the things desired and that which desires them.<sup>18</sup> Just as our intellect will never be satisfied until it has reached infinite being so the will which tends to good, and is made for good, will never be satisfied until it possesses the infinite good. Just as the will desires finite goods by means of real union with them, a perception, not the idea, a mere concept, (as we said, dreaming about a new house is not the same as actually having one!) so a mere negative idea of God will never satisfy the will which craves for the infinite good. Our heart is restless until it rests in God.<sup>19</sup> We tend to seek satisfaction in earthly things and neglect the one thing necessary, the *unum necessarium*, which is God himself, the source of all these beautiful things which

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<sup>14</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 295–6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ps* 42: 1. Cf. *Principi*, cap. III, art. IX, pp. 98–99; cap. IV, art. 8., p. 114 [Durham, *Principles of Ethics*, nn. 67–68, p. 45; nn. 103–4, p. 60].

<sup>16</sup> *Ps* 63: 1.

<sup>17</sup> See my *Antonio Rosmini and the Fathers of the Church*, Chapter 8, for a fuller development of this section.

<sup>18</sup> *Principi*, cap. II, art III, p. 85, [Durham, n. 45, pp. 31–2].

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book I, 1.

he has created.<sup>20</sup> It is fitting, therefore, that we should not be left in a simply natural state but that we should be constituted even in this present life in the supernatural order, and experience a perception of God in his reality.

‘Grace perfects in man and completes *being* which is present to his intellect. Being, seen naturally by man, constitutes a likeness of God. When it is completed by grace, it receives a new nobility, a new character which we may fittingly and properly call an *image* of God.’<sup>21</sup>

Rosmini is at pains to explain exactly what he means by *image*. He quotes St Thomas, who says that every *image* is a *likeness* but not every likeness is an image. The image is the most perfect likeness, but for this to be so it must regard the *essence* of the thing, not just a part of it. If things were alike in some part which did not pertain to the species, e.g. ‘tallness’, a thing would not be the image of another. In the case of corporeal things, we normally take the figure of the thing not just its qualities, of colour, height etc. Also it includes the concept of *origin*. For instance, a head painted from an idea would not be called a portrait of anyone. It might have a likeness to a human face, but a true portrait requires a sitter. Strictly speaking, of course, even a portrait is not an image because a portrait has no soul. It is not the same as saying that a daughter is the image of her mother. But in the case of a portrait we take the sign for the thing signified.<sup>22</sup> Now grace in human beings is a true image of God.<sup>23</sup>

St Thomas speaks on Image
‘Image includes the idea of similitude. Still, not any kind of similitude suffices for the notion of image, but only similitude of species, or at least of some specific sign. In corporeal things the specific sign consists chiefly in the figure. For we see that the species of different animals are of different figures; but not of different colours. Hence if the colour of anything is depicted on a wall, this is not called an image unless the figure is likewise depicted. Further, neither the similitude of species or of figure is enough for an image, which requires also the idea of origin; because, as Augustine says (QQ. lxxxiii, qu. 74): “One egg is not the image of another, because it is not derived from it.” Therefore for a true image it is required that one proceeds from another like to it in species, or at least in specific sign. Now whatever imports procession or origin in God, belongs to the persons. Hence the name “Image” is a personal name.’ <sup>24</sup>

But the idea of being, although a *likeness* of God, is not an *image* of God. It can only be called an image by analogy or potentiality (because it lacks realisation). ‘It is a light

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Book X, 17 (38).

<sup>21</sup> *AS*, lib. II, cap. I, art. IV, p. 298.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 298–299. Cf. ST, I, XXXV, art. I.

<sup>23</sup> As well as the Fathers explicitly quoted in this section Rosmini quotes St Cyril of Alexandria, and Athanasius.

<sup>24</sup> ST, I, XXXV, art. I.

only which precedes the image, and makes it possible, which prepares the way and, as it were, the bare design or outline in man, but which omits the hand of the eternal artist for its completion in reality.<sup>25</sup> The natural cognition of God is only a negative idea. It is a rough outline of an image rather than a true image as we find in grace.

It is not like God *in species* and it is not a sign of the divine species. God is infinite reality, not an idea and there are no natural signs adapted to represent God. God has nothing in common with his creatures.

God has no accidents; he is pure substance. So there is no image of God unless this image of God is God himself. A real image must have something which is common with the other and which belongs to its nature (**Ref. 7**). The true, proper and perfect image of God 'is the eternal Word, who possesses in common with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the whole and entire divine nature received eternally from the Father.'<sup>26</sup> Rosmini quotes the letter to the Hebrews, '*He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature*';<sup>27</sup> and '*He who has seen me has seen the Father*.'<sup>28</sup>

St Thomas says, '...we see that the image of God is in man in three ways.

First, inasmuch as man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, *which is common to all men*.

Secondly, inasmuch as man actually and habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of *grace*.

Thirdly, inasmuch as man knows and loves God perfectly; and this image consists in the likeness of *glory*. Wherefore on the words, "The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us" (Ps 4:7), the gloss distinguishes a threefold image of "creation," of "re-creation," and of "likeness." The first is found in all men, the second only in the just, the third only in the blessed.<sup>29</sup>

Rosmini also quotes St Hilary and Didymus of Alexandria<sup>30</sup> (**Ref. 8**).

The consequence of all this is that it is the divine image which is impressed on human beings through grace, as we saw previously, where Rosmini says that grace is communicated by a real action of God on the soul and that he is formally united with us so that we are temples of God. The divine Word becomes, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, the principle of sanctification and grace. The work of the Holy Spirit is to give light and fire, as it were, to the action of the divine Word in our souls. The Spirit is compared to a signet ring which imprints the divine Word in the soul, through the faith which it enkindles. '*In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your*

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<sup>25</sup> *AS, ibid.*, pp. 299–300.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

<sup>27</sup> *Heb* 1: 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Jn* 14: 9.

<sup>29</sup> ST, I, XCIII, art. VII. (Italics are mine).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *AS, ibid.*, pp. 301–302.

*salvation, and have believed in him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit...*”, and “... *do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*”.<sup>31</sup>

Some of the saints teach that the image of God in man is imparted only by the Holy Spirit because grace and the sealing of souls by the communication of the Word is attributed to the Holy Spirit, for instance Cyril of Alexandria, and Augustine (**Ref. 9**).

Rosmini takes a parallel from Augustine to signify the image impressed by God on our souls. The *image* of God is not the human being, but it is in the human being as the image of Caesar is on the coin but is not the money itself.<sup>32</sup> Grace impresses the image in our souls and this image is a sharing of the one true image of the divine substance which is the eternal Word. Rosmini adds a quotation from St Paul, ‘*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*’.<sup>33</sup> In other words we become *images of God* by being made Christ’s brothers and sisters. We speak of being Christened.

Rosmini discusses the meaning of the words ‘*Let us make humankind in our image according to our likeness*’. He understands ‘likeness’ to refer to intelligence, and ‘image’ as referring to grace. This seems to be confirmed by the words of Genesis ‘*So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them*’.<sup>34</sup> The word likeness is not repeated again as though it were contained in the word image, and instead the word image is used twice, as if to express that the force and perfection of human dignity was contained in it.

Rosmini mentions Fathers of the Church who have distinguished the two words and points out that some take the opposite view, namely, that image signifies natural intelligence and likeness signifies grace, thus giving the latter a greater value. But they agree with him in the substance of what he teaches, for instance Basil, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Augustine, and John Damascene. All these Fathers take the word likeness as an addition to the word image, distinguishing, as it were, two images, one similar to the original and the other dissimilar. Rosmini thinks this may be confirmed by the Hebrew translated by the Latin as image, which signifies umbra, a shadow, and therefore an obscure and imperfect image, like a shadow cast by a person. So the word likeness may have been used to increase the force of the expression (**Ref. 10**).

Rosmini is not saying that his interpretation is certain. In fact, if anyone takes the opposite view it would suit him just as well, or perhaps even better if the words were not distinguished, as they could be seen as expressing the superlative, saying, as it were, an image perfectly like. In other words it would express ‘not a simple likeness of God that he placed in man but an image which was a perfect likeness, namely not intelligence only in which the likeness consists, but also grace which makes this likeness a true and living image, through the participation of the Word, who is the first and only perfect image of the divine substance. In this interpretation we see

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<sup>31</sup> *Eph* 1: 13, and 4: 30. Cf. *AS*, *ibid.*, p. 303.

<sup>32</sup> Augustine, *Sermones*, serm. IX, *De decem Chordis*, c. VIII, n. 9. Cf. *AS*, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Rom* 8: 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Gen* 1: 26–27

excellently expressed that kind of unity which, as we have said, exists between the natural and the supernatural light, and that the latter is a certain perfection of the former. For this reason I prefer this latter interpretation to the former one.<sup>35</sup>

Rosmini concludes this section on image and likeness by reverting to his original interpretation, that is, that likeness refers to the natural light of reason and image refers to the supernatural light. The Word alone is the image of God and we are the image of God by sharing in the Word.

In this more accurate sense Rosmini quotes Ambrose, Cyril of Alexandria, and Athanasius **(Ref. 11)**.

Basil calls the Son ‘the image that effects an image’ because he who is the true image of God produces in us the same image by communicating himself to us. He speaks of the ‘spiraculum vitae’ breathed on the face of man by God and says expressly that with the same breath both soul and grace were infused into man and not separately. He compares the breathing of God on Adam with the breathing of Christ on the Apostles, saying that ‘God then gave the inspiration of the Holy Spirit with the soul; now by a second breathing into the soul.’

‘The Son is, therefore, like a signet in respect of our soul and it is the Holy Spirit that makes use of that signet in order to impress on us that figure which is called also the face of God. Hence the force of the words of Christ, when speaking of himself he says, “for on him has God the Father set his seal” in other words this is the seal imprinted by God the Father who, in sealing souls, produces the divine image.’<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art. V, p. 308.

<sup>36</sup> Basil, *Adversus Eunomium*, lib. V. Cf. *AS*, *ibid.*, p. 310 and note.

<b>Ref. 1.</b>	<b>St Bonaventure on Being</b>
	Moreover being, when it can be thought of [cogitari] as diminished and complete, as imperfect and as perfect, as being in potency and as being in act, as being secundum quid and as being simply-speaking, as being in part [ens in parte] and being wholly [ens totaliter], as transient being and as stable being [ens manens], as being through another and as being through itself [per se], as being commingled with a non-being [permixtum non-enti] and as pure being, as dependent being and as absolute being, as posterior being and as prior being, as mutable being and as immutable being, as simple being and as composite being: since « its privations and defects can in no way be cognized except through its positions », our intellect does not come to resolve [venit ut resolvens] fully the understanding of any of the created beings, unless it be aided by the understanding of the most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute Being; which is Being simply and eternal, in which there are reasons for all things in its purity. Moreover, in what manner does the intellect know [scire], that this being is defective and incomplete, if it has no acquaintance with the Being apart from any fault? And thus concerning the other things already touched upon [praelibatis]. <sup>37</sup>
<b>Ref. 2.</b>	<b>Being is the first thing known</b>
Dionysius the Pseudo-aeropagite	“The term of being does not belong to God under any particular aspect, but simply, and he occupies and embraces not being in any determinate way, but all being.” <sup>38</sup> It is therefore being that falls under our mind before all other things, because being alone is intelligible in itself, so that it forms our intelligence.
Maximus the Confessor	“because the mind even in its very first attitude understands being, and thinks the same being before all other things, and then considers these other things also as being in a certain mode.” <sup>39</sup>
<b>Ref. 3.</b>	<b>The fact of cognition seems like a remembrance....</b>
Bonaventure	“It has itself a thoroughly unchangeable light present to itself, in which it remembers the truth of invariables. And thus through the activities of memory it appears, that the soul itself is an image and similitude of God, to this extent, that present to itself and having Him present, it seizes Him by act and through power « it is capable of Him and can be a participant » (in Him). <sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, cap. III, n. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Dionysius the Pseudo-aeropagite, *De Divinis nominibus*, cap. V. in particular § IV.

<sup>39</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Scholia in Beati Dionysii librum De Divinis nominibus*, in cap V cf. especially § V.

<sup>40</sup> Bonaventure, *Op. cit.*, cap. III, n. 2.

<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>All things are in the hand of God</b>
Gregory the Great	‘All these things exist, but exist not eminently, because they do not subsist in themselves at all, and if they are not upheld in the hands of him who rules them, they can no longer exist.’ <sup>41</sup>

<b>Ref. 5.</b>	<b>St Augustine on the eternal Being and contingent beings</b>
<p>‘For anything, whatever in short be its excellence, if it is changeable, does not truly exist; for there is no true existence wherever non-existence has also a place. For whatever can be changed, so far as changed, it is not that which was: if it is no longer what it was, a kind of death has therein taken place; something that was there has been eliminated, and exists no more....For in all actions and movements of ours, indeed, in every activity of the creature, I find two times, the past and the future. I seek for the present, nothing stands still: what I have said is no longer present; what I am going to say is not yet come: what I have done is no longer present; what I am going to do is not yet come: the life I have lived is no longer present; the life I have still to live is not yet come. Past and future I find in every creature-movement: in truth, which is abiding, past and future I find not, but the present alone, and that unchangeably, which has no place in the creature. Sift the mutations of things, you will find was and will be: think on God, you will find the is, where was and will be cannot exist.’<sup>42</sup></p> <p>‘For in so far as He is the only-begotten Son of God, it cannot be said of Him that He was and that He shall be, but only that He is; because, on the one hand, that which was, now is not; and, on the other, that which shall be, as yet is not. He, then, is unchangeable, independent of the condition of times and variation. For if He is,-and this is a word which can be spoken with propriety only of God (for that which truly is remains unchangeably; inasmuch as that which is changed has been something which now it is not, and shall be something which as yet it is not),-it follows that God has nothing contrary to Himself.’<sup>43</sup></p>	

<b>Ref. 6.</b>	<b>Eusebius on property of being and non-being</b>
<p>Explaining the doctrine of Plato concerning God he says that this philosopher held that ‘it is the property of God to be, and of other things it is proper not to be’, he then goes on to describe the Platonic doctrine thus ‘In the first place we must distinguish as it seems to me that which exists, which always exists and which has no beginning from that which is being continually generated and is never existent. The first of these is understood by the mind which is endowed with reason (namely that which is always one and the same); and the second is known by opinion and follows the irrational sense and is opiniable’ (namely that which is generated and dies and truly non-exists).<sup>44</sup></p>	

<sup>41</sup> Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, lib. XVI, cap. XVI. See also lib. XVIII, cap. XVII.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *In Johannis Evangelium*, tractatus. XXXVIII.

<sup>43</sup> St Augustine, *De Fide et Symbolo*, cap. 6, 7. Translated by Rev. S. D. F. Salmond, D.D., Professor of Systematic Theology, Free Church College, Aberdeen. Cf. *AS*, lib. II, cap. I, art. II, p. 293.

<sup>44</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio evangelica*, lib. XI, cap. IX.



<b>Ref. 7.</b>	<b>The Image must have something in common with the other and which belongs to its nature</b>
Cyril of Alexandria	‘It is manifest’ says St. Cyril ‘and admitted by the common sense of mankind that no one can see in any nature, a nature different from itself; if we have seen a horse we cannot say to ourselves that we have seen a man. Because we see things similar in beings which are of the same nature, not in them that are of a different in essence’. <sup>45</sup>
John Chrysostom	‘that no one who knows gold could see the nature of this metal in silver, because one nature is not seen by means of another nature’. <sup>46</sup>
<b>Ref. 8.</b>	<b>The Fathers speak of image and likeness</b>
Hilary	The apostle [St Paul] did not proclaim his Son image in part or form of God according to a portion only, but says that he is the image of the invisible God and form of the invisible God’. <sup>47</sup>
Didymus of Alexandria	‘The Son being the image of the invisible God and the form of his substance, all who are imaged and formed after that image or after that form are brought to the likeness of God; and they themselves obtain this image or form according to the force of their human perfectibility. Similarly, as the Holy Spirit is the signet of God, those who are sealed by him receive the form and image of God, they are brought in him to the image or seal of Christ, of wisdom and knowledge, and are moreover filled with faith’. <sup>48</sup>
<b>Ref. 9.</b>	<b>The image of God is imparted only by the Holy Spirit</b>
Cyril of Alexandria	‘By partaking of the Holy Spirit we are formed to the image of the Creator. Hence it is clear that this likeness to God can only be obtained by him who partakes of the Holy Spirit. And our redeemer, in order to restore that state in man who was made in the image of God, breathes once more towards his disciples saying, “receive the Holy Spirit”. It is right, therefore, to think that what has taken place in the renovation of man, must have been also in that primitive state; and therefore that the perfect expression of the image of the divine substance is given to man only by the participation of the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus*, assertio X.

<sup>46</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Joannem.*, homil. LXXIV, n. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Hilary, *De Trinitate*, lib. XI, n. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Didymus, *De Spiritu Sancto*, L.II, n. 22.

<sup>49</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus*, assertio XIII.

Ref. 10.	Image = intelligence; likeness = grace
Basil	‘By the image impressed on my soul I obtained the use of reason; but by being made a Christian I became truly like to God’. <sup>50</sup>
Jerome	‘We must observe that the image was made by creation only; the likeness is completed by baptism.’ <sup>51</sup>
Bernard	‘The image may be burnt in the fire but not consumed; it may be burned but not destroyed; but we must say the contrary of the likeness, which either remains in man; or if the soul sins, it is at once changed, and becomes like in its miserable condition to the hearts that have no understanding.’ <sup>52</sup>
Ref. 11.	Likeness = intelligence; Image = grace
Ambrose	‘Only through the image of God (that is, by the Word), can you be the image of God.’ <sup>53</sup>
Cyril	‘We who bear the image of the earthly man cannot put off corruption in any other way than by being impressed with the beauty of that heavenly image. This takes place when we are called to the adoption of the sons of God. For being made sharers of that adoption we are sealed by the Holy Spirit to the likeness of him (namely the Word) and thus ascend to the EXEMPLAR FORM of that image after which the Holy Scripture attests that we are made.’ <sup>54</sup> He expresses the same thought in other places. For instance in his Dialogues he says that ‘we are sealed by the Holy Spirit according to the figure and likeness of the Father, that is to say, of the Son.’ Again, ‘We receive in ourselves the divine character, and we are enriched by it. For by this we are conformed to God, when that supreme species of all things, namely the Son is impressed by the Holy Spirit in our souls.’ <sup>55</sup> And ‘the Son is the character by which God has sealed us, which Son is called also the face of God.’ <sup>56</sup> Cyril distinguishes the potential image which we have by nature from that actual image which we receive from our incorporation into Christ. The latter is the realisation of the former which, is, as it were, a sketch. He says, ‘the Son is the signet by which we are re-formed to God by faith and made conformed to the Son who is the image of the Father, in order that it may be verified in us that we are made to the image and likeness of our Creator.’ <sup>57</sup>
Athanasius	‘We are called to the image and glory of God: but not through ourselves, but

<sup>50</sup> Basil, *Homilia IX in Hexaearon*, n. 6.

<sup>51</sup> Jerome, *Commentaria in Ezechielem prophetam*, lib IX, cap XXVIII, vv 11 ff.

<sup>52</sup> Bernard, *Sermones de Sanctis. In festo Annuntiationis Beatae Mariae Virginis*, sermo I n. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ambrose, *De Fide*, lib.I, cap. IV.

<sup>54</sup> Cyril, *In Joannis Evangelium*.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, *De SS Trinitate, Dialogus V*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, *In Joannis Evangelium*, lib. III.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

*Made in the Image and Likeness of God*

	through the true image and glory of God that dwells in us and which is the Word of God who, for our sakes, was made flesh; and we have attained the grace of being called by the same name as he himself. <sup>58</sup>
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<sup>58</sup> Athanasius, *Oratio Quarta contra Arianos*.

## Chapter 7

### Life before the Fall

#### Preview

The traditional teaching of the Church is that from the beginning our first parents enjoyed supernatural life. Those in a state of grace are able to see *being* more clearly. Adam and Eve enjoyed an intimate relationship with God who made himself visible in a way adapted to their capacity. This was an outward sign of inward grace. Before the fall grace perfected the nature of our first parents; but grace in the New Covenant acts in the essence of our soul and also affects the body inasmuch as we shall one day rise with a glorified body.

Rosmini discourses on what it might have been like for man in a purely natural state and whether he would have been able to observe the moral law. This, of course, is a purely hypothetical situation. Man's fall from grace will be explained in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that before the fall the person of man would have had complete control over his other powers, that is, his nature and if there had been no original sin we would have inherited a person and nature equally perfect. After the fall, the disorder of Adam's *nature* was passed on to his descendants. The redeeming grace of Christ is not passed on through the descendants of the New Covenant because it is a *personal* grace. Rosmini discusses the difference between human beings and angels and the sin of the latter. The next topic is whether human beings can increase in grace indefinitely. He again discusses the difference between nature and person. Nature must always serve the person in whom resides the volitive principle (the principle of the will). This principle, the moral principle, follows the truth; and objective good is always to be preferred to subjective pleasure and satisfaction, that is, subjective good when the two clash. Man's personal perfection lies in perfect obedience to God. Before Adam fell from grace there was no death and the whole person was united to God by grace. Rosmini believes that such people would have arrived at the full possession of God by knowledge and by love, that is, by use of their intellect and will. Ultimately this would have led to the beatific vision of God. For us, a life well-lived ends in death but with the joyful recognition that we shall rise one day with a glorified body.

#### Our first parents enjoyed supernatural life

Before their fall from grace our first parents were constituted in the supernatural order. In such a state there was no reason why there should have been any interval between their natural and supernatural state. There is no repugnance in God bestowing natural and supernatural life at the same time. Firstly, the light of grace united to the light of nature does not make two lights or two lives. The supernatural

light is the same *being* that we see by nature, but this is now seen more clearly and endowed with a stronger light so that we perceive in some way its *substance*. It is very probable that since God willed to give man *light and life* he would give it in the measure that was needed instead of by instalments, so to speak. Secondly, scripture confirms this teaching, that Adam received from God the gift of grace and the gift of intelligence at the same time. God '*formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*.'<sup>1</sup> In the *spiraculum vitae* (breath of life) intelligence and grace were combined.<sup>2</sup> The natural and supernatural light are one and the same, because they are one and the same being. Thirdly this truth is proven from the principle laid down by St Thomas, following St Augustine, who says that all those things that come in process of time by the operation of divine providence which produces them, were created by God in their primitive condition according to certain seminal reasons. In other words, God plants the seeds and lets time develop them. An obvious example is the development of plants from seeds, and, of course, this is strikingly evident in the case of animals. We wonder at the perfection of a tiny baby and realise that the perfection was there from the moment of conception. In the book of Genesis we have the refrain that '*God saw that it was good*' and on completion of his work '*behold, it was very good*'. This mode of God's action is in keeping with the divine wisdom and his use of the least means necessary to produce the maximum good.

<b>St Thomas's teaching on the gift of grace and the gift of intelligence</b>
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For we see that all things which, in the process of time, being created by the work of Divine Providence, were produced by the operation of God, were created in the first fashioning of things according to seed-like forms, as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. viii, 3)... <sup>3</sup>
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### Adam's and Eve's original state

Rosmini speaks of Adam's original state of grace before the fall. We can equally apply this to Eve before the fall. It would be repugnant, as theologians say, that one would be raised to the supernatural state without the other, and indeed original sin affected both. He makes the interesting comment that with all their powers our first parents did not possess happiness within themselves, they were vessels needing to be

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<sup>1</sup> Gen 2: 7.

<sup>2</sup> Rosmini here lists some Fathers who believed that man received intelligence first and then grace or even the Holy Spirit signified by the words '*spiraculum vitae*.' Origen, *De Principiis*, Lib.I, cap. III; n. 6 Tertullian, *Liber de Baptismo*, cap. V; Cyprian, *Epistula ad Pompeium*, VII; Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, Lib. IX; Basil, *Homilia in Psalmum XLVIII*, n. 8; Ambrose, *De Paradiso*, cap. 5. These Fathers thought this because they believed for certain that Adam was endowed with grace but they could find no place in Genesis in which we are told how it was given by God. Rosmini adds that Augustine did not approve of their opinion. Cf. *De Civitate Dei*, L. XIII, c. XXIV. Cf. *AS*, lib. II, cap. I, art. V, p. 306, and note 87.

<sup>3</sup> ST, I, LXII, art. III. Cf. *AS*, *ibid.*, p. 306.

filled and their powers were only the means for obtaining happiness. It is once again important to realise that the whole material universe was inferior to them since they were intelligent creatures. Indeed God made a helpmate for Adam. For '*it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.... Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..."*'<sup>4</sup> Humanity had an essential need of God to satisfy its desires.

It is therefore most appropriate that our human nature should be ennobled by grace which raises us to the supernatural order. It is a completion of our natural limitations and by it we share in the divine and are ordained for an infinite good. For God to have given his creatures an end which would have been less than infinite would not have been in keeping with his infinite power, wisdom and goodness. As we have seen, grace is an interior and real communication of God attributed to the Holy Spirit. It is called by the Fathers the perfecting force by which God's intelligent creatures are perfected.

Rosmini theorises about the relationship of God with our first parents before the fall; this is in keeping with the thinking of the time, and depicts the loving relationship between Adam and Eve and God. In keeping with a literal reading of Genesis Rosmini discusses the effect of God's presence adapted to the capacity of Adam and Eve. The intimate and sensible presence of God was, he believes, the minister of interior grace. The Catechism of the Church reminds us that 'The first man was not only created good, but was also established in friendship with his Creator and in harmony with himself and with the creation around him, in a state that would be surpassed only by the glory of the new creation in Christ'.<sup>5</sup> Adam and Eve were constituted in an original state of holiness and justice.

But the difference between the order of sanctity and grace before the fall and that of the redeemed after the fall is that grace in our first parents was *to perfect nature* so that step by step it would become more and more spiritualised until this life became incapable of being lost and filled with the grace and fruition of God. Death is repugnant to us even though we know by faith that a new life is prepared for us by Christ after our death. St Paul says: '*For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*'<sup>6</sup> This, desire, says Rosmini, would have been satisfied if paradise had not been lost. Human beings would have passed to the vision of God and eternal beatitude without having to shed their bodily life but rather being clothed with glory.<sup>7</sup> They would have passed from mortality to immortality, clothed, so to speak, in the

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<sup>4</sup> *Gen.* 2: 18, 23.

<sup>5</sup> CCC, § 374, p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> 2 *Cor* 5: 4.

<sup>7</sup> Note that it has never been taught that our Lady died. In *Munificentissimus Deus* Pius XII defined that 'Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things...' (CCC § 966, p. 252). We also speak of the 'dormition' of our Lady.

garment of glory and incorruption. On the contrary, we fallen ones have been condemned to death. Another regeneration is necessary, which as we know, is effected through baptism because ‘*God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us*’<sup>8</sup> and ‘*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.*’<sup>9</sup> Finally we recall the words of Christ to Nicodemus, ‘*Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.*’<sup>10</sup> Our hope, therefore stands in this regeneration and new principle of life. This principle comes down from God, the perfect, to give life to the imperfect. Sanctity in our present state lies in a living faith. Thus the virtue and grace of fallen human beings is more sublime than that of Adam before the fall. ‘*So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.*’<sup>11</sup> Our conversation, unlike Adam’s, should be in heaven. Rosmini quotes a long passage from St Augustine which, at the risk of wearying the reader deserves to be quoted in full: this is printed at the end of this chapter (**Ref. 1**).

Not only is the grace given through Jesus Christ in the regeneration of humanity a real action in the essence of its soul as in Adam before the fall, but it also affects the body also inasmuch as the regenerated Christian partakes of incorruption and immortality, regained through the redemption of Christ. ‘*You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*’<sup>12</sup> But the body will not be renewed until after the general resurrection.

Rosmini comments on a passage from St Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15: 44–49), showing the advantage of the second man over the first (**Ref. 2**). ‘Grace therefore triumphs in the new “man”, expanding all its renovating force. In the “old man” God had only to help nature by grace but here he has to create a new nature; here grace does everything, it regenerates, it perfects, whereas in the “old man” grace did only a part. Nature, on the other hand, was presupposed and given prior to grace as subject. It is true that nature of the first man was an operation of God and God was glorified by it; but that operation was only *divine*. On the contrary the operation of God by which man is regenerated and recreated (for he is called by the Apostle a *new creature*) is wholly *deiform*; and in this consists what St. Paul calls the *glory of the grace of Christ*. This

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<sup>8</sup> Rom 5: 5.

<sup>9</sup> Gal 4: 4–7.

<sup>10</sup> Jn 3: 5.

<sup>11</sup> Col 3: 1–4.

<sup>12</sup> Eph 4: 23.

second operation is infinitely more glorious to God than the first, namely the work of the creation and primitive institution of man. In that first institution of man, there were two principles, though contemporaneous, namely *nature* which came from the creative power of God and *grace* which came from his sanctifying power and rendered that nature perfect. In the second institution of man there is but one sole principle viz. grace which is at once the creative and perfecting principle of the new man. Grace here does everything, everything here is in God, principle, means and end: although man when arrived at the period of free will, may correspond if he will or not, with the operation of grace. That primitive grace, in a word, absorbed by its living power what was *mortal* in man, according to the expression used by St. Paul: but the new grace absorbed death itself as the prophet Osee had predicted, as cited by St. Paul “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*”<sup>13</sup>

### **Free will in the state of innocence**

#### **In the natural state**

This is simply an hypothesis because in actual fact our first parents were created in a supernatural state; however it helps us in considering the endowment of free will and its exercise before the fall.

So the question is whether such beings would have had the power to sufficiently observe the moral law or would they have been compelled to sin? For them to sin there would have to be a cause. As we know this cause comes with the temptation which arises between the clash of a subjective good, which is good in relation to the person concerned, and objective good which is good in itself irrespective of the subject. This is shown to us by our reason and we are obliged to acknowledge it as such, thus incurring moral obligation. Objective good is the basis of *morality*; subjective good is the basis of the science of *happiness*.

There is no clash between objective and subjective good if what constitutes both is the same. And if the objective good were not irksome to the subject he/she would no doubt remain faithful to it, for it would be natural for them to give objective good its due value. The only danger of violating morality would arise when the reason presents an objective good and the feeling or sense is presented with a subjective good which it

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<sup>13</sup> (Osee 13: 14) “These words of the prophet are cited by St. Paul 1 *Cor* 15: 53ff. “*For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” — On the other hand, if we were not destined to die, as would have been the case under the primitive institution of man, we would have ‘been clothed upon’ as St. Paul says. Immortality would have been placed on us without our being unclothed of our mortal body by death, without the body being laid aside. So it could not have been said that death was absorbed by life, but rather because of our mortal nature what was mortal in us would have been absorbed by life.’ *AS, ibid.*, cap. II, art. III, pp. 321–322.



is unable to follow without ignoring and repudiating objective good, that is, good estimated at its true value. The moral law shows us clearly that we are obliged to esteem and to follow in practice good only for that which it is worth in itself. On the other hand blind sense or feeling moves us to follow good not for what it is in itself but for what actually at the moment gives us most pleasure. This is what generates moral conflict and constitutes the essence of temptation.

Two questions might arise here i) granted an incorrupt nature would this scenario ever occur ? ii) supposing temptation did arise would it be so great as to overcome free will?

i) Certainly a collision between subjective goods must occur; the person could not enjoy all at the same time and therefore he/she is bound to make a selection in a reasonable manner if they wished to use them either for themselves or for others. That is, the person would be obliged to choose the good which is the better, the greater and the more perfect in its nature. In other words subjective goods must be estimated in an objective manner according to their comparative value; only in this way could they receive a moral dignity. In this particular case where present concerns were concerned there would be no collision between them which would persons in danger of moral failure because their appetite and moral conscience put would be interested in selecting the greatest good.

But how about present and future goods? Present sensible goods exercise a *real* action on the human appetite, whereas future goods exercise only an *ideal* action. However the rational will can restrain the real action by means of the imagination which presides over future goods and in a way can make them present to us. Persons, in the natural state we are supposing, would have clarity and promptness of mind. Their free will, then, would be able to resist any temptation which might arise and in such a state it is not likely that they could sin.<sup>14</sup>

ii) But suppose God manifested himself in some way and enjoined some positive precept on him which entailed privation. Would his free will have sufficient strength to observe this precept? We have seen that the action of a present subjective good could be overcome by imagining the action of a future good but if this imaginative force is not sufficient the person might be easily overcome. The sacrifice commanded is a real, present, physical evil; however, it should be possible to imagine a greater evil which would be incurred by not accepting this sacrifice, or a good the obtaining of which would give him greater satisfaction than the evil of sacrifice. Rosmini quotes the letter to the Hebrews telling us that Christ, in order to support the cross, imagined the joy which would be derived from his suffering: *'who for the joy that was set before him*

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<sup>14</sup> Rosmini believes that in such a state if God had not manifested himself positively it would have been possible to come to a knowledge of God through the idea of being present to us which necessitates a subsistent being commensurate with it, like arguing from the dawn to the sun not yet seen. Coming to the knowledge of a supreme Being and adoring it would not have entailed any sacrifice.

*endured the cross*.<sup>15</sup> But if it were a case of a supernatural good a human being in a purely natural state would be unable to imagine this for it would be a purely ideal good. In this case it would not be sufficient to be a counterpoise to the aversion to evil which would be sensibly present to him. However, this good might be imagined as an accumulation of goods similar to those experienced, to which he might compare that unknown good so that it would appear in that way as some greater invisible good by this imaginary perception. So he might be able to overcome the evil that threatens him, provided he has faith in the promised good and be able to conceive a true and real desire for it

### **Adam's temptation**

Rosmini examines the momentous situation in which the devil tempted Adam. The devil put before Adam future goods promising him deification, immortality and knowledge. *'But the serpent said to the woman "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate*'.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand God had placed an alternative future evil but God said, *'And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."*'<sup>17</sup> Confronted with an ideal evil and a real imagined good the latter would have overcome his will. However Adam, in the supernatural state, would have been able to counter the devil's temptation, as grace is a real feeling on which he could draw.

Though finite things cannot will their own absolute unhappiness, nevertheless because they are contingent limited beings, the value of their existence and their own happiness is inferior to the value of the moral law, which is infinite, unconditional and eternal, that is, God himself. This must be preferred to everything else: hence the dignity and glory of martyrdom which is the ultimate witness to this principle, and the virtue of the creature before its creator. The moral law has an infinite value and dignity.

### **In the state of grace**

Moral limitation in creatures entails a deficiency in moral goodness. But our first parents were created in a state of grace and this takes away in some measure this limitation because, as we have seen, grace acts in the essence of the soul, and God formally unites himself to it. Because of this the person in grace shares in the divine existence *'But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him*'.<sup>18</sup> Through this union it

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<sup>15</sup> *Heb* 12: 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Gen* 3: 4–6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 3.

<sup>18</sup> *1 Cor* 6: 17.

desires something infinite, God is the term of its happiness. It no longer has an indeterminate desire of happiness but justice itself, God himself. Adam 'was able to add force to his free will through being completely just' [...] In this state 'reason was submissive to God and the inferior powers were submissive to reason and the body to the soul'.<sup>19</sup>

St Thomas says: 'For this rectitude consisted in his reason being subject to God, the lower powers to reason, and the body to the soul: and the first subjection was the cause of both the second and the third; since while reason was subject to God, the lower powers remained subject to reason, as Augustine says [Cf. *De Civ. Dei* xiii, 13; *De Pecc. Merit. et Remiss.* i, 16].'<sup>20</sup>

With this grace it was possible for human nature to have complete justice and share in the divine justice of God. Now why did Adam not receive from God the gift of perseverance in good? The reason is that he was equipped sufficiently to be able to persevere of his own free will. Rosmini quotes St Augustine (**Ref 3**). Man could therefore either use or not use this power of grace which added force to his merely natural ability and the influence of purely ideal good, such as justice which laid on him the obligation of obeying God in the face of any sacrifice. Just as the imagination has power to give effectiveness to a future good so this supernatural power was sufficient to enable him to overcome temptation. Augustine says that the angels had this same grace which would enable them either to persevere or not, some did, some didn't, depending on the use their free will made of it (**Ref. 4**).

So how did God put man on trial to see what the free will could do? His free will was not left to itself but accompanied by grace which would remain inoperative unless the free will made use of it so that it would bear fruit. So this grace in the Angels and the human being was *potential* and it was up to man to reduce it to *act*. But, Rosmini asks, in passing from potentiality to act, did this require help from God in the form of an *actual* grace? He believes not and the habitual grace which Adam enjoyed would have been sufficient. After sin, however, though the will remained, it became weaker, the animal sense became bold and false and the other powers were weakened and changed and people looked for the source of happiness in themselves rather than God. The human animal was thus doomed to death and had to be created again, so it was also necessary for God to create a new will in man. This is the work of Jesus Christ.

In Adam's state of innocence, St Augustine attributes the act of doing right to his free will. This was in a state of uprightness and tended naturally to moral good, according to the order of objective good, although it was invigorated by habitual grace. But the free will of sinful man is disordered and has lost its natural uprightness it is no longer turned to objective good and his original tendency is infected with

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<sup>19</sup> AS, lib. II, cap. III, art. II, pp. 332-333.

<sup>20</sup> ST, I, XCV, art. I.

disorder. In the free will of the unbaptised person there exists a principle of evil action. Therefore such a person is in need of the grace of the Redeemer to invigorate the free will and also to implant the *principle* of good acts. Thus the re-adjusted will receives a right direction in the order of objective good. St Augustine thus attributed to grace both the power of good and the good acts themselves, the will to do good and the actual doing of it.

Since the principle of good in the regenerated person proceeds from God and not our nature, this moral force is greater than that of man in a state of innocence because grace is stronger than nature. Thus the glory of God's power and mercy shines more resplendently. The first man who was in a state of greater good did not persevere in grace. But fallen man is enabled to persevere by the grace of God.

### The moral dignity of man

The moral dignity of the first man lay in his perfectly upright will which is the supreme principle of action. There is no principle higher than this because it is swayed only by the objective principle of the law of God. The person is constituted by this supreme principle. The uprightness of the first man gave nobility to his person. This was also a good of his nature because in the state of innocence nature and person were in perfect harmony.

Person and Nature
The person is the <i>supreme principle of action</i> in the intelligent nature of the human being. The perfection of the person takes place in the person's personal activity. I, the person, direct my actions in virtue of my will. Human nature can be perfected at the cost of the person, for instance by employing immoral means. Before the fall the person dominated the active principles inferior to it and these were arranged in an orderly fashion. All this contributed to perfection of the nature of the person. Unfortunately this order has been upset and disturbed by sin. Our disorderly nature tends to rebel against what we know to be right.

The person is the supreme principle of action which resides in the intelligent nature of man. This ought to dominate all other principles of this nature. By nature Rosmini means all the active principles connected individually together. If any active principle that enters into the constitution of a *nature* acquires some degree of perfection, nature is being perfected. But for the *person* to be perfected this must take place in the supreme principle, which is that of personal activity. There is therefore a distinction between the perfecting of a nature and that of a person; similarly the good of a nature from the good of the person. Perfect health of body is a good of nature but if the personality thereby falls into evil, the person would not have gained in perfection and in good. For example, suppose a woman has an abortion to keep her health, her nature gains from this act but her person has committed moral evil and would have lost in perfection. But there are cases where sickness, which is a loss of nature, brings an increase of virtue. In this case the person gains in perfection. Yet again we can

think of a case in which the good of the person contributes to the good of the whole nature.

In the perfect human nature, Adam before the fall, the person, that is, the supreme active principle would dominate the other principles designed to be subject to it. Not only this but by this bond these principles would be arranged in an orderly fashion and this order would bring perfection to the entire nature of the person, and the prevalent force of the supreme active principle is a perfection of the person himself.

Person and nature before and after the fall
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If there had been no original sin, Adam's descendants would have inherited a perfect human nature obedient to the dictates of a perfect person, with the same perfection of grace. After the fall redemptive grace is not transmitted through generation because it is personal. But a disordered nature produces a disordered nature. An external action of God was necessary.
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This nobility was destined to be passed to the descendants of our first parents as they would receive from their parents a perfect human nature; they would have been born in that same condition of moral good. The grace given by God to our first parents was perfective not only of person but also of nature. Therefore their descendants born with a perfect nature would also have been born with the same perfection of grace. In accordance with Rosmini's theory of the vision of being shining before the intellect of all intelligent creatures in an ideal manner (the idea of being), we can see that this *being* was not merely ideal being but had a certain degree of *reality* since grace is this same being manifested to man in its *real subsistence*, that is to say it is supernatural and divine.

But these descendants would not have been confirmed in grace because their parents would not have yet been confirmed in grace which would only come about at the end of their earthly journey and admission to the beatific vision of God. They would certainly have been born in original grace for this would be part of the nature transmitted to them. On the contrary *redemptive* grace is not transmitted through generation because such grace is personal, that is, it is affixed to the person or the supreme principle of human nature which is the intellective will. The other inferior powers of this human nature are, in this state, in rebellion and averse to the dominion of grace. That which belongs to the person does not pass to the offspring. A disordered nature reproduces a disordered nature. There is nothing to prevent a morally disordered nature from being intelligent but grace cannot be communicated by natural generation for grace is incompatible with guilt, moral disorder and sin. Thus an external action of God is necessary to repair this disorder. It is fitting, says Rosmini, that this extraordinary gift be attached to the intellect, in which truth or being shines to the mind for this *being* is not given to man in a way proper to generation but appended by a law of God to the act of generation, this *being* cannot

suffer any alteration since it is an *appurtenance* of God himself.<sup>21</sup> St Augustine explains this **(Ref. 5)**. The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a miraculous exception to this fall from grace.

### **Human beings and angels**

Rosmini says that theologians teach that angels reach their term of perfect beatitude with their first meritorious act. But man has a long journey to make, and has to perform virtuous acts without yet being confirmed in grace.

Rosmini distinguishes between the intellects of human beings and angels. Human intelligence is the lowest in the hierarchy of intelligences. Our nature consists in seeing *being*, in the most imperfect indeterminate mode. We can progress, using our senses, to a more entire and perfect knowledge of being but we have to make use of our limited perceptions in order to understand more noble beings and God. Our understanding is always limited because of the weakness and imperfection of the means employed. The soul cannot find anything in itself, its acts, or in material things that has a true and proper likeness to angels and God. We said earlier that we have only a negative idea of God and the same can be said about angels. Through grace we can progress much further into the knowledge of the absolute Being. But grace, given in proportion to our nature, adds only greater effectiveness and brightness to natural concepts in this life. It has imparted a greater wisdom and acuteness of spiritual vision but this light does not impart to the mind any perceptions that are entirely new in nature.

This grace is the least of the graces with which other species of intelligences more excellent than us were endowed.

The angels saw being much more perfectly than us. They saw *being* and in *being* were able to see immediately many of its determinations. They could see not just the principle of *being* as man sees it through nature, but also many terms of being itself. Not that the angels already saw in the beginning either through nature or grace the essential and absolute term of being, that is, God. But as they looked into ideal being, as in a mirror, which reflected real being and all that they wished to find there, thus sharpening their intellectual vision, so they were able to penetrate into other created things, themselves and their Creator. This love which moved their will to seek objects on which to contemplate would be a just love if their intellectual attention was kept fixed by preference in God or it would be unjust if they chose to contemplate the

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<sup>21</sup> Although the nature of parents is passed on to their children, the accidental state in which that nature happens to be is not passed on. Therefore the merits and grace of Adam in the state of innocence would not have been passed on. Rosmini goes on to give as examples, that blind people do not beget blind people, and that children are not born with the accidental good qualities of their parents; men of great learning do not beget learned children. However it would have been interesting to know the impact of modern gene theories on Rosmini. What would he have thought about families of musicians, the Bach family for example. However, there are signs that Rosmini was still open to the fact that virtue and good habits and vice versa might have an effect on offspring. He mentions this in his *Filosofia del diritto* [Philosophy of Right] vol. IV, nn. 1358–1368, pp. 1117–1122 [vol. 5, pp. 136–141].

excellence of any other being in preference to God. So those who sought the Divine Essence within the ideal being which shone most clearly before their minds, found it and with the same act, which perfected their cognition, there resulted the merit of virtue and the reward of eternal beatitude. Whereas those who with unjust affection sought in ideal being themselves rather than God, preferring themselves to him, committed sin. They darkened their intellect by withdrawing it from the contemplation of divine life; thus they were unable to behold the face of God and his love from this moment on.

Human nature does not see in being all that it desires but only what the senses enable it to see and this is weak and limited. Even aided by grace, which proceeds gradually in accordance with our nature, human beings have to walk a long road before arriving at the intuitive knowledge of God.

This is why a human being never reaches ultimate evil. Knowledge is acquired only gradually and is always imperfect and his/her merit and demerit which follow on knowledge are the same. Let us suppose that his sin consists in immediate disobedience to God: it is evident that the greatness of this sin is not as great as the greatness and majesty of the supreme Being considered in himself; but only as great as the greatness and majesty of God, in the knowledge and concept of the sinner; so that the more knowledge a man has of God, the greater his guilt would be; and less in proportion as the concept of the supreme Being is more imperfect.<sup>22</sup> So the gravity of sin in human beings depends on the amount of knowledge of their Creator. Thus we sin and, having come to know God better, can repent, and God has only to give us grace to know him more by experience, in other words he can save us by increasing in us supernatural and experimental knowledge.

Now in the case of the angels their natural knowledge was of the highest order in that first act of theirs and also the degree of knowledge derived from grace. Just as the angel by the first use of his will was able to bring his knowledge of God to perfection by directing his intellect to gaze on his very essence, so by abusing this first act of that highest degree of knowledge and highest degree of grace there was no further degree of grace that could be given to him to save him. Human beings can only acquire some higher degree of knowledge step by step. But they may obtain a greater knowledge and grace that may affect their conversion as long as they make their earthly journey, unless they abuse the last grace that they can receive which, Rosmini says, is the sin against the Holy Spirit which scripture says will not be forgiven in this world or the world to come.<sup>23</sup> This sin would be like that of the angels.

### **The indefinite perfectibility of the human species**

This erudite topic demonstrates very important truths in the moral life of men and women. Rosmini takes up again the difference between nature and person and begins by discussing the active principles that enter into the constitution of human nature.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. IV, art VI, p. 345.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Mt* 12: 32.

He distinguishes in the active principles 1) their number; 2) the power of each; 3) their order and mutual harmony.

1) Number:

In their natural order there are two, namely, **instinct** and **will**. In the supernatural order there is the **will** acting under supernatural perception.

2) Power

As far as their power is concerned this is given by the laws to which their nature and generative power are subject. Rosmini suspects that this may be increased or diminished according to the influence of virtuous or vicious habits, and in general by the good or evil through which humanity passes.

3) Order

As far as the order of the principles is concerned, its perfection consists in the perfect subordination of the active principles, and this constitutes the perfection of the moral state of human beings.

So these three elements must be carefully taken into consideration if we want to know the greater or lesser perfection of the human being. But besides the perfection which is attached to being human, there is also the perfection of its development depending on how these active principles are used and exercised. These belong either to the *person* or to *nature*; in either case they are *accidental perfections*. The perfection of the person is that which resides in the personal principle i.e. the supreme principle or *moral principle*. The perfection of nature regards some active principle which forms part of man's nature.

This distinction between the perfecting of the person and the perfecting of the nature of the human being is very important because all the powers are capable of development but the perfection of one is not necessarily the perfection of the other, one is perfected without the other and sometimes at the expense of another. Therefore not every development of the human being as animal is to be taken as proportionate to and the rule of the development and perfection of man as an intellectual being. For instance people can be very concerned with their health and strength and neglect to cultivate the powers of their spirit. In fact some careers are devoted to the improvement of the body and the accidentals that accompany bodily beauty and appearance. On the other hand those who are wisest and most clear-headed are not always the most healthy. Rosmini himself in pursuing his intellectual activities neglected his health when he was a young man in Milan and became seriously ill. Powerful intellects can also be quite immoral. We frequently encounter this with great artists, in music, painting and so on. The cultivation and perfection of the moral principle forms the perfection of the person. The cultivation of the intellectual and animal part of the human being forms only the perfection of our nature; the moral principle is the supreme active principle in man, this constitutes man's personality.

Not only does the perfection of the person differ from the perfection of nature but sometimes these two can clash. Rosmini cites St Thomas who says that among the virtues some do not require any imperfection in our nature, yet others do. Justice and



charity do not; but faith and hope supposing a deficiency in knowledge, penitence supposing sin and compassion which supposes sharing in the evils in others do.

He says, 'It must, however, be noted that some virtues of their very nature do not involve imperfection, such as charity and justice; and these virtues did exist in the primitive state absolutely, both in habit and in act. But other virtues are of such a nature as to imply imperfection either in their act, or on the part of the matter. If such imperfection be consistent with the perfection of the primitive state, such virtues necessarily existed in that state; as faith, which is of things not seen, and hope which is of things not yet possessed. For the perfection of that state did not extend to the vision of the Divine Essence, and the possession of God with the enjoyment of final beatitude. Hence faith and hope could exist in the primitive state, both as to habit and as to act. But any virtue which implies imperfection incompatible with the perfection of the primitive state, could exist in that state as a habit, but not as to the act; for instance, penance, which is sorrow for sin committed; and mercy, which is sorrow for others' unhappiness; because sorrow, guilt, and unhappiness are incompatible with the perfection of the primitive state.'<sup>24</sup>

There is no doubt that such acts increase the perfection of the person. The occasion for this is given by defects in our nature. The reason for this is, of course, the limitation of our human nature which is not susceptible of every degree of greatness and perfection so that perfection on the one hand entails imperfection on the other. This law determines the maximum sum of good attainable.

What, then, determines the order of perfection between person and nature? The answer by now will be clear, the nature must serve the person. The perfection of the person is of infinitely greater value than what concerns the perfection of the nature. The volitive principle which dwells within the person is designed to follow the truth and has an absolute value and right over all the other powers which constitute man and these should be guided and moved by this supreme principle. If there is a defect in the latter the whole person is ruined.

### **Happiness and Pleasure**

Happiness is often confused with pleasure. Happiness is the enjoyment of the greatest good, and totally different from sensual pleasures which in our hedonistic age are thought to bring happiness and well being. These cannot assuage our longing for the absolute good and, in fact, when in conflict with the dictates of morality, prevent us from attaining moral perfection when we follow our animal instincts at the expense of wisdom and virtue. The principle relationship between the two elements forming human beings depends on the dignity of the intellective over the animal element and the dignity of the good of the intellective element over

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<sup>24</sup> ST, I, XCV, art. III.

the good of the animal element. The sole, absolute good is end, everything else is a means to be ordered and subjected to absolute good.<sup>25</sup>

Rosmini makes the point that happiness is very often confused with pleasure. We all want happiness, but those who seek for happiness by perfecting their nature, whether through riches and prosperity, corporeal pleasure, ambition, culture of the intellect and so on, to the detriment of practical moral culture, will never really be happy because they do not seek for an improvement of the person and what really matters. To be sure it is important to try to improve one's lot and that of others. We constantly are asked to contribute to this or that appeal, for starving or displaced people, the cancer fund, the heart foundation and so on. But Rosmini is considering those who are absorbed in the pleasures of life at the expense of morality. It is true people may well benefit from their generosity. But are they themselves improved? The danger is always present of sacrificing the person for some partial perfection of the nature. 'For, as we have said these two kinds of perfection are not always in perfect harmony: but one may come into collision with the other, through the intrinsic limitation of human nature. In all these cases of collision those who have no appreciation of moral perfection and who place all perfection in that of the nature will not scruple to sacrifice moral perfection to a blind instinct for the perfection of nature; and this is a thing that happens not infrequently; or rather it is so universal that it constitutes those two great classifications of men into good and wicked.'<sup>26</sup> There are many applications in Rosmini's teaching for the modern world, for example in the science of embryology, and the obtaining of stem cells from embryos in order to improve the health of people. There is continual discussion whether or not the nature of human beings should be improved through means which others see as immoral and offensive not only to the embryos, but to those who promote the use of embryos as a means to an end. Other examples are *in vitro* fertilisation, donations of eggs and sperm etc. The suggestion to have living wills in which the desire of the person to be assisted to die might lessen the pain of the sufferer and therefore enhance their nature, but this would only happen at the expense of their person, and now (2010) there is the move to allow assisted suicide. Good-living people all want to see an end to suffering of whatever sort but differ as to the means used. So it is a good thing for philanthropists to wish to improve the nature of those they are trying to benefit but not at the expense of their personality which must always be preferred. There is a real division here between the 'children of God' and the 'children of men' which leads to incessant conflict.

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<sup>25</sup> *Rosmini's Theory of Ethics*, cap. 3, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art X, p. 354.

If humanity had remained innocent the perfection of nature would never have been set up against, or in conflict with, the perfection of the person. In this state there would be nothing repugnant in the fact that some persons may have developed some perfections of nature and others another, and also that some may have fostered qualities that resided in the person rather than the nature. However, Rosmini says, that the former would have made more progress in moral perfection, in merits and virtue and would have reached the maximum of perfection first. This does not mean that those who took more time in perfecting their nature did not receive moral merit and virtue, for they too, would have obeyed their Creator.

Another question one can ask is whether human beings in a state of innocence would have first developed parts of their nature other than their personality, and only when they came to realise their own personal dignity would have directed their energies to it.

It seems, says Rosmini, that both, from an analysis of the human subject and that of Scripture that the direct development of the human person would have come last. Looking at the constitution of human beings it is clear that the powers most prompt to move in man and the first to develop themselves are those of the animal sensibility, because we are surrounded by the material things of nature and stimulated by sensations. So man's attention is drawn out of himself, and can only think of himself and his internal acts by reflection. His intellectual faculties would have to be developed first.

With regard to Scripture God did not say to man, 'cultivate your personality', but '*God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."*'<sup>27</sup> These words describe the development and perfecting of man's nature not personality. He was to labour in the garden and keep it.<sup>28</sup> This was not a command to study wisdom but to use the things of the earth. His personal perfection came from perfect obedience to God. 'I have also said that God did not omit to give to this perfecting of the person an indirect stimulus from the beginning. For after he had given to man as his food the whole vegetable creation, he added, giving him a precept of obligation, "*but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat thereof you shall die.*"'<sup>29</sup> In these words God calls man to obedience, which would have the effect of perfecting his person with the merit of moral action and we must note that this perfection or personal merit which God intended to promote in man by this precept was to be effected through a certain mortification of his nature since nature was forbidden to enjoy that fruit which was pleasant to the eye and delicious to the taste, and which excited in his nature an appetite which demanded to be satisfied. But, as we have said, owing to the limitation of created being, that personal perfection proceeding from obedience to a positive

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<sup>27</sup> *Gen* 1:28; 9: 1–3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 15.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 17.

precept could be acquired only on condition of the nature being in some way grieved and disappointed in its wishes.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear therefore that human nature would firstly have aimed *directly* at the perfection of nature, and only *indirectly* at that of person. In time humanity would have applied itself directly to the perfection of person. At first its will and its other forces would have been preoccupied by external objects coming into contact with the senses and its contemplation of them, after this it would come to discovery of self. Its offspring, after having discovered self, would have benefited from the experience of its parents and would have been more directly educated in this regard. They could still choose which perfection to pursue and therefore there would have been differences in merit, excellence and perfection that each would acquire compared with others.

Now, could the perfection of nature and the perfection of will continue to progress indefinitely? Rosmini believes so. The perfectibility of nature would extend to the subjection of the whole material world so that humans could draw from it all the uses that would minister to their needs, and not only that, but the formation of a perfect society with all possible social advantages and pleasures. It would also consist in the acquisition of a perfect knowledge of all created things. The secrets of the universe and their penetration into the vestiges of the divine in nature would have occupied them indefinitely.

As regards the perfection of the person Rosmini believes that in the order of nature this personal perfection would continue indefinitely. The moral act is the result of two elements, the *law* and the *will*. The more grave the law and the more the will adheres to it, the greater the excellence of the moral act. The moral perfectibility of these is indefinite. The law arises from the knowledge of the object which in this case is God and man. Our knowledge of God may be increased indefinitely because God is infinite in nature and is an inexhaustible fount of knowledge and man will never be satisfied and acquire beatitude in this life. So, as his knowledge increases so does his degree of love and reverence for God, and he acquired ever-increasing degrees of merit. As far as the adherence of his will is concerned no term can be assigned to the increase of its love. It can never be satisfied with the possession of God that it can have by nature and therefore no reason why it should stop its efforts to tend to the possession of God by increasing love.

### **The supernatural state of humanity before the fall from grace**

In our present state no matter how much we increase in grace this will never raise us to the beatific vision of God: we must first undergo death. But before the fall there was no death and therefore human beings would have passed through successive degrees of increase of grace to heavenly glory.

In our state the grace of the Redeemer is attached to the person and therefore not all the parts of nature, though redeemed, are healed by it. The animal part of us is still disordered, inclined to concupiscence and a prey to death, and the complete vision of

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<sup>30</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 358.

God cannot coexist with man in this disordered condition. We are not yet fit for the vision of God.

But in a state of innocence man's nature was perfect, grace was attached to the nature and the animal part followed in harmony the movements of the intellect and will which obeyed grace with utmost fidelity. The whole man was united with God by grace and there was nothing in him to destroy this union. Now, how would God have manifested himself gradually to human beings if they had remained in a state of perfect innocence?

Rosmini begins by saying that increases in grace would have followed on increases in moral merit. Increase in moral perfection is twofold, by a clearer knowledge of God who is the object of their moral acts and an increasing force of union of their will to the good, moral act. So as this morality and merit progressed so would the degree of grace. It is worthwhile analysing this a little further. Virtue can spring from increased knowledge of God but it can and does also spring from the faith of a person who is not so endowed. Take the case of the Curé of Ars, St John Mary Vianney, who was not intellectually gifted in the ordinary sense of the word. In his case a great deal of moral good was united with a lesser degree of knowledge. Rosmini cites the case of a person making some sacrifice when in fact the act has no value and yet this is a virtuous act worthy of merit. In faith there is always some ignorance and yet the merit of faith arises from this. A person who rests his faith simply on the authority of God advances further than one who sustains his faith with human arguments or who needs these to remove all doubt from his mind. In the case under consideration, then, the merit acquired depends on the energy of the will independently of the degree of knowledge.

The other species of merit is proportional to the degree of light and knowledge of the one who contemplates the object followed by a good will which seeks to raise itself in accordance with the knowledge gained.

Rosmini believes that in a state of innocence human beings would have arrived at the full possession of God by both these ways, viz. the intellect and will.

This agrees with what I have said about the two ways of seeing God, namely by the way of knowledge and the way of love. For I think that as man progressed in that grace by which God is manifested to the intellect, it would increase by successive degrees so that it arrives at the point of manifesting God with such clearness that man would come to see the Divine Word himself, clearly or, in other words, to see the Divine subsistent knowableness of things, as it is in itself: and that with the increase of this grace which enkindles the love of the will, man's will might have arrived at such a point and to so exalted a degree that he would see in this love the Holy Spirit himself, or in other words, the Divine loveliness itself. I have in fact already shown that this knowledge of God which man has by grace, is already a beginning of the vision of

God,<sup>31</sup> whose term is the Divine Word: and that the love by which man by grace loves God is a beginning of that possession whose term is the Holy Spirit. **(Ref. 6).** Now it is evident that when man arrives either at the vision of the Word or at the possession of the Holy Spirit he has thereby reached the Beatific Vision of the Divine Essence, which is contained in both the Word and the Holy Spirit. From this vision would proceed all those effects which belong to it, viz. the beatification of the whole of man's nature, the acquiescence of all his desire in his last and supreme end and in the overflowing fullness of glory which would have inebriated the human spirit and penetrated even his inferior powers and that spiritualisation of the body itself which is spoken of by St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians.<sup>32</sup>

Rosmini calls the grace and communication with his Creator which man enjoyed in the state of innocence, the vision of God. He reflects on God's presence to our first parents in the Garden of Eden, taking the words of Genesis literally according to the usage of his time. He says that God conversed with our human parents in some sensible and probably human form. This was to make himself accessible to them as they could not otherwise have borne his majesty. They received all the education, precepts and counsels they needed. Grace came to them from all these sensations, not just aural ones, which they received from God clothed in a bodily form. It entered their souls in the same way as we receive grace from sensible signs, that is, the Sacraments. In this way they received an ever-increasing perception of God allowing their spiritual vision to penetrate more and more profoundly until finally they would see the face of God, that is to say his essence.

Rosmini holds it for certain that the divine nature of Christ was dimly seen through his humanity. He quotes the conversation between Jesus and Philip. '*Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied."* Jesus [expressing his surprise that they have not yet known him] *said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' "*' They should have realized from the way he acted and from his aspect that he was manifesting not just his human nature.<sup>33</sup>

Let us return to the Garden of Eden. God, in a similar way, would have revealed himself more and more through words and sensations aided by grace until our first parents perceived with their understanding the divine essence itself. Their senses, too,

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<sup>31</sup> He refers to Augustine, Gregory the Great, Bernard, Anselm, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil.

<sup>32</sup> 2 *Cor* 5: 1–5. Cf. **Ref. 6.** *AS, ibid.*, pp. 363–364. St Paul tells us that man shrinks from death, and longs rather for an increase of life. He desires naturally a life so full that it shall absorb into itself all mortality, so that nothing of the corruptible and mortal should remain. This desire of Adam before the fall would be perfectly satisfied as he would have been destined to be clothed by a superior life which would have perfectly satisfied his nature.

<sup>33</sup> *Jn* 14: 8–9. On the other hand Rosmini says that they would fully understand this when they received the Holy Spirit.

*Life before the Fall*

would have been nourished and perfected and would have been preserved from bodily deterioration. 'This was to have been effected by eating the fruit of the *Tree of Life* which was itself also a species of sacrament of that age of innocence and which gave man not only a bodily food but also at the same time a supernatural gift of incorruption, a special grace and virtue.'<sup>34</sup>

St Thomas says, Man's body in the state of innocence could be preserved from suffering injury from a hard body; partly by the use of his reason, whereby he could avoid what was harmful; and partly also by Divine Providence, so preserving him, that nothing of a harmful nature could come upon him unawares.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 366. It would seem probable also that the animals by a certain instinct were friendly and obedient to man, as now some of the domestic animals show their affection and obedience; or as St. Thomas says 'in the way in which cranes seem to follow their leader by instinct or the bees show their deference to the queen bee; thus the animals would have been naturally subject to man as their Lord.' ST, I, XCVI, art. I, ad 4.

<sup>35</sup> ST, I, XCVII, art. II, ad 4.

<b>Ref. 1.</b>	<b>St Augustine on the comparison of the grace in Adam and of those who have been justified in Christ</b>
<p>‘Let us see the comparison which St. Augustine draws between the grace of Adam in the state of innocence and that of the just in Christ. “What shall we say then? Had not Adam grace from God? He had it and it was great, but different. It was in the goods that he had received from the bounty of his Creator, for those good things came not to him of his own merits, goods in which he suffered no evil. But the saints in this life to whom belong the grace of redemption are in the midst of evils from which they cry out to God: deliver us from evil. Adam with those goods had no need for the death of Christ: but we have been delivered from the hereditary guilt and from our own by the blood of the Lamb. He had no need of the help we ask for when we say: ‘I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ For the flesh fights against the spirit and wearied and endangered in the combat they ask for vigour to fight and conquer, from the grace of Christ. But Adam was tempted and disturbed by none of these contradictions of self against self. He enjoyed peace within himself in that place of happiness.” Hence the saint concludes that the grace of Christ is more powerful than that which was given to Adam, saying, “Therefore the redeemed have need of a more powerful grace, although one not at present so joyful, and what grace can be more powerful than that of the only begotten Son equal to the Father and co-eternal, made man for us without original or actual sin, crucified for sinful man? Hence God assumed our nature that is to say, a rational soul and the flesh of the man Christ, an assumption uniquely admirable and admirably unique, in which when he began to become man he had been even in the beginning Son of God; so that he man and the Word, who is without beginning was one only Person.’ — From this birth good works follow, not that good works had merited it. Here then there is no room for fear that human nature assumed so ineffably into the unity of the person of the Word of God, might sin through the freedom of his will, for this assumption was such that the human nature assumed by God did not admit of any movement within itself of an evil will. And thus God made known that he willed to convert from evil into eternally good those whom he redeemed with the blood of that mediator, which was so assumed that it was never sinful, otherwise the sinner could never have been made eternally good.” The holy Doctor goes on to show that Adam never had, nor could have this grace. He adds: “The effect of the first grace was that a person might have justice if he wished; the second grace is more powerful because it effects the will itself, a strong will, a burning charity, so that by a contrary will the spirit overcomes the conflicting will of the flesh”.’<sup>36</sup></p>	

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<sup>36</sup> Augustine, *De Correptione et Gratia*, cap. XI, nn. 29–31. *AS*, vol.I, lib. II, cap. II, art.III, p. 319, note.



<b>Ref. 2.</b>	<b>St Paul shows the advantage of the second ‘man’ over the first</b>
<p>“It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.’” ‘He says that life in the first Adam moved from the imperfect (the body) to the soul which went on increasing in perfection; whereas in the new Adam life proceeded from the sanctified spirit, from the perfect, to vivify the imperfect, the body. So St Paul continues, “But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; (from the earth he must go to heaven) the second man is from heaven (originating from heaven by grace; and hence he is already by his nature heavenly). As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have born the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven”.’<sup>37</sup></p>	
<b>Ref. 3.</b>	<b>St Augustine speaks on the gift of perseverance</b>
<p>“The reason why the first man did not receive this gift of God, but that it was left to his free will to persevere or not, was because his will had such force — because instituted without any sin and without anything in himself by way of concupiscence that withstood it — it seemed reasonable to commit the free will of perseverance to such goodness and such facility for living well.’<sup>38</sup></p>	
<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>St Augustine on the decision of the Angels</b>
<p>‘God had given to man a right will, for it was in this right will that he had made him right. He had also given him an aid, without which he could not have persevered in a right will: he left it however to his free-will, to will. He could therefore have persevered, if he had willed, because the aid was not wanting, by which he could, and without which he could not, adhere with perseverance to the good that he would have willed. But his not willing to persevere was his own fault as it would have been his own merit, if he had willed to persevere. So was it also with the holy angels who when the others through their own free-will fell, by the same free-will stood firm and merited to receive the reward due to their constancy, namely such fullness of beatitude as to know with absolute certainty that they will persevere in it for ever. St Augustine says that God wished to try man’s free will and see what he would do, whether he would give him submission and obedience by means of his free will. It was the same with the angels. ‘Wherefore we confess (says the Saint) that God so disposed the life of angels and of men that firstly they might show what their free will could effect, and afterwards what could be done with the benefit of his grace and the judgment of his justice.’<sup>39</sup> Free will was always accompanied by grace but man had to make it operative with his free will.</p> <p>“That grace of Adam was not small, although it was intended to demonstrate the power of the free-will which was so aided that without this grace it would not be kept good and yet it was able to abandon this very aid, if it chose to do so.”<sup>40</sup></p>	

<sup>37</sup> 1 Cor 15: 44–49. *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 321–322.

<sup>38</sup> Augustine, *De correptione et gratia*, cap. XI, § 37.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, § 32.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, §31.

<b>Ref. 5.</b>	<b>St Augustine on the inheritance of original sin</b>
<p>‘But why, they say, does a Christian who is already baptized and has already had his sin forgiven produce a son who is with the sin of the first man? — Because he produces him with his flesh, not with his spirit. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh”. “And that exterior man of ours”, says the apostle, “is subject to corruption but the interior man is renewed from day to day.” (2 Cor 4: 16) In virtue of what is renewed in you, you do not produce a child; it is from what is corrupted in you that you produce a child. You were born and reborn so that you may not die eternally; he (your child) up to now is born, (but) is not yet reborn.’<sup>41</sup></p>	
<b>Ref. 6.</b>	<b>The Time of Innocence</b>
Basil	<p>The time of innocence was ‘the time of the understanding of the Supreme Good of elevation to the highest Beauty, of the enjoyment of the Heavenly Secrets’.<sup>42</sup></p>
Augustine	<p>‘Although man according to the body was earth, and the body in which he was created was animal; nevertheless if he had not committed sin, he would have changed into a spiritual body and without experience of death, would have passed to that incorruption that is promised to the faithful and the saints. But of this we not only feel the desire within us, but we have also knowledge by the words of the Apostle where he says of the body <i>“For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling— if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.”</i><sup>43</sup> And therefore if Adam had not sinned he would not necessarily have been despoiled of his body, but would only have been clothed over with immortality and incorruption so that the mortal element would have been absorbed by life, so that from being an animal being he would have been changed into a spiritual being.’<sup>44</sup></p>

<sup>41</sup> Augustine, Sermo VIII, *De Verbis Apostolis*.

<sup>42</sup> Basil, *Homilia Quod Deus non est auctor malorum* (especially n.7.).

<sup>43</sup> 2 Cor 5: 2–4.

<sup>44</sup> De peccatorum meritis et remissione, lib. 1, c. 2.

## Chapter 8

### Our Sorry State

#### Preview

Our present human condition, is as we know, one of frustration as we battle with our evil inclinations and strive with the grace of God to become worthy in his sight. This is the result of original sin. St Paul explains this in his letter to the Romans. Rosmini reviews some past theories for this state of things and then considers original sin and in what it consists. He concludes that it is an inclination of the will to evil. He considers imputability. Is this sin imputable to the descendants of Adam? He makes a distinction between sin and fault. All have sinned in Adam but those who inherit it are not blameworthy because it was not contracted through their free will. But there is now a weakness of the will which is in conflict with the powers of the soul which has lost its harmony. We call this conflict concupiscence. The consequences of original sin are first and foremost loss of grace and intimate union with God. We were now at the mercy of our own natural powers and a prey to natural evils and death. But owing to the infinite generosity and love of God we could be justified by faith in virtue of the predestined redemption by Christ. Although Christians share in the life of Christ through grace, a foretaste of future happiness, the effects of original sin are still with us and we are subject to the evils following on it and ultimately death.

Human beings have a natural desire for happiness. God desired this for us when we were created. However we know that we live in 'a veil of tears'. We long for immortal happiness and we are only too aware that any joy we have in this life is transitory and often illusory. Our present state is one of frustration and dissatisfaction. We know only too well, the reason for this which is found in the words of St Augustine 'you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.'<sup>1</sup> We shall find complete happiness only in God. We plunge into the lovely things which God has created and neglect the source within us.<sup>2</sup>

The sages and philosophers have tried to find the reason why our present state entails such a conflict, not simply within ourselves but in our interaction with one another, even 'man's inhumanity to man'. What is the reason for this contradiction in human nature, for disease, great labour and suffering, for this fragility of human nature? And why do the innocent suffer? The writers of the Old Testament tried to understand how it is that good people suffer, sometimes more than evil ones. They,

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<sup>1</sup> St Augustine *Confessions*, Book I, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* Book X, 38,

too, made use of a story, albeit inspired, to try to find a solution as to how sin came into the world. This was the story of the Garden of Eden and its inhabitants.

Moreover we have a wild inclination to evil which conflicts with the good we know we should do. St Paul says, '*For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do... Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*'<sup>3</sup>

Various systems have been proposed through the ages to try to explain this situation. The Manichaeans, for instance, supposed that two contrary principles were involved in the creation of human beings, one of good and the other of evil. These principles were independent, supreme, eternal and essentially hostile to each other. Plato imagined that souls dwelt in a former place before they were inserted into human bodies and, having sinned in that state were imprisoned in bodies as a punishment. Cicero attributes this theory to even more remote sources and also to Aristotle. Augustine quotes a fragment of the *Hortensius* of Cicero in which these ideas are mentioned in one of his works.<sup>4</sup> Pythagoras proposed a transmigration of souls. The spirits passed through various bodies and were thus purified. Rosmini says this combat between good and evil is also found in Hindu philosophy. Thus, these opinions found their way into philosophy. Rosmini holds that there must have been three periods, a) that of a body of simple teachings; b) popular elaboration fixing these fables; and c) the work of philosophy which recalled these teachings and symbols and which tried to discover the teaching that underlay them. However all traditions and mythologies agree in the existence of a Golden Age at the beginning of things which was a time of happiness and virtue. Once we have distinguished between the fact and the fables which ensued, we see that the cause of this fall into transgression was a primitive and original sin.

Philosophers, however, came to realise that they, too, had no answer to the problem of good and evil in our present state. Plato himself, came to realise that his theory was a philosophical dream and says as much in a letter to Dionysius, King of Syracuse.<sup>5</sup> Two reasons why philosophers found this problem so difficult was firstly that the original fact had become obscured by myths and fables, and secondly that even if it had been preserved without alteration it was mysterious and obscure. Firstly original sin was connected with a state of existence totally different from our own, and secondly there is the problem of how sin is passed on from father to offspring. How could the latter be guilty? How could people bear the brunt of this original sin which they did not commit? Rosmini believes that an infallible authority was needed which proposed this fact of the origin of evil for belief, not just by spontaneous instinct or by juvenile acceptance but with faith which would withstand any criticism of the fact. No philosopher would have been capable of teaching the doctrine of original sin. He quotes Lactantius (**Ref. 1**). The doctrine of original sin must have needed divine revelation which is proposed by Christianity, the Church, for belief. Thus it was faith

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<sup>3</sup> Rom 7: 19, 24.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum*, lib. V, n. 78.

<sup>5</sup> Plato, *Dialogues* VII. Rosmini probably refers to Letter II and Letter VII.

that convinced human beings of their limitations and impotence to discover this truth for themselves. St Augustine says ‘faith prepares man for reason and reason leads him to intelligence and knowledge’<sup>6</sup> In other words reason can work on truths received by faith and add to our understanding of them. We do not find these truths to be as inaccessible and mysterious as first thought. This is true of the dogma of original sin.

### **Original sin**

Original sin is called a stain on the soul, not of course materially, but metaphorically. It is a moral deformity which has been passed on from our first parent. Now in what does this deformity consist? Animal concupiscence (rebellion of the lower appetites against reason) itself cannot be sinful because to be sinful one requires an intellective and volitive nature, that is, one that understands and wills. My pet dog cannot commit a sin. Two elements are necessary to constitute sin, a law and a will. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But they deliberately flouted God’s law. The Council of Trent tells us that original sin is proper to each individual born into the world.<sup>7</sup> This means that the disorder of sin must be in the proper and individual will. It was not just in the will of Adam but in the will of every infant at birth. This will is subject to concupiscence not through habit but through the will of Adam.

How can this be? We distinguish between the will which is subject to *necessity* (the instinctive will) and the will which is *free*. Freedom of will is acquired at a later period with development of the understanding: only with the knowledge of many things can a choice be made. Of course all this implies that there is the power of will from the first moment of our existence. This power consists in a first act of volition and this in turn supposes as its term a first primitive cognition. This is the act which constitutes the intellect, also a primitive power, which requires an object, the first thing known. Rosmini’s theory of knowledge shows that this is the *innate idea of being*. We have from this a clear notion of the *power* which man has from the first moment of his existence, of knowing and of willing and of the primitive *acts*, which are included in, and constitute these powers. We see that the power of cognition is the power of seeing *being*, and the power of willing is the power of desiring *being*. We also see that the primitive and essential act of the power of cognition is determined by the imperfect state in which *being* is originally presented to man’s vision namely, in the state of *indetermination*; and it is by this object itself that the act of the power of volition is

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<sup>6</sup> Augustine, *De vera religione*, c. XXIV. ‘As we continue our catechesis on Saint Augustine of Hippo, I wish today to consider some of the teachings of this great Doctor of the Church. A passionate believer, he recognized the importance of bringing together faith and reason. It was he who taught that we should believe in order to understand, and understand in order to believe. God makes himself known to our reason, although he always transcends what we can know through reason alone.’ Benedict XVI, Audience 30 January 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Concilium Tridentinum, *sessio* [= *Conc. Trid. sess.*] 5, Canon 3.

determined.<sup>8</sup> The nature of the will consists in a constant seeking and desire for being as presented to it by cognition. Firstly being is known only universally so this desire is also universal; later as the person comes to know particular beings the desire develops into so many volitions of these.

So one can easily grasp the possibility of a disorder in the will from the very beginning of its existence. Also we can easily see how the subject of these volitions, the Ego, can experience perverse suggestions and, as a consequence may use his will immorally. St Thomas teaches that original sin is not a mere privation but a corrupt habit, a corrupt disposition of the power of the will. Also, since original justice, according to Anselm, is an upright will, therefore original sin, which is opposed to that justice, must regard essentially the will. Original sin affects the will before all the other powers, since it is to this that the inclination to sin belongs in the first place. Here are St Thomas's own words.

<b>Original Sin is a corrupt habit — a corrupt power of the will.</b>
‘It is not a pure privation, but a corrupt habit.’ <sup>9</sup>
‘Original justice has a prior relation to the will, because it is “rectitude of the will,” as Anselm states (De Concep. Virg. iii). Therefore original sin, which is opposed to it, also has a prior relation to the will.’ <sup>10</sup>
‘It must therefore regard first of all that power in which is seated the first inclination to commit a sin, and this is the will, as stated above ( LXXIV, art I, ad 2). Therefore original sin regards first of all the will.’ <sup>11</sup>
‘The intellect precedes the will, in one way, by proposing its object to it. In another way, the will precedes the intellect, in the order of motion to act, which motion pertains to sin.’ <sup>12</sup>

However original sin does not consist solely in the inclination of the will to evil, because this remains after baptism and yet, according to the Council of Trent, Baptism takes away entirely the stain of original sin. ‘If anyone shall deny that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ conferred in Baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted; or shall assert that all that has the true and proper nature of sin is not taken away, but says that it is cancelled and not imputed, let him be anathema. For God hates nothing in the regenerate, since no damnation remains in those who are truly

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<sup>8</sup> *AS*, lib. III, cap. V, art III, p. 386.

<sup>9</sup> *ST*, I II, LXXXII, art. I.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXIII, art III.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, ad 3.

buried together with Christ by Baptism in death.<sup>13</sup> Finally, original sin cannot exist in the conflict between the will and animal concupiscence as this, too, remains after baptism which faith tells us removes the true and proper nature of sin. The Council of Trent says, 'This Holy Synod confesses and knows that in the baptised concupiscence remains or the *fomes* (or excitement to sin) remains, which concupiscence is left that it may be occasion to man of combat, it cannot hurt those who do not consent to it, who manfully repel it by the grace of Jesus Christ: he also who shall have combated as he ought, shall be crowned'.<sup>14</sup>

Original sin consists in a corrupt disposition of the power of the will
But it is not identified with: a) animal concupiscence; b) the evil inclination of the will by itself does not constitute the essence of original sin; c) the conflict between concupiscence and the will.

### What inclines the will to evil?

Now the question is, 'from what principle does this evil inclination of the will proceed?' What inclines this power to evil? As we have seen, it does not come from our free will. This is innate in us before our acquisition of ideas through the senses. Now if the will does not receive this evil inclination from free will or from an external agent, it must come from an active principle inherent in human nature which seduces the will and inclines it to evil, for the will is necessitated and not free. St Paul says, '*we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else*'.<sup>15</sup> The Fathers call original sin a sin of nature or *peccatum originale*. St John Chrysostom calls it a radical sin.<sup>16</sup> St Augustine states that it is transfused by a 'secret corruption of nature'.<sup>17</sup>

Now how is this sin insinuated into human nature and what is the order in which this took place?

Sin belongs to our rational nature so we must examine human beings as intellectual subjects and in the state in which they existed before the fall and then the disorder which ensued. Before the fall our first parents not only contemplated ideal being but God gave them the perception of himself, the subsistent absolute Being, so there was a new tendency of the will towards being. They were constituted not only in the order of nature but also of grace. The will found itself not only in the first act mentioned above by which it terminated in ideal indeterminate being, but also absolute and complete being. It sought its total satisfaction in the *totality of being*. Now, after the fall our first parents were deprived of this absolute object. Grace was taken away and with

<sup>13</sup> *Conc. Trid. sess. 5, can.5.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, (the inclusive language is really unavoidable in the context).

<sup>15</sup> *Eph 2: 3.*

<sup>16</sup> *Homiliae in Epistolam I ad Corinthios*, Hom.XL, n. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, lib. I, cap, IX, n. 10.

it the spiritual sense of subsistent being, leaving them with only the natural object of their understanding, the faint idea of indeterminate being, but his will was still actuated and inclined as it was before and not finding its infinite real object, searched for it in vain.

The will of Adam had an infinite desire which could not be satisfied and fed itself on empty fictions of its imagination.

The sin of Adam consisted in an act of the free will by which he turned it away from the infinite good to which it was inclined, to the fiction of good, the 'forbidden fruit' which the devil cunningly presented as making him wise and leading him to a state better than that of the grace of God. Adam turned away from the inclination to real good and inclined his will to the emptiness of finite good, the false good of his imagination. Thus his faculty of choice as well as his will became warped and bent towards evil and fixed by a vicious habit. The subject himself to whom the faculty of choice belonged was corrupted. The normal instinct in man was altered and perverted by the animal sense and concupiscence and now man experienced a delusive and exaggerated expectation of finding total satisfaction in finite objects.

So far we have simply discussed the *effect* of Adam's sin.

The act of Adam by which he sinned was an act of the free will but this is not just the act of the power but an act of the subject who possesses the power. He had on the one hand his right understanding showing him true good and on the other the false good presented to him by concupiscence and he had to make a choice between the goods which these powers presented to him. The energy of free action comes from the subject who rules these powers. The subject can either submit itself to right understanding and to receive illumination or submit itself to false understanding and sense and fall into self-delusion. This free act generated in the subject itself, in that free energy, a bad disposition of the will, an instinctive tendency to evil, which was strengthened by the removal from intellect of Subsistent Being and the increase and alteration of impulse of animal sense or feeling. This act of free energy caused the ruination of the powers of understanding and sense and this in turn reacted on the subject making his volitive force weak, slow and defective in its action.

<b>Summary of the Ruin of Human Nature</b>
1. Original sin arose from an act of free will when 'Adam ate the forbidden fruit'.
2. The first energy of the subject turned itself away from the good it perceived supernaturally and turned to fictitious good. It received a new impulse towards evil.
3. The will was fixed in that act whose object was the totality of being, namely God. And when afterwards it was deprived of this object, it was forced to try to create a fiction of infinite good in creatures.
3. The animal instinct became violent and without the brake on it of the superior powers which were distracted and allied to it.
4. The following principles were affected: 1. the subjective principle of choice; 2. the will; 3. the animal instinct, each exercises a corrupting influence on the others.



Rosmini's conclusion is, 'Original sin is therefore an infection of the nature and person of the human subject. It is an infection of the nature, owing to the breaking up of the harmony and the intimate corruption of the powers which constitute the nature: it is an infection of the subject because it infects and corrupts the supreme principle of all the powers, the highest point of human nature in which the subject properly consists, namely the EGO, man's own self.'<sup>18</sup>

Original sin is a sin also of the person because it is sin in the human nature and of the subject, that is, the person. 'Hence the Council of Trent has defined that original sin is not only common to the species but proper to everyone descended naturally from Adam.'<sup>19</sup> And St. Augustine says the same (**Ref. 2**). Original sin attaches itself to the person because it receives all its properties according to the expression of St. John Chrysostom, who terms this sin *radical*, because the person may be considered under a certain aspect as truly the *root* of man's nature.

As a result of all that we have said we can define original sin as: 'a certain concupiscence and inclination in the will to evil (not just the animal instinct) in as much as this will is the supreme part of the human being and therefore the element in which the human personality resides'.<sup>20</sup>

### **The question of imputability**

Now can this original sin be imputed to those who inherit it? Imputability is defined as, 'attributing the action to the agent who as its cause produces it.'<sup>21</sup> Now where the principle which effects the action is not a person there can be no imputability. But as we have seen, original sin is also personal, it infects the person himself and from this, as from its formal principle, its quality of true and formal sin. So it is clear why original sin is imputed to man, who contracts it through generation. Now what is the nature of this imputability? There are two species of imputability, the imputability of sin (*peccatum*) and the imputability of fault (*culpa*). When the human person by his will opposes the law it is a sin; if this opposition proceeds from free will there is fault, that is, the sin is imputed as fault.<sup>22</sup> Now those descended from Adam did not contract original sin through their free will. They are born and generated in that act which is contemporaneous with their beginning to exist. Therefore original sin cannot be imputed to them as fault. In Adam, however, who committed sin through his free act, it was imputed not only as sin but also as fault. St Thomas always refers the imputability of original sin to Adam, just as the error of a hand or foot is imputed to its subject, or the soul that moved the hand or foot, and not to the hand or foot except in so far as it is united with the person who moved it.

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<sup>18</sup> *AS*, lib. III, cap. V, art. VIII, p. 395.

<sup>19</sup> *Conc. Trid.*, sess. V, can. 3

<sup>20</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art XI, p. 400.

<sup>21</sup> *AM*, lib. IV, cap. XI, art. I, n. 870, p. 473 [Durham, p. 464].

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, nn. 886–887, pp. 481–482 [Durham, pp. 473–474].

**Saint Thomas on the question of imputability**

‘Accordingly the multitude of men born of Adam, are as so many members of one body. Now the action of one member of the body, of the hand for instance, is voluntary not by the will of that hand, but by the will of the soul, the first mover of the members. Wherefore a murder which the hand commits would not be imputed as a sin to the hand, considered by itself as apart from the body, but is imputed to it as something belonging to man and moved by man's first moving principle. In this way, then, the disorder which is in this man born of Adam, is voluntary, not by his will, but by the will of his first parent, who, by the movement of generation, moves all who originate from him, even as the soul's will moves all the members to their actions. Hence the sin which is thus transmitted by the first parent to his descendants is called “original,” just as the sin which flows from the soul into the bodily members is called “actual.” And just as the actual sin that is committed by a member of the body, is not the sin of that member, except inasmuch as that member is a part of the man, for which reason it is called a “human sin”; so original sin is not the sin of this person, except inasmuch as this person receives his nature from his first parent, for which reason it is called the “sin of nature,” according to *Eph. 2:3*: “We... were by nature children of wrath”.’<sup>23</sup>

Revelation answers the three vexing questions regarding our unhappy state. The first question is why we are born like this. The answer is that it is not nature which is responsible but what Adam did with it; its corruption came from the free will of Adam. The second question is why should infants who have never sinned actually be subject to sorrow and death. The answer is that they inherit a mortal nature which has been perverted and a perverse will and that these are penalties inherited from Adam. The third question which asks why there is a perpetual conflict in man between the law directing him to follow good and a perpetual stimulus opposed to the law, tempting him to evil, is that God imposed the law and it is impossible to cancel it; the opposition to the law is due to the rebellion of man to his Creator due to original sin.

**The consequences of original sin**

Original sin is a natural penalty. There are two kinds of retribution. One is the result of sin and is called retribution *de facto* and the other is a consequent guilt and is called retribution *de iure*. The first is called a natural penalty, because it is a natural consequence of the offence committed and this belongs to original sin. It is a sin of man's nature and is naturally communicated, whereas with our own personal sins we are blameworthy.

The powers of the soul are wounded by original sin and have lost their harmony because they were no longer submissive to the subject himself after he had withdrawn his subjection to God.

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<sup>23</sup> ST, I II, LXXXI, art. I.

St Thomas says, 'Now the cause of this corrupt disposition that is called original sin, is one only, viz. the privation of original justice, removing the subjection of man's mind to God.'<sup>24</sup>

There is a weakening of the dominion of the subject over its powers and the subject finds itself impeded in its action and bound down by them. Even the use of one's reason is sometimes impeded by the force of the animal instinct and his reasoning can be led astray because of its force. The instinct and the intelligence have no direct communication but only through the subject who communicates between the two and moves both of them. And this is the difficulty. The subject no longer has that overall dominion which should bring tranquillity and a calm to the soul. If the human being were perfectly constituted, the greatest animal delights would be incapable of disturbing the intelligence. 'Hence also in our Divine Redeemer the movements of the animal nature did not impede those of the rational part, but both the one and the other were kept independent at his good pleasure'.<sup>25</sup>

'St Thomas says, 'In us it happens that the motions of the sensitive appetite are not always contained within their proper bounds, but draws the reason after them. It was not so in Christ, because the movements naturally belonging to the human flesh remained by divine disposition, so completely within the sensitive appetite, that the reason was never in any way impeded in doing those things that were fitting.'<sup>26</sup>

'To distinguish this moderated passion in Christ, which never transgressed the limits of animal sensibility or attempted to dominate the reason; and thus to separate it from that immoderate passion to which corrupted man is subject, theologians have invented the name of *propassion*<sup>27</sup> and say that Christ has *propassion*, other human beings, *passion*.<sup>28</sup> St Augustine distinguishes the consequences of original sin from the point of view of the active and passive powers of the intelligence, identifying ignorance in the passive powers and the difficulty to do good in the active powers.<sup>29</sup>

### Free will in relation to supernatural virtues perished

The power of free will in the state of innocence extended not only to natural virtue but also to supernatural virtue. But the power of supernatural action came from grace so when this was withdrawn, so was the power. Christ is speaking of the supernatural

<sup>24</sup> ST, I II, LXXXII, art. II.

<sup>25</sup> AS, lib. III, cap. VII, art. III, p. 407.

<sup>26</sup> ST, III, XV, art. IV.

<sup>27</sup> The term *propassion* was used in antiquity e.g., by St. Jerome on the words *caepit contristari* — (Mt 26). *Commentaria in Evangelium Matthaei*, lib. IV, cap. XXVI, v. 37.

<sup>28</sup> AS, *Ibid.*, pp. 407–8.

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *De Natura et Gratia Contra Pelagium*, cap. LXVII, n. 81.

order when he said in the parable of the vine and the branches, '*apart from me you can do nothing*'.<sup>30</sup> There are innumerable passages in Scripture which assert that divine grace is needed for every salutary work, even works and thoughts. St Paul says, '*not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God*'.<sup>31</sup> The reason for this is that although in nature we can do something good by the power of our nature providing God helps us, keeping us in existence with his power and acts, yet scripture calls this nothing, since it is nothing with respect to our end which is eternal salvation. So Christ says '*apart from me you can do nothing*' and tells us that we must be grafted in to the vine. We bear no fruit cut off from it, though dead wood can be useful for burning. In the gospel of John we read, '*no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father*'.<sup>32</sup> Such expressions refer to eternal salvation, of perfect good in the supernatural order.

Recalling what we said earlier, God's supernatural action in us gives us either new cognitions or new light and force to natural ones. Applying this distinction to moral matters, we see that the light of grace produces in us either new moral obligations corresponding to this new knowledge or modifications of old obligations, that is regarding obligations which man had to observe naturally, since after the reception of grace he was bound to fulfil these natural precepts in a new way (supernaturally) corresponding to the new light added to his previous natural knowledge.

The consequence of original sin is that the human subject lost the power of observing precepts which were wholly supernatural and the power to observe natural precepts in a supernatural way.

St Thomas's teaching on the limitation of natural powers
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<p>'The commandments of the law can be fulfilled not only as regards the substance of the work but also as regards the mode of operations so that they can be performed from the motive of charity. But man cannot fulfil the commandments of the law, in this mode, without grace, whether he be in the state of perfect nature or of corrupt nature.'<sup>33</sup></p>
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The precepts of the natural law can therefore be fulfilled to some extent but not supernaturally, only naturally. This must be so otherwise free will would be entirely destroyed. This would be contrary to the teaching of the Council of Trent. The latter also says that man is not bound to the impossible which would be the case if he was obliged to carry out natural precepts in a supernatural way, deprived of grace (**Ref.3**).

### The weakness of the free will

Now what is the nature of this weakness of the free will?

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<sup>30</sup> *Jn* 15: 5.

<sup>31</sup> *2 Cor* 3: 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Jn* 6: 65.

<sup>33</sup> ST, I II, CIX, art. IV.

Rosmini points out that every just act is the result of a practical judgement, so the power of the free will lies in making practical judgements in favour of virtue. We must therefore see how the power of forming the practical judgement in favour of the law is diminished and then how the free will is weakened.

The practical judgement is that by which we say to ourselves that, all things considered, the just action is better for us than the contrary. It is the judgement which being the most particular judgement of all most proximately precedes actions that determines the particular good. The speculative judgement on the other hand is universal and does not calculate all the circumstances of the moment in which the action takes place, it looks rather at the circumstances as ideally and specifically considered. It looks at one species of good, say justice, and judges that this ought to be done. But the practical judgement embraces all the species of good at once saying that, *hic et nunc*, it is best for me to do this or that. We can see how these two judgements can be in opposition. The speculative judgement tells me not to follow that action, but the practical judgement opposes this speculative and partial judgement, led astray by passion, and in the moment of action sacrifices the moral good to follow the delight it sees in this particular action. This is an unjust judgement and a guilty act. The faculty of voluntary error precedes the faculty of sinning. So what causes the person to prefer the eudemonological good (that which brings happiness) to the moral good which he or she knows to be incomparably superior? This arises because we perceive the moral good in a languid manner and the eudemonological good is represented very vividly.

### **The evils which follow from original sin**

The first evil is the loss of grace, the second is its consequence, namely the death of the soul. Life is an incessant production of feeling. Grace is an incipient perception of God who acts in the soul and who, as a result of this action, arouses in it the deiform feeling in which the supernatural life of the soul consists.

It is necessary to recall that the human subject is both sentient and intelligent, that is, it feels and understands. The soul in so far as it has animal feeling does not live as intellective but as sensitive only, as an animal subject. So when the body dies the sensitive soul perishes. '*So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*'<sup>34</sup> The intellectual soul naturally has the notion of ideal being but, as has been said, this is a most attenuated and uniform concept and gives the soul no sense or feeling of any real thing. It is a certain principle of feeling, not feeling itself. So without grace the intelligent soul has no longer by nature anything more than a principle of life, but wants true and complete life, and is therefore said to be dead.

The soul, with the idea of being only, does not see or feel real finite being. The being and feeling which comes from its union with indeterminate being is, at best,

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<sup>34</sup> *Rom* 8: 12–13.

indeterminate and indefinite. In the second place the soul does not discern itself but exists, so to speak, in its object. In the third place any principle of feeling is purely immanent and does not contain any action but only a principle of action. Such a principle cannot be called life. Life involves a complete and incessant production of feeling. For this to take place it is necessary to experience the action of real being. Thus the soul passes from real to ideal being and ideal to real being. But with the death of the soul the action of finite material things where God is not present ceases. The soul therefore relapses into immobility or sleep. Deprived of grace such a person has only an ephemeral life.<sup>35</sup> Moreover since we are infected by original sin there would be an aversion to truth and God who is life. Thus original sin truly entails the death of the soul.<sup>36</sup>

Another consequence of original sin was that human beings were abandoned to a general providence as a *means* and not as an *end*. Now what does this mean?

Before the fall humanity was the end of the universe in so far as God delighted in his creation. Man was intimately united with him and he was regarded as an end to which everything in the universe was ordered and directed to serve him. But because of original sin God withdrew himself from man and the cause of man from then on was no longer the cause of God. He was no longer the end of the universe because he had been an end in so far as he was united with God. Man was now only a creature at the mercy of his own powers. The same applied to nature and all the beings which composed it and he was exposed to all the accidents that could naturally happen to him in this vulnerable state. If this affair had remained, the universe would have lost its end; all extraordinary providence would have ceased in the world, and the world and man would be exposed to the unruly forces of nature.

Summary of Effects of Original Sin
1. Man was deprived of all his supernatural powers and limited to the powers of nature only.
2. The different powers of his nature itself were altered and the harmony which had kept them in union was destroyed, disorder taking its place.

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<sup>35</sup> Perpetuity is the characteristic of true life. *‘But the righteous life forever, and their reward is with the Lord’* (Wis 5: 15). *‘Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live’* (Jn 11: 25).

<sup>36</sup> ‘If any one asserts, that the prevarication of Adam injured himself alone, and not his posterity; and that the holiness and justice, received of God, which he lost, he lost for himself alone, and not for us also; or that he, being defiled by the sin of disobedience, has only transfused death, and pains of the body, into the whole human race, but not sin also, which is the death of the soul; let him be anathema: whereas he contradicts the apostle who says; “By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.”’ *Conc. Trid., sess.V, can.2.* (Italics mine).

3. All the forces of external nature, deprived of all supernatural influence, were altered and disordered; the special providence which had directed all these forces and all their movements to the good of man as the friend of God ceased.
4. Thus man and nature fell under the power of the malignant spirits — the demons.
5. The relation of God with man was altered: a) because the eternal order of justice was violated when man incurred an infinite debt to restore that order, and not being able to restore it, the necessity arose of a punishment without end in vindication of offended justice; b) the separation of God from man; c) the indignation of God or the actual infliction of punishment.<sup>37</sup>

However God had predestined that his Son would redeem the world and so all things became a means for the greatness, the happiness and the glory of the Redeemer, who was the end of all things. So great numbers of people would be delivered from sin and re-united with God after being justified through faith in the Son of God. *‘...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith.’*<sup>38</sup> *‘We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.’*<sup>39</sup> For he desired that all his fellowmen and women should be associated with him; but not before they should have been justified: and being justified should regain the state and condition of end together with him who was essentially the END and who invited others to share his dignity.<sup>40</sup>

Those who are in sin are a prey to natural evils and death. Whereas the just suffer these to a certain degree, those who are sinners have no supernatural virtue which will temper and guide the forces of nature in their favour (**Ref.4**). They are, too, a prey to demons since they are under the power of Satan. Rosmini also adds other conjectures concerning the state of a soul which dies in original sin.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *AS*, vol. II, lib. IV, cap. II, art. VIII, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> *Rom* 3: 22–25.

<sup>39</sup> *Rom* 8: 28–30.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *AS*, *Ibid.*, cap. VII, art. IV, p. 423–424.

<sup>41</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 425–428.

<b>Ref. 1.</b>	<b>Lactantius: on philosophers</b>
For this reason Lactantius says that ‘the philosophers taught many things very like the truth and often came very near it; but their precepts carry no weight because they are human and lack any superior, that is, divine authority. Hence no one believes them because he who hears knows himself to be man neither more nor less than he who commands.’ <sup>42</sup>	
<b>Ref. 2.</b>	<b>St Augustine on original sin</b>
‘The sins of fathers in a certain way are said to be the sins of others; and again in a certain way they are found to be ours also. They are of others by the property of action; and they are ours by the contagion of propagation. If this were not so, then in truth the heavy yoke which weighs down the children of Adam from the moment when they came forth from their mother’s womb would in no way be just.’ <sup>43</sup>	
<b>Ref. 3.</b>	<b>The Council of Trent on carrying out acts in the natural order after original sin</b>
‘ “God does not command what is impossible” but if man who finds himself in the natural order, were obliged to fulfil the natural precepts supernaturally, he would sin every time that he did a naturally good work; and this would be contrary to the definition of the Church in condemning that proposition of Baius “all the works of the unbelievers are sin”.’ <sup>44</sup>	
<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>The teaching of the Council of Trent on original Sin</b>
‘If any one does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he had transgressed the commandment of God in Paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice wherein he had been constituted; and that he incurred, through the offence of that prevarication, the wrath and indignation of God, and consequently death, with which God had previously threatened him, and, together with death, captivity under his power who thenceforth had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil, and that the entire Adam, through that offence of prevarication, was changed, in body and soul, for the worse; let him be anathema.’ <sup>45</sup>	

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<sup>42</sup> Lactantius, *Divinarum institutionum*. lib. III, c. XXVII.

<sup>43</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum Pelagianum*, lib. VI, cap. X, n. 28.

<sup>44</sup> *Conc. Trid.*, sess. VI, canon 11.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, sess. V, canon 1.



## Chapter 9

### The Transfusion of Original Sin

#### Preview

Rosmini begins by recapitulating his teaching on nature and supernature. This is important as it is the foundation of all his teaching on our fallen state and redemption. He then moves on to consider the theories of some of the Fathers of the Church on the origin of the soul, on the dilemma of Augustine concerning this and the teaching of St Thomas who condemns the fact that the soul may be transmitted through corporeal generation. Rosmini agrees, but says this is not the question the Fathers were asking. They were asking whether the soul was propagated in a spiritual way from the soul of the parent. Having given us his opinion he surveys Augustine's comments on the problem. All this of course has a bearing on the problem of the transfusion of Original Sin. Rosmini now expounds his theory. Part of this teaching in this chapter is taken from his *Anthropology in the Service of Moral Science*. His basic tenet is that when God created the first human being he constituted the law that whenever a human being was generated it would be generated intelligent. Thus the intelligent souls of future generations were present 'in germ' (not actually) in the first human being. God does not create a soul every time a human being is born. He has enacted that this will happen when he created the first man. He surveys different opinions which endeavour to explain the handing on of original sin from one generation to the next. This can't be attributed just to the body because the disorder of sin lies in the disordered will of the soul. Human nature consists of body and soul, not just the body. He follows St Thomas and the general teaching of the Church in his time that the proximate instrumental cause of the disorder of our nature lies in some morbidity in the semen which fertilises the ovum in conception. These are thorny issues but Rosmini believes his explanations are the most satisfactory to account for original sin and its effects. He also explains that the actual sins of Adam are not passed on to his descendants nor are our sins passed on to our children. Because our sins affect our persons not our nature: they are personal to us.

Animals are sensitive subjects. In generating offspring they generate more sensitive subjects like themselves. In his *Antropologia in servizio della scienza morale* Rosmini explains the generation of human beings. Here he simply says that in the case of rational subjects, human beings, as soon as they begin to exist in nature they must receive the vision of being which renders them intelligent. In other words the offspring are intelligent as soon as conditions are present for this to occur.

Now, before the fall human nature was constituted in a perfect mode. Not only did it possess being in its ideal form but also through grace given to it by God, it possessed the perception of real and subsistent being. In other words our first parents were constituted not simply in the order of nature but in the supernatural order. They conceived being not only in its ideal form but perceived it in its subsistence and reality, that is, as God himself. But through sin they were deprived of the supernatural life, that is, of this perception of Being in its subsistence and reality and were left simply with the intuition of indeterminate being. It was as if God said to them as he did to the Israelites, '*I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be*'.<sup>1</sup> It follows from all this that if sin had not occurred the offspring of our first parents would have inherited supernatural life, in other words, the full nature in which their parents had been constituted. But man turned his back on God, and was no longer able to see God. He had made himself blind to the vision he had hitherto enjoyed. Instead he longed for material and finite goods.

We should be clear about this vision of subsistent being. Rosmini stated at length earlier that in the supernatural state we are given a perception of God's reality, but this is an initial and indistinct perception of God which is the basis of the spiritual life. We perceive God as the 'all- good' or 'all-being': this may become vivid and powerful, as it does with the saints. As he pointed out earlier, we can hypothesise that in the case of our first parents if they had not sinned their union with God would have gone on increasing until they experienced beatitude. But the idea of being always remains indeterminate even in our supernatural life and, as long as we are on this earth, our idea of God remains a negative one. Only in the next life shall we see the full subsistent realisation of it: then we shall see God.

So man separated himself from God by this first sin; the vision of God was lost, man had blinded himself to it and the divine substance now remained an unknown good and the will could not regain something which it did not know. The Fathers, for instance, Ambrose and Augustine, called this a voluntary and sinful blindness because it was willed. Now this state of human nature in its fallen state necessarily multiplies itself in the descendants of our first ancestor **(Ref. 1)**.

Rosmini surveys opinions on the origin of the soul. Some held that all souls were created from the beginning by God and afterwards were sent or came into bodies that been newly generated. Origen was one ecclesiastical writer who thought this. Others held that as the body generated the body so simultaneously the soul generated another. Thus the whole person was naturally generated. Jerome mentions this opinion in his letters **(Ref. 2)**. Finally others have held that souls are created immediately and one by one and infused by God in the bodies gradually, as these were generated. Pope Innocent III and Peter Lombard and others believed this. The first of these opinions was held only by a few writers.

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<sup>1</sup> *Deut* 32: 20.

Three Theories on the Origin of the Soul	
Origen and others	The soul is created from the beginning by God and afterwards sent into newly generated bodies.
Tertullian Apollinaris	As the body generated the body so at the same time the soul generates the soul. (Common opinion in the Church according to Jerome.)
Innocent III	Souls were created immediately by God one by one and infused by him in bodies gradually as these were generated.

St Augustine, whom Rosmini calls perhaps the greatest genius the Church has known,<sup>2</sup> did not know which to choose between these last two and was never able to strike a balance. The greater part of ancient authors also could not decide as seems evident from the Apology of Rufinus to St Athanasius.<sup>3</sup> St Fulgentius and Cassiodorus calls the question doubtful, as also St Gregory the Great and St Prudentius in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Ref. 3.).

### St Thomas's teaching on the origin of the soul

The problem continued but in the 13<sup>th</sup> century St Thomas Aquinas said, 'It is therefore heretical to say that the intellectual soul is transmitted with the semen'.<sup>4</sup> After him it was universally held and accepted by theologians that the intellectual soul was not propagated with the body but was created by God.

However this opinion was not what the Fathers had been discussing. The question addressed by the Fathers was whether the soul, a spiritual substance is propagated in a spiritual way from the soul of the father at the same time as he propagates the body from his body; the second question is whether the soul is propagated by means of the corporeal generation, so that it is the body which generates the soul. Now St Thomas addresses this last question, that is, whether the soul comes from bodies.

St Thomas: Whether the intellectual soul is produced by the semen
'It is impossible for an active power existing in matter to extend its action to the production of an immaterial effect. Now it is manifest that the intellectual principle in man transcends matter; for it has an operation in which the body takes no part whatever. It is therefore impossible for the seminal power to produce the intellectual principle.' <sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *AS*, lib. III, cap. VIII, art. IV, p. 433.

<sup>3</sup> Rufinus, *Apologia quam pro se misit ad Anastasium Romanae urbis episcopum*, VI.

<sup>4</sup> ST, I, CXVIII, art. II.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

He condemns the opinion that the soul is produced from matter.

‘Again, the seminal power acts by virtue of the soul of the begetter according as the soul of the begetter is the act of the body, making use of the body in its operation. Now the body has nothing whatever to do in the operation of the intellect. Therefore the power of the intellectual principle, as intellectual, cannot reach the semen.’<sup>6</sup>

The absurdity to which he refers is that the intelligence and corporeal matter might communicate even sensitive matter. The body can have no action on the intellective principle.

Since the intellectual soul has an operation independent of the body, it is subsistent, as proved above (75, 2): therefore to be and to be made are proper to it. Moreover, since it is an immaterial substance it cannot be caused through generation, but only through creation by God.’<sup>7</sup>

Finally St Thomas says, ‘Therefore to hold that the intellectual soul is caused by the begetter, is nothing else than to hold the soul to be non-subsistent and consequently to perish with the body. It is therefore heretical to say that the intellectual soul is transmitted with the semen.’<sup>8</sup>

### **Augustine’s comments on the problem**

Rosmini first gives us his argument, ‘The argument comes therefore to this: if the body produces the soul, either the soul must be a corporeal substance or a modification or act of the body itself. It is not a corporeal substance; and it is not a mere modification or act of the body for such an act is not a substance in itself. Therefore the soul cannot be made by the body.’<sup>9</sup> St Augustine makes no decision when regarding the question whether souls are derived from souls but he rejects the soul being derived from corporeal matter in a letter to Optatus (**Ref. 4**).

But regarding the propagation of souls from matter he blames the followers of Tertullian (**Ref. 5**), showing that Augustine did not believe this. However Rosmini thinks that Tertullian did not believe this either and refers to St Jerome’s opinion of Tertullian.

Rosmini says there were three periods in the earlier history of the Church, a) before Pelagianism when there was no formal investigation; b) the second period which

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<sup>6</sup> ST, I, CXVIII, art. II.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> AS, lib. III, cap. VIII, art. IV, p. 436.

began with St Augustine who dealt with the question in trying to find out the propagation of original sin; and c) the third period of the Scholastics, this period culminated in St Thomas who condemned the opinion that souls were propagated like bodies, which, according to Rosmini means materially in the sense attributed to Tertullian and Apollinaris. But the problem had re-asserted itself in the Schools of Philosophy with Leibniz and his contemporaries.

### **Rosmini's theory on the transfusion of original sin**

Rosmini's theory is based on his teaching on anthropology and psychology. A human being can be defined as a rational animal or as Rosmini has it, a rational subject. It feels its body but also intuits being and feels its own thinking activity in intuited being. It unites what is felt with what is understood. It sees that feeling and the idea are the same being under its real and ideal forms. The human being is constituted by a rational feeling which on the one hand feels its body and on the other intuits being. This renders it intelligent. Human beings as animals are subject to animal laws of propagation. The difficulty lies in explaining the origin of intelligence. 'Because the human subject is a feeling-intellective principle, it necessarily exists simultaneously with the *matter* of its feeling and with the *object* of its intelligence (being), both of which are posited simultaneously by nature.'<sup>10</sup>

St Thomas teaches that 'Animal signifies that which has a feeling nature; rational is that which has an intellective nature. The human being has both'.<sup>11</sup>

Granted these teachings as proven or accepted, let us see if we can successfully investigate the more general laws governing human generation. Relative to the multiplication of the animal element, the investigation, as we have said, presents no difficulty. The animal element can be understood to multiply as other animals do. The difficulty consists in explaining how this animal element, this feeling principle, is raised to the level of intellective soul, (we are not speaking chron-ologically here but logically, in the order of concepts) and consequently to the level of a soul which survives the loss of all its corporeal matter.

Note, we are not asking how the feeling principle can, of itself and without the intervention of the Creator, rise to the level of intellective soul. Such a question would be absurd: there is no doubt that the hand of the Creator is necessary for the origin of an intelligent soul. This fact is beyond discussion. We are concerned with the beginning of a new intellective soul not relative to God who creates it, but relative to the soul that is created. We are asking whether in the soul placed in existence by the Creator there are

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<sup>10</sup> *AM*, lib. IV, cap. V, n. 812, p. 450 [Durham, p. 440].

<sup>11</sup> ST, I, LXXXV, art V, ad 3.

any laws or steps, as it were, taken by the soul towards its complete subsistence. We want to indicate these laws and steps.<sup>12</sup>

A feeling subject becomes intelligent when the intuition of being is added to it. The existence of the intellective subject is created by the object (ideal being) when this manifests itself to the subject. These two things happen contemporaneously. The human soul therefore is a ‘feeling principle which has being in general as the term of its feeling’.<sup>13</sup> So what is the law according to which a feeling subject which has *matter* as the term of its feeling also begins to have *being in general* as the term of its feeling?<sup>14</sup> This union of being with the subject is given by nature. Different subjects intuit the same ideal being. It is sufficient that individuals with a human nature be propagated, the light of being will then shine before each individual. The manner of the multiplication of human beings will be found as soon as we find how the individual principles of animal nature multiply. There is no difficulty in accepting that God constituted such a law from the beginning.

‘This way of conceiving the multiplication of human beings is also found to be in full accord with the words of Genesis, and with the constant opinion of Church tradition that “in creating the first human being, God not only gave origin to an individual, but in that individual instituted the whole of human nature and the human species”. This must apparently be understood to mean that “God, in the first operation and formation of the human being, constituted the laws which govern all human nature and the human species”’.<sup>15</sup> The book of Genesis says that God when he created man ‘*breathed into his face the breath of life*’; it is interesting that the Hebrew says ‘*the breath of lives*’. Rosmini interprets this as meaning that the spirit infused into the first human being was intended to communicate life to others, just as ‘*the tree of lives*’ was intended to preserve the lives of all those who ate of its fruit.<sup>16</sup> Rosmini cites the Fathers of the Church to support this interpretation, namely, Lactantius, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Augustine (**Ref. 6**). He goes on to say that the Fathers saw, in the breath of life, the principle of intelligence, not only in Adam but in all human beings. He quotes St Basil again, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa<sup>17</sup> (**Ref. 7**).

We say, then, that in human generation, all this happens contemporaneously, the animal is constituted by those parts which form the embryo... and that the intelligent principle is constituted through the vision of *being* which is imparted to it. This vision or intuition of being was from the beginning granted to human nature whenever or wherever human nature should be constituted in its organic part; and therefore it is given to all the

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<sup>12</sup> *AM, Ibid.*, n. 815, p. 451 [Durham, p. 441].

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 820, p. 453 [*Ibid.*, p. 443].

<sup>14</sup> *AM*, n. 821, pp. 453–454 [*Ibid.*, p. 444].

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, nn. 823–824, p. 454–455 [p. 445].

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 825, p. 455 [p. 445].

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, nn. 826–831, pp. 455–460 [pp. 445–450].

descendants of the first man by the self-same act in which it was given to the First Man. Thus it is not true that the animal, and much less the intelligent soul, pre-existed in the first fathers individually and singularly; but it is true that they existed in them in *germs* and *rudiments*, which in virtue of generation and the constitution itself of human nature, as God made it in the beginning naturally become human individuals, particular human beings.<sup>18</sup>

At what stage does the fertilised ovum become human? This is still discussed but the prevailing opinion and certainly the opinion of the Church is that the moment of fertilisation and the formation of the zygote constitutes the beginning of the human being.<sup>19</sup> Certainly this diploid cell contains the combination of the chromosomes of the haploid gametes of both parents. Thus all the genetic information for human development is present irrespective of the implantation of the embryo in the uterus and further development of the embryo.

Rosmini does not hold with opinions which require God to create a human soul each time a person is conceived but rather that God gave intelligence to human nature when he breathed into Adam the breath of life: '*the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being*'.<sup>20</sup> Afterwards he left to human nature to multiply by generation. What was generated by this nature was so constituted that it would always have before it the intuition of *being* by which it attained intelligence.<sup>21</sup> Rosmini goes on to explain how his opinion has its advantage over others, referring to the Fathers and later the Scholastics. In this respect we must take into account that Rosmini had only the medical and scientific opinions of the time at his disposal.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 443–444.

<sup>19</sup> *CCC*, n. 2274, p. 616.

<sup>20</sup> *Gen* 2: 7.

<sup>21</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, p. 447. It is still the teaching of the Church that every soul is created immediately by God. 'The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God - it is not "produced" by the parents...' (*CCC*, n. 366). We should note that Rosmini does not believe that the soul was produced by our parents any more than the Church's official teaching. Both theories hold that the parents provide the occasion for God's action. But Rosmini holds that this action of God was preordained for every human conception rather than being an 'every time' act. It would seem that this is more in keeping with God's infinite wisdom which acts according to the law of the least means, that is, the use of the least means to produce the greatest effect.

<sup>22</sup> For example, in justifying the opinion of St Thomas, he says, 'We may also consider that it is only on the supposition of our opinion being true that the reasoning of St. Thomas has force where he answers the difficulty how if the soul does not come from man but from God, it can inherit original sin. His reply is as follows:

'that although the soul does not pass through the semen yet by virtue of the semen human nature is imparted from father to son.' (S.I. II, 81, art 1, ad 2) Now, what is human nature? Certainly not the body, but the body and the soul together, or rather principally the intellective soul which constitutes the specific difference of this

Rosmini comments on some alternative opinions as follows:

1. Those who hold that God creates a soul for every human being must explain how a spiritual substance in a state of purity, innocence and perfection can without any fault be made to enter a corrupt body. It is difficult to reconcile this with the justice and goodness of God.
2. St Thomas answers the difficulty how if the soul comes from God and not from man it can inherit original sin. He holds that it is in virtue of human nature imparted by a father to his offspring.

St Thomas says, 'Although the soul is not transmitted, because the power in the semen is not able to cause the rational soul, nevertheless the motion of the semen is a disposition to the transmission of the rational soul: so that the semen by its own power transmits the human nature from parent to child, and with that nature, the stain which infects it: for he that is born is associated with his first parent in his guilt, through the fact that he inherits his nature from him by a kind of movement which is that of generation.'<sup>23</sup>

But human nature is not just the body but body and soul together, principally the intellective soul which renders man intelligent. So how can human nature passed from father to offspring just be the body?

Rosmini quotes the verse of St Paul in the letter to the Ephesians, '*we were by nature children of wrath*'.<sup>24</sup> Now our nature is body and soul. The body is not the Ego, only the soul can say 'I'. The moral order does not belong to the body, it belongs to the soul. It is in the soul that sin is found. How can we say we are children of wrath if the soul is of its nature created pure and clean and is not corrupted through divine origin but through the body? If however the soul is produced simultaneously with man in virtue of that *being* which is united with human nature we can justly say that we are children of wrath by nature, in our very conception, by the laws which govern the simultaneous generation of body and soul. Rosmini quotes St Paul's letter to the Romans, '*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned*'<sup>25</sup> and the Council of Trent says the same.<sup>26</sup>

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nature? Would it then be true that human nature passes by virtue of the semen, if the body only was thus imparted, even though it were well adapted to receive the soul? I do not see how this could be. But if on the contrary the sentient principle which is imparted through the semen is already of its own nature, as soon as this is constituted, admitted to the intuition of being and thus rendered intellective, understood in this way, the words of St. Thomas 'that the soul is imparted by virtue of the human seed' receives a most true significance.' *AS, ibid.* No doubt Rosmini would have revised his explanation in keeping with modern advances in embryology.

<sup>23</sup> ST, I II, LXXXI, art. I, ad 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Eph* 2: 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Rom* 5: 12 (Douai-Vulgate).



Ambrose says: 'I am fallen in Adam; in Adam I was driven out of paradise, in Adam I am dead. How shall I be raised up again unless I shall be found to have been in Adam subjected to guilt and given over to death?'<sup>27</sup> And St. Augustine also says: 'By the evil will of one alone all have sinned in him at a time when we were all that one alone, from whom we thereby derived original sin.'<sup>28</sup>

It remains then to be seen how we were in Adam, how we sinned in him and in him we were driven out of paradise; how, in a word, all men are only that one sole Adam.

3. Some say we were in Adam as a moral or social union. St Thomas says that a person can be considered as an individual and the act which he does of his own free will belongs to him, or he can be considered as a member of a community or city and the many people composing it can be said to do what the ruler does. So if we consider the individual as a member of the whole human nature propagated by the first man, he shares in the guilt which was the result of the voluntary sin of that first man. In other words the members are punished for the sin committed by the head.<sup>29</sup>

These examples, however, do not go far enough in explaining the transfusion of original sin. The imputation made to a society for the sin of its head cannot have a true moral imputation but only a legal one. This would be an unjust punishment.

4. Another theory is that there is an intellective union between the human race and Adam consisting in the unity of nature. All human beings intuit the idea of being. St. Ambrose says: 'In one only we can conceive the species of the human race: this was Adam and we were all in him. Adam perished and we all perished with him.'<sup>30</sup> St. Thomas says: 'all men who are born from Adam may be considered as one man only, in as much as they agree in the nature they receive from their first father.'<sup>31</sup> Now this union is true in the order of ideas but not in the order of realities and sin belongs to the latter order. The communion of species is not sufficient to explain the transfusion of original sin because Christ himself has a human nature and he is perfectly free from sin not by any privilege but because he was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

5. Rosmini goes on to say that it is by generation only that sin is transfused and this is not due to a moral or social union, nor by a unity of species, but through a physical union between father and offspring. It must take place through the union of the generator and the generated, a communication of the person body and soul. It is only this kind of union and communication of nature which gives an adequate explanation of the transfusion of original sin. The male parent takes a dominant role in this theory;

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<sup>26</sup> *De Conc. Trid.*, sess. VI, cap. I.

<sup>27</sup> *De Fide resurrect.* L. 2, n. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*, lib. II, cap. 5.

<sup>29</sup> *De malo*, q. 15, art. I; ST, I II, LXXXI, art. I.

<sup>30</sup> Ambrose. *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*, lib. 7, n. 234.

<sup>31</sup> ST, I II, LXXXI, art. I.

but would it not be equally valid to see it applying to both parents each of whom has inherited original sin?

If the soul were created directly from God in every case it would not have any physical link with Adam because nothing would have any communication with him except the brute matter of his offspring; in this case there would have to be a sensitive and animal soul preceding the intelligent one. But the human being has only one soul, namely an intelligent one. Rosmini says that it is not surprising that earlier writers did not see the full problem of the transfusion of original sin which has been made clearer over the centuries with the progress in science. In spite of this the Fathers of the Church, St Augustine for instance, speak of a real and physical union of Adam with his descendants and that the true reason for the transfusion of sin consists in this fact (Ref. 8).

Rosmini again refers to St Augustine and quotes the Scriptures to demonstrate the physical link between Adam and his descendants. He also quotes Origen. He concludes by quoting St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians '*for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ*'.<sup>32</sup> We are made alive in Christ through regeneration, but we died in Adam through generation. Christ communicates to us a new principle of life. But in our generation from Adam we received a principle of spiritual death. St Paul says, '*the first man, Adam became a living being, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit*'.<sup>33</sup> 'Our soul gives us natural life by generation and the Holy Spirit gives us supernatural life by regeneration. The first infects us with sin and death; the second imparts to us incorruptible justice and immortality. An imperfect vision of being is given to the human subject in the former: an incipient vision of God in the latter.'<sup>34</sup>

### **The scholastic opinion on the transfusion of original sin**

Rosmini concludes his treatment of the transfusion of original sin by commenting on the scholastic theory as known to him. He begins by quoting Aristotle, 'It remains, therefore, that the intellect alone comes from without.'<sup>35</sup> This impressed him, but he points out that it is not the intellect that comes from without but the *idea of being* which draws the intellect into act. The Scholastics use this opinion to demonstrate that the soul is created immediately by God but it will not hold on their theory because they teach that the soul contains the vegetative and sensitive soul. The embryo is first animated by a nutritive or vegetative soul but during development this is corrupted and replaced by a sensitive soul which in turn is corrupted and replaced by the intellective soul. This has within it the properties of the two previous ones. Admittedly some scholastics held that the soul becomes intelligent by virtue of God illuminating it but this opinion was forgotten and could not be developed at that particular stage of philosophy. It is interesting that Rosmini rejects this, not just

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Cor 15: 22.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 45.

<sup>34</sup> *AS*, lib. III, cap. VIII, art IV, p. 455.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *De generationem animalium*, II, c. III.

because he found part of the theory out of date but also because Aristotle believed that the animation by a human soul took place a few days after conception.

He believes that the foetus has a human soul at the time of conception and says that this was becoming accepted by the Church. He questions what use there would be in having a soul which was going to be corrupted. The intellective soul could not be given while the sensitive soul was present otherwise there would be two souls. Now if the body did not have a sensitive soul at the time the intellective one was given, what was the point in having it in the first place? There would be no body for the intellective principle to enter into. There would be no organizing principle, for the organizing principle is the rational principle which is both sensitive and intellective. The prior existence of a sensitive soul poses the question of what happens to the foetus when the sensitive soul becomes corrupted partially? Surely death would inevitably ensue. There is no sign of one soul being replaced by another.

Moreover the sensitive soul is indivisible from the body: this forms its matter. The soul cannot exist without it. If separated the soul could not subsist; it is the action of the body which gives its subsistence. Aristotle defines the soul as an *act of the body*. It follows that this must cease if the sensitive soul ceases to exist.

According to this opinion the soul that we have was not received from our parents by generation nor even the animality since this has perished with the corruption of the sensitive soul. Again, with the loss of the sensitive soul the individuality of the organism is lost, so when an intellective soul was given to it there would be a different individual from the first!

For in an animal or in a man, if the soul is changed it is no longer the same but a different individual: thus the father would have as his own son only the foetus so long as it has the sensitive soul, but when it receives the intellective soul his son has perished and there remains only a son of God. For in fact the identity of the animal and of man consists only in the identity of feeling and consciousness and the identity of feeling and consciousness consists in the identity of the soul. If, therefore, the soul is changed another feeling, another consciousness, another living being has come into existence and not that which was generated by the father. But if this new being has come from God then not only its intellect but its faculty of feeling, in a word, the intelligent sentient principle, namely all that is formal in man has also come immediately from God; how then can this new creature of God be corrupted by original sin, since its own origin is perfectly pure? <sup>36</sup>

The Council of Trent says, 'For as in truth men, if they were not born propagated of the seed of Adam, would not be born unjust, seeing that, by that propagation, they contract through him, when they are conceived, injustice as their own...' <sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 459.

<sup>37</sup> *Conc. Trid.*, sess. VI, cap. III.

The Council of Trent states that human beings contract original sin when they are conceived. Now if the foetus was conceived as a sensitive soul it could hardly be capable of sin. Moreover, if the sensitive soul perished to give way to an intellectual one, the sin would perish also!

Although modern theologians in Rosmini's time said that God created and infuses the soul into the body they did not specify the time or mode in which this was done. If this was done in the act of conception difficulties would still remain. If they held that there was one soul infused, namely a sensitive and intellective one, this would mean that the parents simply provided animal inanimate matter. This in itself is problematic. For what is animal inanimate matter? In this case God would provide the EGO but we could not derive any sin from Adam. We would have to say that we are corrupted because our soul came into contact with inanimate matter but how could this on its own be morally corrupted? Then there would be the absurdity that animals could generate sensitive souls but man could not. The suspension of the faculty of generation would require a miracle every time a person was conceived. God would also have acted unwisely since he would have produced a generative power in man which was then rendered useless.

### The actual sins of our first parents

How about the actual sins of our first parents. Have these been transmitted to their offspring? Original sin was a sin which affected the nature of our first parents and it also was a personal sin. It is their ruined nature which is communicated to their posterity and this in turn corrupts the person generated.

‘Through original sin *the person corrupts the nature*, namely Adam who sinned corrupted human nature. But subsequently in other people *the corrupted nature taints the person* since the corruption of nature is imputed to the person born as fault because of the will of the parent.’<sup>38</sup>

St Thomas says this isn't simply an external or legal imputation but an interior, real one as the will of the child is vitiated. But the difference between sin and guilt should be born in mind here. It is the sin that is imputed to the child, not the guilt which proceeds from sin committed with a free will. It is this nature in which we all share but the person is an individual, so the other sins of our first parents are not communicated to us, nor are our actual sins communicated to our offspring.

#### St Thomas: actual sins are not communicated to offspring by their parents

‘Man generates one like himself *in specie*, not *in individuo*; and therefore the personal and proper acts of parents are not transmitted to the children; thus a grammarian

<sup>38</sup> St Thomas, *In Epistolam ad Romanos*, cap. V, lect. III.

does not transmit to his son his own acquired knowledge of grammar. Hence as original justice would have been transmitted to posterity, so the inordination also that is its opposite. The other actual sins, on the contrary, whether of our first parents or of others do not corrupt the nature in its natural properties, but corrupt only that which belongs to the person, to which the moral goodness of the acts belongs. Hence it is that the other sins are not transmitted.’<sup>39</sup>

However, as we said earlier, some experience seems to support the possibility of moral dispositions either for good or evil being transmitted to the offspring. Natural talent certainly seems to be inherited, for instance with musicians, sports people etc.

### **The proximate and instrumental cause of the transfusion of original sin**

In discussing the proximate and instrumental cause of the transfusion of original sin Blessed Antonio follows closely the teaching of St Thomas. He states that if we wish to know what this cause is and the action by which it perverts the will, we must seek it in the very nature of man, that is, the principal and instrumental cause by which he was conceived. The principal cause is that which acts in virtue of its own form and in this case the cause is more noble than the effect. The instrumental cause does not act in virtue of its own form but in virtue of another. For instance the carpenter makes a table but his tools are the instrumental causes.

The proximate instrumental cause in this case is the seed or semen. ‘Christian tradition totally agrees in attributing the corruption and disorder of the generated nature which springs up in the will, to a bad quality in the seed or semen, so that sin is formed coincidentally with generation.’<sup>40</sup>

Rosmini quotes the scriptures in support of what he believes, namely Job and the Psalms, depending on the Vulgate version then in common use: ‘*Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed*’<sup>41</sup> and ‘*For behold I was conceived in iniquities; and in sins did my mother conceive me*’.<sup>42</sup> Pope Innocent III, commenting on this verse said, ‘our body is conceived by our mother corrupted and contaminated by corrupt and contaminated seed.’<sup>43</sup> Since the infection of the seed is physical the true and proper nature of sin does not consist in this; it is rather the instrumental cause. The effect is that man is corrupted in his animal part with a disordered instinct, the forces of the subjective will are attracted to this animal instinct and in this the nature of sin is completed. ‘There is therefore, first the infection of the paternal seed, next the disordered animal instinct; and lastly the will itself inclined to and condescending entirely to the concupiscence: and in the last part it is, as I have said, that true and proper habitual sin consists.’<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> ST, I II, LXXXI, art. II. (Italics mine).

<sup>40</sup> AS, *Ibid.*, art VI, p. 467.

<sup>41</sup> Job 14: 4. Douai.

<sup>42</sup> Ps. 50 (51): 5 Douai.

<sup>43</sup> Innocent III, *Commentarium in VII Psalmos Poenitentiales*, Ps 50: 7.

<sup>44</sup> AS, *ibid.*, p. 468.

The essence of original sin, then, consists in the evil inclination of the will which is seduced by concupiscence to turn aside from intellectual goods and adhere to animal satisfactions. St John says, *‘what is born of the flesh is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is spirit’*.<sup>45</sup> That is, being flesh the subject instead of applying its powers to intellectual things devotes itself to the perception of sensible matter. St Paul attributes the whole origin of evil to the flesh, *‘To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law — indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you... So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live’*.<sup>46</sup> And again, *‘For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh’*.<sup>47</sup> So, Rosmini says, prior to concupiscence there is a morbid quality in the flesh which is transmitted through generation which is the proximate cause of concupiscence and concupiscence is the proximate cause of the evil inclination of the will, or of formal sin. The Fathers speak of concupiscence as constituting original sin but, Rosmini says, this holds only when it overcomes the will, for the will can overcome its inclination to concupiscence by the action of its free will aided by grace to the merit of the individual. In other words, we do not have to give in to temptation. As a man of his time Rosmini adheres to a literal interpretation of Genesis and thinks it probable that Adam may have eaten an apple poisoned by the devil. This poison affected his powers of generation. This he says is supported by an ancient Hebrew tradition.

Moreover, he says, the concupiscence in those who generate it may be the cause of the morbid quality responsible for concupiscence in the offspring.

Augustine and Thomas on Concupiscence	
Augustine	<i>‘This concupiscence which is expiated by the Sacrament of Regeneration only, certainly transmits to posterity the bonds of sin by means of generation’</i> . <sup>48</sup>
St Thomas	<i>‘Lust transmits original sin to the offspring’</i> . <sup>49</sup>

Rosmini wonders if the pleasure associated with the sexual act was shared by the offspring and so the instrumental and proximate cause of the transmission of original sin would indeed be the corrupted semen and concupiscence. This theory supports the fact that Christ was free of original sin. He did not have a human Father, he was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary,

<sup>45</sup> *Jn* 3: 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Rom* 8: 6–9, 12–13.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 18.

<sup>48</sup> *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*, lib I, cap. XXIII, n. 25.

<sup>49</sup> ST, I II, LXXXII, art IV, ad 3.

conceived immaculate through divine dispensation, therefore he was free from original sin and its effects. The emphasis in the Fathers is on the absence of the evil male seed and the absence of concupiscence. St Augustine speaks further on the matter (**Ref. 9**).

In our present state, then, we are conceived and born in original sin. Baptism reforms the person only, whereas original sin has affected not only our personality but our nature too. The latter remains still disordered. The generative faculty is a principal part of this and hence the proximate and instrumental cause through which original sin is insinuated into the subject remains vitiated even in those who have been baptised. Hence one corrupted nature produces another. The Pelagians had asked why, if the sinner generates the sinner, the just should not generate the just. Augustine and St Thomas explain that we generate with our fallen nature not with our re-generated person.

## **Conclusion**

It is the church's teaching that we carry with us the inclination to evil which is the result of original sin. We call this concupiscence, the tendency to indulge in the things of the flesh, as we say. St Paul graphically says, *'For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!'*<sup>50</sup> It is because of this that the Church teaches that we must take steps to control our unruly appetites, in other words, to practise mortification and self-denial. This is precisely what we concentrate on during Lent and special periods of penance. But it is a constant task for those who want to advance in their union with God. On the contrary those who are not interested in the spiritual life will 'always depict people in bright and cheerful but also delusive colours, perhaps similar to those which the fruit of the forbidden tree seem so fair and desirable to Eve. ... This then is another cause why the world does not receive or rather disdains to examine the doctrine of original sin which is a sad and melancholy but undeniable fact. Hence the spirit of the world is a spirit of self-gratification, gaiety and pleasure of the flesh which is reprehended and condemned by the Church. It is the profound doctrine of original sin that makes that great separation which exists between the mode of operation of the Church and that of the world.'<sup>51</sup> To sum up we can say that Rosmini's teaching on this topic is heavily influenced by tradition, the Fathers of the Church and St Thomas. He sees this tradition supported by Scripture and as a 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and theologian he was dependent on the thought and teaching of the Church of his time.

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<sup>50</sup> *Rom* 7: 18–25.

<sup>51</sup> *AS, Ibid.*, cap. IX, art I, p. 477–478.

Ref. 1.	Original sin — a voluntary and sinful blindness
Ambrose	‘If anyone were so ill ordered as to close up his mind within barriers of his sins and like a fool shut out the light of the Word and secure for himself the blindness of his folly; can he blame the Sun of Justice for not choosing to enter or censure the light of heaven for its weakness? The Word of God knocks at your door. “If anyone”, he says, “will open to me, I will enter”. If therefore a man will not open the door, whose fault is it, the one who does not enter, or the one who keeps the door shut?’ <sup>52</sup>
Augustine	Calls the original blindness and also concupiscence, sin; as for instance in the following passage: ‘The blindness of heart which ignores what justice forbids, and the violence of concupiscence by which a man remains bound, who even though he will know from what he ought to abstain, are not only sins, but they are the penalty of sins. For if these were not sins seeing that man cannot be without them, it would not be said “Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions” (Ps 24: 7) nor “my transgression would be sealed up in a bag, and you would cover over my iniquity”’. <sup>53</sup>

Jerome speaks about the origin of the soul
‘Or are souls really produced, as Tertullian, Apollinaris, and the majority of the Western divines conjecture, by propagation, so that as the body is the offspring of body, the soul is the offspring of soul, and exists on conditions similar to those regulating the existence of the inferior animals?’ <sup>54</sup>

Ref. 3.	Comments of other Fathers
Augustine	‘But seeing that the obscurity of this most mysterious subject, the origin of the soul, compels me to do as I have done, let them rather stretch out a friendly hand to me, confessing my ignorance, and desiring to know whatever is the truth on the subject; and let them, if they can, teach or demonstrate to me what they may either have learned by the exercise of sound reason, or have believed on indisputably plain testimony of the divine oracles.’ <sup>55</sup>
Gregory the Great	‘On this point your most sweet charity must know that the Holy Fathers have made great investigations as to the question of the origin of the soul; but it remains uncertain whether it descended from Adam or is given to each one who is born; and they confess that this is in the present life an insoluble question. For it is truly a grave question and incomprehensible

<sup>52</sup> Ambrose, *In psalmum CXVIII expositio*, sermo XIX.

<sup>53</sup> Augustine, *Contra secundam Juliani responsionem imperfectum opus*, lib. VI, cap. XVII.

<sup>54</sup> Jerome, *Epistolae*, ep. 82, n. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Augustine, *Epistolae*, epist. CXLIII, n. 7.

<sup>56</sup> Gregory the Great, *Epistolarum liber VII*, ep. LIII, ad Secundinum.



*The Transfusion of Original Sin*

	by man. <sup>56</sup>
Prudentius	'Flesh is born indeed from flesh but whether the soul is born similarly from the soul is a great question much, and for long, discussed by the Fathers and left in the end without any certain definition.' <sup>57</sup> Rosmini says it is clear that the saint is speaking of a spiritual soul.

<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>Augustine to Optatus on the origin of the soul</b>
<p>'On this matter in the first place I would have you as a sincere man to know that in all my writings I have never ventured to give a definitive opinion nor imprudently to commit to writing for the instruction of others what I cannot explain to myself. It would be too long to explain in this letter the motives and causes that lead me not to incline to one party or the other but to hold myself between the two.'<sup>58</sup></p>	

<b>Ref.5.</b>	<b>Augustine on the followers of Tertullian</b>
<p>'Those who assert that souls are propagated from that one soul which God gave to the first man follow the opinion of Tertullian, for in fact they do not make the souls spirits but contend that they are bodies and are produced from the corporeal semen.'<sup>59</sup></p> <p>'This insane notion being banished from the heart and life of the Christian, whoever confesses that the soul is not body but spirit, as in fact it is, and yet thinks that it is derived from fathers to their children, is free to hold such opinions and there is no obligation to hold the contrary.' — 'But when he takes into consideration and draws out that which is involved in these opinions he says that it would be a great thing if human reason could comprehend in what way the soul in the offspring is produced from the soul of the father or is transfused as the lamp which is lighted from the lamp, and without any loss to the first flame a second flame begins: and whether there is an incorporeal seed in the soul which by some secret and invisible way goes out from the father and enters the mother in the act of conception; or whether (which is even more incredible) it lies hidden within the corporeal seed; and in what way God forms it into man and although the soul is drawn seminally from another as he forms in man the members of the body, although seminally it is drawn from another body.'<sup>60</sup></p>	

<b>Ref. 6.</b>	<b>The Fathers support Rosmini's theory</b>
Lactantius	Lactantius says: '(God) formed the body and infused the SOUL BY WHICH WE LIVE'. <sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Prudentii Trecensis Episcopi, De Praedestinatione contra Joannem Scotum Erigenam, c. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Augustine, Epistolae, ep. CLXV; ep. CLXVI, cap. IV. n. 9.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 15.

<sup>61</sup> Lactantius, *Divinarum institutionum* 1. II, c. 12.

*Our Light and Our Salvation*

Athanasius	Describing the creation of the first human being, says: 'God, maker of the world, formed through his Word the human race in his own image, and gave it (the human race) understanding, and knowledge of his eternity.' And a little further on: 'Hence, the maker of things wished that the human race which he had founded should continue as he founded it.' According to these passages, God imparted the light of the intellect not only to Adam when he created him, but at the same time and with the same act to all Adam's descendants.' <sup>62</sup>
Basil	Speaks of the creation of the first ancestor as the foundation constituting human nature: 'The human being is certainly a wonderful thing; he has received something of great value from his natural constitution. Amongst the things we see on earth, what else was made in the image of the Creator? Here we see that "human being" is taken to mean human nature, not simply one individual of this nature.' <sup>63</sup>
Gregory Nazianzen	Also sees the whole of humanity in Adam: 'Because the Creator-Word wishes to demonstrate this, he makes the human being a unique animal by uniting visible and invisible nature.' <sup>64</sup>
Gregory of Nyssa	'Has written an entire treatise on the making of the human being, in which we clearly see how little he deals with the creation of the individual. The principal object of his meditations is human nature instituted in the first individual.' <sup>65</sup>
John Chrysostom	John Chrysostom, applies to all human beings the words 'Let us make man to our image and likeness'. 'Just as he said image because of our source, he also said likeness, in order that we may render ourselves like God according to human forces.' <sup>66</sup>
Cyril of Alexandria	Speaks of Adam as human nature: 'This animal, completed by God the Creator with all the conditions proper to its own nature, was immediately endowed with the divine likeness.' And a little further: 'After losing the grace of God and being despoiled of the good with which it had been enriched at the beginning, human nature was banished from the paradise of delights and became deformed.' <sup>67</sup>
Augustine	Says expressly that the human race was 'as it were radically instituted in Adam'. <i>De Gen ad litt.</i> lib VI, 11, 19 He says that we were all in Adam,

<sup>62</sup> Athanasius, *Orat. contra Gent.*

<sup>63</sup> Basil, *Homilia in Psal.* XVIII.

<sup>64</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Orat. XLV, Orat II. In Pascha.*

<sup>65</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio.*

<sup>66</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homil IX in Genes. AM*, lib. IV, cap. V, n. 826 p. 445 [Durham, p. 446].

<sup>67</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *De adorat. in spir. et verit.* lib I, XLVIII.

	indeed we were the single Adam, because ‘if the form in which we lived as individuals was not yet individually created and distributed, nevertheless the seminal nature from which we were propagated was present.’ <i>De Civ. Dei</i> XIII, XIV Once again, Adam was certainly a human being, but this human being ‘was the whole human race’. <i>In Jo Tract</i> X, II [10,11]. Finally, ‘all were in Adam’s loins by means of the seed’ <i>Op. imperfect contra Jul</i> , V, XII. <sup>68</sup>
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Ref. 7.	The Fathers speak of the ‘breath of life’ as the principle of understanding of Adam and all intelligent creatures.
Basil	‘Human beings possess a power by which they can know and understand their Creator and Maker. The Creator breathed into him, that is, added to the human being a part of his own grace so that by means of this likeness formed in him, the human being might know him to whom he had been made alike.’ <sup>69</sup>
Gregory Nazianzen	‘When the Maker wished to manifest the Word, therefore, he formed this single animal into a human being from visible and invisible nature. The body of the human being is formed from matter previously produced, and the Creator breathes into it the breath which Scripture calls the image of God and the intellectual soul. He places a large world, as it were, on our little earth.’ <sup>70</sup>
Gregory of Nyssa	‘The MATTER of the creature is first prepared and his FORM designed to show an exemplar of outstanding beauty. Then the Creator makes a nature similar to himself and like him in its actions.’ <sup>71</sup>
John Damascene	John Damascene, following the steps of the earliest authors, is careful to explain the origin of the material and spiritual parts of the human being in the same way. <sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *AM*, lib.IV, cap. V, n. 826, p. 456–457 [p. 447].

<sup>69</sup> Basil, *Hom. In Psal.* XLVIII. Cf. *AM*, lib.IV, cap. 5. n. 830, p. 459 [p. 449].

<sup>70</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Orat.* 42 [45], *quae est orat. 2 de Pascha*.

<sup>71</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio*, c. 3.

<sup>72</sup> John Damascene, *De fide orthod.*, lib. II, c. XII.

<b>Ref. 8.</b>	<b>Augustine and Origen speak of the physical union of Adam and his descendants</b>
Augustine	“ ‘Certainly all sinned in Adam when all were as yet included in him, in virtue of that force which had been placed by nature in him by which he was able to generate them.’” <sup>73</sup> Observe here how St. Augustine says that all in the nature of Adam were one only man; by that innate power by which he was able to beget them. <sup>1</sup> The same holy Doctor thus speaks in another place of this physical conjunction in the following way: “That is no great thing which you see that children have not a will of their own to choose good or evil. I would like to point out what he saw, who, writing to the Hebrews, said that Levi, son of Israel, was in the loins of his father Abraham when he paid tithes and therefore that he paid tithes also.” <sup>74</sup> From this, if you have the eye of the Christian you may discern by faith if not by intelligence, that all were in the loins of Adam who through concupiscence of the flesh were to arise from him”. <sup>75</sup>
Origen	‘Let us see how by one man sin entered the world.’ He adds: ‘If it be said that Levi who was born in the fourth generation after Abraham, existed nevertheless in the loins of Abraham: much more did all mankind who are born have been born into this world, existed in the loins of Adam, when he was still in Paradise: all mankind, with him and in him, were driven from Paradise when he was driven out. This then is that ‘one man through whom sin entered the world and death by sin.’” <sup>76</sup>
<b>Ref. 9.</b>	<b>Augustine: Christ was not subject to concupiscence as he was conceived of the Holy Spirit.</b>
	‘Hence it appears that the propagation of evil in the human race proceeds from that concupiscence through which Christ would not be conceived. For although the body of Mary came from it, yet she did not transmit it into that body which she did not conceive through concupiscence’ and again ‘The flesh therefore of Christ drew mortality from the mortality of the body of his mother: for he found that body mortal: but he did not draw from it the contagion of original sin because he did not find there the concupiscence of a human father.’ <sup>77</sup> That this concupiscence is bound up with human intercourse can be seen in the following passage from Augustine, ‘although he [Christ] is of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, since the Virgin Mary, from whom the Word took flesh, was propagated from that seed, nevertheless he was not subjected to the action of that seed, since he was not conceived of the seed of man and remained free from the bond of the ‘concupiscentia seminatrix’. <sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Augustine, *De Peccatorum. meritis et remissione*, lib. III, cap. VII.

<sup>74</sup> *Heb* 7: 9–10.

<sup>75</sup> Augustine, *Contra secundam Juliani responsionem imperfectum opus*, lib. I, cap. XLVIII. *AS*, lib. III, cap. VIII, art. IV, p. 452.

<sup>76</sup> Origen, *Commentaria in epistolam B. Pauli ad Romanos*, lib. V. n. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Augustine, *Contra Julianum haeresis Pelagianae defensorem*, lib. V, cap. XV, nn. 52, 54.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, *Contra secundam Juliani Responsionem Imperfectum opus*, lib. IV, c. CIV.

## Chapter 10

### Signs and Symbols

#### Preview

In this chapter Rosmini begins by recapitulating what he has said earlier regarding nature and supernature. Human beings suffer from two main limitations. In the natural state they will never be satisfied until their vision of ideal being is totally realised by the vision of infinite reality which is God. Secondly they could not give themselves finite objects for their development. Our first parents were constituted in the supernatural state. That is, they were given a perception of God as all-being, all-good. He also gave them the universe of contingent realities. This besides aiding him in his natural life was also a symbol of the divine and would raise him up to see beyond them to the invisible universe and divine things. This chapter deals mainly with such symbols and their effect on our first parents and us also in our present state. This in turn leads to the spiritual/philosophical/theological exegesis of Rosmini of the first chapters of Genesis. At first it might strike the reader as rather ingenuous in the light of modern exegesis but Rosmini is supported by the Fathers and St Thomas and we must remember that this book of the Bible enjoys its own particular genre and is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

#### The limitation of creatures

As we have said already, finite humans beings intuit being. This ideal being has no limits and possesses divine characteristics. Indeed, it is a spark of the divine and an appurtenance of God, though it is not God. For God is real being. This unlimited means of knowledge becomes limited by the real objects perceived. Now the finite being is able to advance more and more in the knowledge which it draws from the things that surround it; there is no limit to the capacity of the human intellect. But this shows up the finitude of the person, the real being which sees infinite being only in the idea. It is, therefore always imperfect, and will never be satisfied except by the total realisation of ideal being, that is, infinite real being which is God. Now infinite Being cannot be known in its *Reality* unless he communicates himself to the intelligent creature giving it a perception of himself; which he does through grace.<sup>1</sup> Ideal being is the most indeterminate possible. We see nothing in it except what is determined by sensations coming from real contingent beings around us. It is a most faint and remote light. Therefore human beings are the most limited and imperfect intellectual beings. The perfectibility of human beings is indefinite. This is demanded by human nature, but in the state of innocence Adam and Eve were destined to enjoy also the

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<sup>1</sup> AS, lib. IV, I, cap. I, art 2, p. 13.

supernatural state of grace which would enable them to increase in perfection until the time came for them to enjoy the Beatific Vision. This also holds for fallen man, for through the death and resurrection of His Son, God has enabled us, too, to rise to a new supernatural life. This life consists in the action of God in our soul, and giving us a real perception of himself, as we have seen earlier.

We might ask why God could not have made man perfect immediately? Rosmini gives four reasons for this: a) all the other parts of man except pure intelligence would not have been used; b) if man had been left out and only the angels had been created there would have been one less nature in the universe; c) man would have lost the ability to merit and therefore deserve gifts from God in return and therefore he would have lost the moral dignity attached to this; d) it would not have been in keeping with the wisdom of God who makes use of secondary means where these are available, according to the law of the least means, in achieving his ends. It was therefore fitting that man should proceed by self-development through the use of all his powers.

There were two things which man could not attain on his own: a) an infinite real object corresponding to the infinite ideal being he intuited; b) he could not give himself finite objects needed for his own development. God remedied this by giving man a perception of Himself as explained above. This operates in the human intellect and this light of grace forms one light with the light of reason. Rosmini says ‘that grace, is, as it were, the heat that issues from the light and which increases the light itself’.<sup>2</sup> Secondly God gave man the material universe of contingent limited realities. Rosmini quotes St Augustine and St Ambrose (**Ref.1**). Efficacy and light are thus added to the natural cognitions and to the means by which he acquires them, namely natural signs and symbols.

We have seen that we naturally form cognitions of external things by the application of the idea of being, thus forming ideas and being persuaded of the real existence of the source of sensations in us. Now this *being* in us is either in its natural state, the idea of being, or else also in a supernatural state, united to the deiform feeling or perception of the divine. Whenever external signs or symbols signify and indicate divine things they are understood naturally by those who have the idea of being only, thus forming natural cognitions of God, or they use their supernatural light as well if they possess it and in this case the natural cognitions they form of God receive a certain deiform light which makes them living and operative in the person. This leads us to adore the divine nature through the gift of faith.

For our first parents who enjoyed not just a natural but supernatural life this supernatural element accompanied all the cognitions they acquired and imparted a supernatural virtue to the sensations themselves. Those coming from natural objects could not impart anything supernatural, yet within the person who received them they

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<sup>2</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art. V, pp. 16–17.

are supernaturalised by the grace they possess. Rosmini says this is why the saints so easily see God in creatures and whatever they sense helps to raise the mind to God and they are surprised that others experience this so little.

All the natural cognitions of man have their origin from the external universe which operates on his senses. These cognitions, therefore, having a nature and order calculated to raise up the mind of man to his Creator, were dependent on the arrangement of the universe. God created and ordered the universe, in such form that as well as giving human nature all that was necessary for the conservation, reproduction and development of its animal life, it should also be not merely an outline but more than that — a *sensible symbol* of the interior and supersensible universe, or of the whole universe both sensible and supersensible.

Rosmini says the universe has three ends:

1. It is made and ordered to satisfy all the needs of animal nature so that we may be able to subsist, reproduce etc.

2. It is made and ordered so as to be an outline of the divine nature, through the power, wisdom and goodness that we see in it. We proceed from effect to cause as recounted about Rosmini who, on one occasion, walking with Don Paoli on the shore of Lago Maggiore, was enraptured by the beauty of the lake and the mountains which raised his mind and heart to God.<sup>3</sup>

3. To serve as a symbol and, as it were, a visible representation of the invisible universe, in order that the human intellect may ascend by this means to its Creator contemplating in the sign the thing signified.

It is principally by this last way, by the way of signs, that man is educated and if we take the word 'sign' in its most general signification, it is literally true that outside of God the Creator we perceive nothing but signs which signify and manifest him, although these signs are various in nature, some being more expressive and others less so. Basically, as I have explained in another book, we argue from what impinges on us from external things, from sensations in us, to the fact of sensible qualities which produce them and thence to our idea of substances which uphold these qualities and also that there must be a cause producing these effects. By means of these principles of substance and accidents, and cause and effects we can arrive at a primal substance and a primal cause namely God.<sup>4</sup> We also need to know our relationship with God. Hence the universe which is comprised of individual things, from which we may draw the knowledge of ourselves and our Creator.

As we saw in the last chapter<sup>5</sup> the acquisition of natural cognitions is not the ultimate perfection of man because for the sanctified man God dwells in his soul by grace. In this way God adds deiform feeling to the idea of being, thus an efficacy and light to the natural cognitions which man acquires and to the *means* by which he

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<sup>3</sup> William Lockhart, *The Life of Antonio Rosmini*, vol. II, Kegan Paul, Trench and Co. 1886, chapter 2, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> JAD, Chapter 2, pp. 44–46.

<sup>5</sup> Pp. 131–132.

acquires them, namely natural signs and symbols. Now if these external signs or symbols signify divine things many people who understand them will use only the natural light of being forming natural cognitions of God, or if they possess through grace that supernatural light this illuminates the natural cognitions. This is what would have happened to our first parents prior to their fall from grace. The natural sensations they received would have been supernaturalised through the power of grace dwelling within them. This, Rosmini says, explains how the saints so easily see and contemplate the Creator in the creature.

Grace operating through the human reason perfects the person and in so far as it extends its influence over the inferior faculties, perfects the nature and through it the person. The latter is, as we can see in an inverse manner to the former. In the first case the sensations of natural objects are sublimated by grace and made to serve as a means for supernatural cognitions. In the second case a certain virtue is added to the sensations which communicate to the person who receives them the effects of grace. However it is clear that the objects from which these sensations come in a certain supernatural manner could not be purely natural but must be united with a supernatural and divine principle which forms one sole agent and cause with them.

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| 1. Grace the form of reason: perfects the person. Sensations of natural objects are enhanced and illuminated by it and serve as a means for supernatural cognitions.   |
| 2. Grace perfecting nature: power is added to sensations which communicate to the person via the nature the effects of grace. These come in a supernatural manner being united with a supernatural and divine power co-operating as a cause. |

Rosmini gives as an example the touch of the woman who was healed from a haemorrhage in the Gospel; she received that sensation not from a purely *natural* body but from the *divine* body of Christ who said that *virtue had gone out of him*.<sup>6</sup> The same thing can be said of other miracles which Christ worked. In these cases the sensations producing a physical good are not operating as signs or the matter of cognition but as blind agents accompanied by a power alien to them. But supernatural power is united with the sensations as a cooperating cause.

We can presume that these healings also were accompanied by the healing of the soul since grace proceeded from the nature to the person. This healing of the soul would seem to result in a new supernatural habit when the person who has been healed gives thanks and praise to God. Rosmini refers to Christ healing a man on the Sabbath. '*If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man's whole body on the sabbath?*'<sup>7</sup>

But considering sensations as the matter of cognition, that is, ones which people understand, there may be sensations produced by objects which are not merely natural and in which we find something supernatural or divine which produce a most

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<sup>6</sup> Lk 8: 46.

<sup>7</sup> Jn 7: 23 (Italics mine).



effective knowledge of God. We have all heard about or experienced the face of holy people which radiate their interior holiness and union with God. Such sensations (this radiance) which Rosmini sees as an initial gift of a glorified body can effect in us a supernatural knowledge of God. A pre-eminent example was the Transfiguration where the face of Christ manifested his divinity. '*And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white*'.<sup>8</sup> Such signs are the gifts of a glorified body, a preview of the glory God reserves for those who will enjoy the beatific vision. They also raise our minds to the supernatural knowledge of God and a source of grace for the beholder. '*Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here"*'<sup>9</sup>

'...God can produce in the body itself such effects of his presence by uniting himself to the soul. These clearly show that God himself is dwelling in that soul since such effects are beyond the powers of any finite being, and therefore indicate beyond doubt the infinite cause which produces them.'<sup>10</sup>

The Fathers of the Church attribute the power which drew men to Christ mostly to seeing his sacred humanity. St Jerome speaks of this **(Ref. 2)**.

There is also a third class of sensations accompanied by a supernatural action; they produce a deiform action in the person without it being necessary for that person to understand what they signify. This is more to do with the supernatural operative principle, God himself, rather than the individual recipient. Readers will realise that examples of these are sacramental actions. For instance the pouring of water accompanied by words in the sacrament of Baptism produces an effect in the infant without him or her being aware of it.

The rather long explanation of the signs or sensible impressions can be summarised as follows on the next page.

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<sup>8</sup> Mt 17: 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 4.

<sup>10</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art IX, p. 33.

Sensations and signs
<b>1<sup>st</sup> kind:</b> Purely natural ones but do help in increasing one's knowledge of God.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> kind:</b> Those which are not purely natural but are accompanied by some supernatural principle, proceeding from material objects informed by divine power. a) Sensible impressions which have united with them a supernatural virtue and grace not in as much as they are signs but in as much as they are <i>sensations</i> . Their effect is not the communication of grace to the human mind but of producing some prodigious effect, e.g. miracles. Grace can follow if not refused. b) Pure sensations but accompanied by supernatural virtue and grace. They are known to be signs; here grace is operating by means of the concept of the thing signified. c) Sensible impressions which have united with them a supernatural power and grace as in as much as they are signs <i>but it is not necessary for the individual to know them as such or to know what they signify</i> . They are signs because of the being (God) who acts through an agent who knows what he is doing, e.g. the sacraments.

St Thomas on signs
'It belongs to divine Providence to provide for everything according to the mode of its condition; divine Wisdom therefore fittingly confers on man aids for his salvation under certain corporeal and sensible signs.' <sup>11</sup>

God therefore instituted a system of sensible signs which would communicate knowledge and grace to promote the development of the perfect human nature of our first parents. Rosmini professes ignorance as to whether purely natural signs, those of purely natural sensations would have been employed by God for this purpose, because we do not know what the situation was before the fall, that is, whether the divine pervaded all things or not. But he believes that the other three kinds of signs were certainly used by God.

Now what were the signs which God used in the development of man and woman in paradise?

1. The whole material universe was a symbol of the spiritual universe. This came to be interpreted by symbolic language both human and divine, firstly pertaining to the major parts of the universe and secondly to its minor parts.

2. Among its minor parts first and foremost would have been the sensible, probably human form under which God represented himself to man giving his divine commands to him.

3. The second would have been the marital state of our first parents which symbolised the union of the human nature with the divine primarily in the Incarnation. It is

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<sup>11</sup> ST, III, LXI, art. 1.

significant here that Christ elevated marriage to a Sacrament, and as we know St Paul quotes the words of Genesis, *'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church'*.<sup>12</sup>

4. Rosmini sees the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as symbolising ideal being (the source and formal object of all knowledge) and the Tree of Life as symbolising real being (the principal of subsistence and life and therefore of grace which is a communication of more abundant life which is immortal, supernatural and absolute). He goes on to say that the Tree of Life is a symbol of what gives or increases subsistence in human beings and he quotes the Book of Proverbs, *'Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life'*.<sup>13</sup> And *'A gentle tongue is a tree of life'*.<sup>14</sup> To show that right living is rewarded with joys which increase and sustain life we read, *'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life'*.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the noblest life we can enjoy is that which comes of sharing in wisdom. This vital and practical knowledge is represented by the Tree of Life, whereas what is solely speculative and abstract is represented by the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. *'She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy'*.<sup>16</sup> As we have seen, infinite and absolute wisdom is found in the divine Word. So in its most eminent sense the Tree of Life symbolises the Word of God. Jesus said, *'I am the way and the truth and the life'*.<sup>17</sup> The Word communicates to us true and substantial wisdom, life and immortality.<sup>18</sup> Even in the heavenly Jerusalem the Tree of Life stands on either bank of the river flowing through the city, *'Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.'*<sup>19</sup>

Thus we see that those symbols which God places at the beginning in the terrestrial paradise had the virtue of signifying in a marvellous manner what will be found at the end of all things and that they were the exemplar of that grand conception to which God designed to give effect by his Providence, by means of that course of all the ages preordained by him. This is that "tree of life" of which St. John speaks that produces "twelve fruits" symbolising those twelve effects of the Spirit of Jesus Christ enumerated by St. Paul and which he calls "the fruits of the Spirit".<sup>20</sup> Saintly people

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<sup>12</sup> *Eph*, 5: 31–32.

<sup>13</sup> *Prov* 13: 12.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 15: 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11: 30.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 18.

<sup>17</sup> *Jn* 14: 6.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Jn* 6: 35–51.

<sup>19</sup> *Rev* 22: 1–2.

<sup>20</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. X, pp. 39–40. Gal 5: 22. Modern versions follow the Greek which mentions only nine of the twelve fruits viz. the first six together with faithfulness, gentleness and self-

are Christ bearers and therefore we can call them trees of life since Christ communicates to others through them. Rosmini imagines the scene from the book of Revelation — the scene in the heavenly Jerusalem, which has trees on either bank. In fact the prophecy of Ezekiel says, *‘On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.’*<sup>21</sup> Yet St John says tree in the singular because it is always the Christ alone who lives and acts in all his saints and he says that these trees *‘have leaves for the healing of the nations’*, because the nations are converted and healed by that grace which the saints in heaven obtain by their prayers or which on earth is transfused by their preaching and example: neither is there any tree of another species in heaven but only the tree of life. *‘On either side of the river is the **tree** of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations* <sup>22</sup> **(Ref. 3)**.

5. The symbol of water. This was the river which watered the garden and divided into the four. It was the living water or the water of life. God has continually used this very ancient symbol. It was used in the great flood to purify the world of wickedness, and also the waters of baptism. *‘He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.’*<sup>23</sup>

It figured in the Exodus, the Israelites passing through the Reed Sea, and it was provided for the people in the desert when Moses struck the rock and water flowed out.<sup>24</sup> It was used in the prophecy of Ezekiel in the vision where *‘water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple...’*<sup>25</sup> These words were not intended to be taken just literally. As we see they foreshadowed the heavenly temple of the book of Revelation in which water issued from the throne of God and the Lamb, *‘Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city’*.<sup>26</sup> St Ambrose sees this flowing water as a symbol of the Holy Spirit that proceeds from Christ. It flows from the throne of God and from the Lamb **(Ref. 4)**. Speaking to the woman of Samaria at the well, *‘Jesus said to*

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control. It is possible that the Latin version has accidentally included, in some cases, two renderings of the same Greek word Cf. The Holy Bible, Knox Version.

<sup>21</sup> *Ezek* 47: 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Rev* 22: 2. (Bold print mine).

<sup>23</sup> *1 Pet* 3: 18–22.

<sup>24</sup> *Ex* 14: 17, *Num* 20: 1–13.

<sup>25</sup> *Ezek* 47: 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Rev* 22: 1.

*her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."*<sup>27</sup>

Christ willed to preserve and perpetuate this primitive symbol in his Church by elevating it in the institution of holy Baptism to the dignity of a sacrament of his New Law. For the Holy Spirit and his graces are what nourish and vivify the saints for whom those waters flow from the heavenly Jerusalem and bathe their roots close to the trees of life which represent the saints. Not only St. John but also Ezekiel saw that on the banks of these rivers there were many trees of life.<sup>28</sup> Thus the water is inseparable from the tree which it irrigates and makes fruitful, and so the water which God placed in Paradise in the beginning is the proper symbol of the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity: and if we take it in a general and abstract sense only, it is a symbol of *moral being*. Thus the beginnings of all things were symbolised before the eyes of the first man in those two trees and in those waters, because those three objects were most beautiful symbols of the threefold form of being, namely ideal, real and moral being, elements of all human development.<sup>29</sup>

The question might be asked whether in the time before the fall there were sacraments, that is, signs of sacred things. We can answer in the negative because there was no one thing that was exclusively constituted as a particular symbol of any supernatural truth, but we can say that everything in the universe was a kind of general sacrament. St Thomas denies that there were sacraments because he believed that man did not receive sanctity from corporeal things, but that it was infused into his soul and this grace in turn sanctified his body.

'Sacraments were not necessary in the state of innocence. This can be proved from the rectitude of that state, in which the higher (parts of man) ruled the lower, and nowise depended on them: for just as the mind was subject to God, so were the lower powers of the soul subject to the mind, and the body to the soul. And it would be contrary to this order if the soul were perfected either in knowledge or in grace, by anything corporeal; which happens in the sacraments. Therefore in the state of innocence man needed no sacraments, whether as remedies against sin or as means of perfecting the soul.'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Jn* 4: 13–14.

<sup>28</sup> The symbol of trees irrigated by living and running water is frequent in the Psalms e.g., 'He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season' (*Ps* 1: 5) and so in the Gospel barren and fruitful trees are symbols of man who brings forth fruits for eternal life or the contrary.

<sup>29</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art X, pp. 41–42.

<sup>30</sup> ST, III, LXI, art. II.

*Our Light and Our Salvation*

Rosmini says that there were no sacraments in the strict sense of the word but it may be taken in a broader sense and in this sense theologians are agreed that there were sacraments. This explains passages from Augustine and shows that his teaching is in accord with these theologians.

On the other hand, with the sacraments of the New Law it is characteristic of them to produce grace even without acts of the person's will as in infant baptism, as I mentioned above. As we say, 'they are outward signs of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is given to the soul'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, Catholic Truth Society 1971, n. 249.

Ref. 1.	The Divine Word and Holy Spirit are sent to us
Augustine	‘The Word is sent to anyone by whom he is known and perceived.’ Hence it is said: “I came forth from the Father and am come into this world.” He says the same also of the Holy Spirit. To say that the Holy Spirit is the gift of God is the same as to say that he proceeds from the Father; so his being sent means to say that it is known that he proceeds from him. <sup>32</sup>
Ambrose	‘If we think wisely as becomes a child of God, we must understand that he is sent for this, that from that incomprehensible and ineffable secret issuing as it were from the profound depths of the majesty (of God) the Word of God is made comprehensible to our minds according to their capacity when he not only annihilates himself but when he also dwells in us, as it is written “I will dwell within them”.’ <sup>33</sup>

Ref. 2.	The attraction of the person of Christ
‘St. Jerome, speaking of the promptness with which Matthew obeyed the call of Christ says: “doubtless the glory and majesty of the hidden deity, which even shone through his human countenance had the power of drawing to him those who beheld him, even from the first glance. If the magnet and amber have such a power as people say of drawing light objects to them, how much more can the Creator of all things draw to him those whom he calls?” (Mt 9: 9–13)... the attraction described by St. Jerome must have begun by being physical, so to speak, coming from the sensitive perception of the aspect of Christ, but it ended by being truly intellectual and moral when the effects of grace came gradually to touch the superior part of man although it began its entrance by way of the senses.’ <sup>34</sup>	

Ref. 3.	Augustine speaks about the Tree of Life
‘God did not will that man should live even in paradise without spiritual things corporeally represented to him: so that in the other trees he had nourishment, and in this tree of life the sacrament.’ <sup>35</sup>	

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<sup>32</sup> *De Trinit.* lib.IV, cap. XX, n. 29.

<sup>33</sup> *De Fide* lib. V, cap. III. *AS ibid.*, lib. IV, cap I, art. V, p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> *AS*, *Ibid.*, art. IX, pp. 33–34 (text and note).

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, lib. XIII, cap. IV, and lib. VIII, cap. V, n. 9

<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>Ambrose sees the river of the water of life of Revelation as a symbol of the Holy Spirit.</b>
<p>“This is certainly the River proceeding from the throne of God, that is, the Holy Spirit, whom he drinks who believes in Christ, as he himself says: “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believes in me, as the Scripture says, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But He spoke this of the Spirit.” John 7:37-38 Therefore the river is the Spirit.”<sup>36</sup></p>	

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<sup>36</sup> Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto*, lib. III, cap. XXI (XX).



## Chapter 11

### The Possibility of Redemption

#### Preview

In this chapter Rosmini states the traditional teaching of the Church of God's plan for the redemption of the human race; a plan based on the necessity of making adequate reparation for the offence committed against God by original sin. *'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life'* (Jn 3: 16). As God led the human race back to perfection through grace, he made use of signs which symbolised divine things and the interior life with God. Some of these signs are effective, they produce what they signify (sacraments) and other signs are instructive and teach us about the things of God. Rosmini explains the difference between effective signs prior to the fall and after it.

#### God's eternal plan for our salvation

Rosmini recapitulates the consequences of original sin. I refer the reader to chapter 8.<sup>1</sup> Rosmini states the held position of the Church, namely, that to re-enter friendship with God, the order of justice had to be re-established. An act of the will against the will of God is an infinite disorder because it measured by the object. We say we are sorry for having offended God because 'we have offended his infinite goodness'. The debt fallen humanity owed to God was infinite and quite impossible for finite human beings to pay. The order of justice consists in a) that all the honour that God deserves at the moment should be given him, and b) that what had been taken from him should be restored. This would surpass the power of finite creatures.

The Father takes all his delight in the divine Word in whom there is no defect or sin. He is perfect justice because he is God as the Father is God. Through the stupendous mystery of the incarnation, Jesus Christ took on a human nature while remaining God. This human nature was sinless and Rosmini once again makes the point that Christ could not have inherited original sin since he was born of a virgin and we can add 'one who was conceived immaculate'.<sup>2</sup> In this generation there would be no concurrence of man, for it is precisely this *concurrence* which corrupts human nature in the act of its propagation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 128–129.

<sup>2</sup> It is significant that Rosmini played an important part in the Definition of the Immaculate Conception under Pius IX.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *AS*, *ibid.*, lib. IV, cap. IV, p. 53.

Rosmini observes that the fact of the incarnation stands by itself and is complete in itself; the salvation of the world was something extra and accidental. God did all this out of his love for his only begotten Son without the direct and primary consideration of man. Humanity was saved because the love of God's own divine Son demanded it.

For it is proper to man to love his own nature even in other human subjects who partake of it, and therefore Christ by a love that was natural to him as man, loved all other men and desired their salvation and the Eternal Father could not deny him the satisfaction of all that he desired. Nor did this desire of Christ cross the order of justice because the Word incarnate had the possibility in him of satisfying completely and even superabundantly the debt contracted by man; for he was God himself and his acts of worship were, therefore, adequate to the divine Majesty. But over and above this, he was able to give to God a greater homage than was due from him in the order of justice; for in fact, justice demanded that Christ, being perfectly innocent and holy, should be perfectly happy and should suffer no pain whatsoever. Yet instead of this he was abandoned by his Father to sorrow and to death itself; it seemed as if God sinned against this man as another man had sinned against him. It is certain that God contracted an infinite debt towards Christ, since being infinitely just and worthy of all protection and care, he was left by God in the midst of troubles, his humanity exposed to destruction: and Christ submitted himself obedient to a decree of such severity, which had all the appearance of being unjust and which would have been so if the will of Christ had not accepted it, renouncing his rights for the love of God his Father. We have here then, as it were, two accounts opened. The one on the part of humanity which owed an infinite debt to God; the other that one of the human race, who had a credit equally great with God. He, therefore, was a wealthy man who was able to pay the redemption of his fellow human beings, whom in fact he redeemed and brought back by means of this credit that was his own; he received in exchange the handwriting of the debt that was against them which he cancelled nailing it to his cross.<sup>4</sup>

The salvation of each of us is a pure gift of our Redeemer. Jesus Christ himself tells us that '[For] God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.'<sup>5</sup> And St Paul tells us, '*but God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation*'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54

<sup>5</sup> *Jn* 3: 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Rom* 5: 8–11.

### **The mystery of our redemption**

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.'<sup>7</sup>

In Christ alone, then, lay the possibility of re-establishing the order of justice which had been upset. The salvation of each of us is a pure gift of our Redeemer. God could now lead humanity back through grace to supernatural perfection. Christ was able to communicate his own divine spirit to us. To attain this Jesus made use of signs. We have already dealt with signs and symbols generally in the previous chapter.

These signs were *instructive* signs and *effective* signs or sacraments. Rosmini deals with instructive signs first and then effective signs. However before doing so he explains the difference between the role of effective signs before and after the fall.

### **Effective Signs before and after the fall**

#### **1. The first difference** lay in their effect.

Before the fall man was holy and his superior powers were in direct communication with God and received grace from him immediately. His lower powers were subject to the mind and the body to the soul. Signs simply *prepared* his inferior powers so that they might be in harmony with the superior ones.

To repeat what we said above (p. 159), St Thomas says, 'in the state of innocence, before sin, sacraments properly so-called were not necessary and this because of the rectitude of that state in which the superior things entered the inferior and were in no way dependent on them. For as the mind remained subject to God, so the inferior powers of the soul were subject and the body to the soul; and it would be contrary to this order if the soul had to obtain its perfection either as to knowledge, or as to grace, by any corporeal means: as in the case in the sacraments.'<sup>8</sup>

But after the fall human beings could not be made perfect until they had re-acquired justice, so appointed signs gave them sanctity and with this a sure hope and promise. In fallen man the soul no longer rules the body and falls in with its feelings and

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<sup>7</sup> *Eph* 1: 3–10.

<sup>8</sup> ST, III, LXI, art. II.

imaginings. The influence of the body must therefore be turned to the benefit of the soul. So God employs sensible signs whose effects reach the soul infusing grace and sanctification.

Rosmini hypothesises that the sensations in man which are excited by these signs are accompanied by power that renders the superior part of the soul more independent of the body than before and supernaturally excites the soul to contemplate God and to perceive him. In fact God is present to all things and it is due to a defect in the intellect if he is not perceived, but if this defect is removed it comes to see him. It is because the human subject is both intellectual and sensible that what arises in the senses can influence the intellective will. Though the soul is benefited the body is not reformed (**Ref. 1**). This explanation seems to agree with Basil, and also Augustine who explain the action of the sacrament of Baptism. Speaking of Baptism Basil assigns an effect to the blessed water and another effect to the Holy Spirit. The effect of the water is to take away sin, its power being due to the presence of the Holy Spirit (to which Rosmini adds taking away the original corruption which has its root in the body which weighs down the spirit and liberating the soul from its tendency to evil) but he attributes to the Holy Spirit the giving of new life. It is an immaterial power alone that can infuse grace in the intellect, but just as sensations in the natural order dispose the intellective soul to form cognitions so in the supernatural order the material element (the water) having received force from the Word, disposes man to receive the life of grace in the intellect.

**2. The second difference** is the mode by which Christ restores sinful human nature by the medium of signs. The person only is restored in this life, not the nature.

We have seen that grace conferred by sensible signs terminates in the personality. This is restored first. But the nature of man remains subject to the consequences of sin. This is with us as long as we live. Only after our death at the time predestined by God, will our nature be restored through the power of the soul, through the indwelling of Christ. The soul being perfect draws after it the perfection of the body, just as the person draws after it the perfection of the nature.<sup>9</sup> The grace of Christ effects in us a change in the supreme principle of our activity, namely our natural will which is a slave to sin and passions. *'For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.'*<sup>10</sup> Another person is born in human beings by grace, different from what was there before; although the human subject is the same. A regeneration has taken place as Christ said to Nicodemus, *'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above (anew).'*<sup>11</sup> The expressions in Scripture, 'children of God', 'born of God' all refer to a renewed personality.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Rom* 6 and 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Rom* 8: 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Jn* 3: 3.

St Thomas says, 'For as man in his intellectual powers participates in the Divine knowledge through the virtue of faith, and in his power of will participates in the Divine love through the virtue of charity, so also in the nature of the soul does he participate in the Divine Nature, after the manner of a likeness, through a certain regeneration or re-creation.'<sup>12</sup>

The regenerated person shares in the divine nature, that is, the person as a divine element added to the human nature. Rosmini draws liberally from the letters of St Paul. In the letter to the Ephesians he says, '*to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*'.<sup>13</sup> The words 'new self' and 'created' express renewal of the person and the word 'clothe' indicates the preservation of the human nature. The phrases 'in the spirit of your mind' and 'in true righteousness and holiness' declare that it is the supreme part of man which has been renewed, that is a new person has been created. In his letter to the Colossians, St Paul says, '*Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator*'.<sup>14</sup> The words 'renewed in knowledge' shows that this renovation takes place in the supreme part of man and the word 'created' shows that it is not simply a change that has been effected but the addition of a new thing; and the words 'to the image of its creator' shows that a man is made to the image of God by grace; God himself dwelling in him.<sup>15</sup>

'In his letter to the Romans Paul says '*how can we who died to sin still live in it?*'<sup>16</sup> meaning that when the new man is born the old man died and that we must not permit the old man to revive. A little further on he says, '*We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin*'.<sup>17</sup> He says 'the sinful body might be destroyed' meaning that this body, full of concupiscence, has no longer the power it had over the will and that the body, relatively to the will and the person, is already as if dead and he explains a little later saying, '*So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions*'.<sup>18</sup> This reign of sin is its influence in moving the human will and hence gives man two existences, the one in the flesh and the other in the spirit. The existence of the person deprived of grace is subject to sin, and the other the new person formed by grace is moved

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<sup>12</sup> ST, I II, CX, art. IV.

<sup>13</sup> Eph 4: 23–24.

<sup>14</sup> Col 3: 9–10.

<sup>15</sup> AS, *ibid.*, cap. V, art. II, pp. 60–61.

<sup>16</sup> Rom, 6: 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 6.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

by grace. St Paul says, *'While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code, but in the new life of the Spirit.'*<sup>19</sup> St Paul is aware that our inferior part is not healed. In that telling passage in Romans chapter 7 he says, *'For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.'*<sup>20</sup> 'I' here signifies the person and 'the sin that dwells within me' means the sin that although it has formally ceased yet taken materially still dwells in my nature'; 'in me' means not the person but the nature. This is important because normally when people speak of nature they attribute it to the person. But Paul gives the interpretation for he says, *'For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh'*. This indicates that he was not talking of the person but the inferior part of human nature. He makes a clear distinction between the person and the nature when he says, *'For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I (the person) do not want is what I (my nature) do'*. It is not the person but the sin that dwells in him. *'Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.'*<sup>21</sup> Here he says that the law of his members binds and impedes his superior and personal will, because the obedience of the members does not always correspond with the good will of the person. Whereas the nature should obey the person. The body, however, will be regenerated in its own time, *'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.'*<sup>22</sup>

**3. The third difference** between the signs which sanctified man after sin had come into the world and the signs that preceded the fall is that the former had to be religious ceremonies especially instituted by God.

In his state of innocence there was no need for signs to have the power of infusing grace and sanctity, but only ones which might dispose him for grace and serve as occasions for preserving the good he already possessed and increasing it. The new

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<sup>19</sup> Rom 7: 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-23.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 8:11. *AS, ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

signs, however, had to have an extraordinary power which is foreign to their nature and which would unite human beings with God himself. Original sin affected not only human nature but corrupted everything. Natural things could only produce what was in accord with their nature. They could only symbolise spiritual things but not produce them, and these would not be fruitful if people did not understand them. But God wished to use sensible signs to signify grace and salvation so that man might understand this signification. Therefore he chose which he would use endowing them with power to produce the effect. This meant that he instituted such signs and communicated these to man. These thus became a religious ceremony to which we give the name of sacraments. They became causes and occasions not just of salvation but also of worship offered to God.

St Thomas says, 'The sacraments are, properly speaking, things applied to the worshippers of God for their consecration so as, in some way, to depute them to the worship of God.'<sup>23</sup>

Apart from these signs God employed other signs or natural symbols for our instruction, admonition and encouragement hence the term *instructive signs*.

**4. The fourth difference** is that the signs perfecting man after sin needed a victim of propitiation.

How is it that a nature which is hostile to God can continue to exist? Certainly not out of respect on God's part but his respect for another nature dear to him, namely that of his beloved Son.

The natural result of sin is the destruction of the sinner; the sinful angels were spared annihilation in order to increase the glory of Christ and the holiness of the elect and as a monument to his justice. Man might have been destroyed without being annihilated because death separates the soul from the body. Such a destruction leaves the nature surviving. Hence sinful human nature was abandoned to death which was its natural destiny. A sinless creature in a state of pure nature would have eventually died owing to its limitations of its powers. In other words such creatures would have been mortal, like us. When sin enters, this destruction is accelerated and if we regard death as the punishment of sin we see this as a just vengeance of the divine nature which has been injured.

Now death considered under any of these aspects could not be a means of appeasing God. So death could be a form of justice that should open the way to mercy only if it were a sacrifice pleasing to God and one made through love of justice and an oblation accepted by God. No one who inherited Adam's sin could love justice to the extent required. But the death of Christ could fulfil these requirements because innocent and capable of paying the infinite price. As we say in an Easter Preface 'he is

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<sup>23</sup> ST, I II, CII, art. V.

the true lamb who took away the sins of the world. By dying he destroyed our death,<sup>24</sup> and, 'As he gave himself into your hands for our salvation, he showed himself to be the priest, the altar, and the lamb of sacrifice'.<sup>25</sup> Our salvation was made possible by the incarnation and all the sacraments are derived from the passion and death of Christ, arising from his sacrifice.

St Thomas says, 'Likewise by His Passion He inaugurated the Rites of the Christian Religion by offering "Himself — an oblation and a sacrifice to God" (*Eph* 5: 2). Wherefore it is manifest that the sacraments of the Church derive their power especially from Christ's Passion, the virtue of which is in a manner united to us by our receiving the sacraments. It was in sign of this that from the side of Christ hanging on the Cross there flowed water and blood, the former of which belongs to Baptism, the latter to the Eucharist, which are the principal sacraments.'<sup>26</sup>

Not surprisingly Rosmini also refers to the Fathers, namely, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Theophylact, Augustine, Jerome, Leo and John Damascene (**Ref. 2**).

Therefore the sacraments of the New Law re-present and renew the image of the death of Christ. And we see this death at work in them. St Paul says, '*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*'<sup>27</sup> As we know, the whole person used to be immersed in water in the early Church, this was a symbol of burial and rising from the water symbolised the resurrection. Similarly in the Holy Eucharist, '*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*'.<sup>28</sup> The sacraments of the Old Law, foreshadowed those of the New Law.

St Thomas says, 'The passion of Christ was the final cause of the ancient sacraments, which were instituted to foreshadow it'.<sup>29</sup>

These sacraments, then, are expressions of the passion of Christ and our own death which is united with that of Christ and therefore they take the form and nature of an acceptable sacrifice. This is shown in a pre-eminent form in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Fourthly, then, the sacraments differ from the signs given for the perfecting of man before the fall, as no propitiatory victim was needed, nor would man have died.

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<sup>24</sup> Preface of Easter I.

<sup>25</sup> Preface of Easter V.

<sup>26</sup> ST, III, LXII, art. V.

<sup>27</sup> *Rom* 6: 3–4.

<sup>28</sup> 1 *Cor* 11: 26.

<sup>29</sup> ST, III, LXI, art. III ad 1.



Ref. 1.	The action of sacraments on the soul
Basil	‘...because in baptism two ends were proposed; on the one hand, the destroying of the body of sin, that it may never bear fruit unto death; on the other hand, our living unto the Spirit, and having our fruit in holiness; the water receiving the body as in a tomb figures death, while the Spirit pours in the quickening power, renewing our souls from the deadness of sin unto their original life. This then is what it is to be born again of water and of the Spirit, the being made dead being effected in the water, while our life is wrought in us through the Spirit. In three immersions, then, and with three invocations, the great mystery of baptism is performed, to the end that the type of death may be fully figured, and that by the tradition of the divine knowledge the baptized may have their souls enlightened. It follows that if there is any grace in the water, it is not of the nature of the water, but of the presence of the Spirit.’ <sup>30</sup>
Augustine	‘You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.’ Why does He not say, ‘You are clean through the baptism wherewith you have been washed’, but ‘by the word that I have spoken unto you,’ save only that in the water also it is the word that cleanses? Take away the word, and the water is neither more nor less than water. The word is added to the element, and there results the Sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word. For He had said also to the same effect, when washing the disciples’ feet, ‘One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean.’ And whence has water so great an efficacy, as in touching the body to cleanse the soul, save by the operation of the word; and that not because it is uttered, but because it is believed? <sup>31</sup>
Ref. 2.	The Fathers speak of the sacraments as proceeding from the body of Christ
Augustine	‘...for it was from His side, pierced with the spear, as He hung on the cross, that the sacraments of the Church flowed forth.’ <sup>32</sup>
John Chrysostom	‘With this too an ineffable mystery was accomplished. For "there came forth water and blood." Not without a purpose, or by chance, did those founts come forth, but because by means of these two together the Church consists. And the initiated know it, being by water indeed regenerated, and nourished by the Blood and the Flesh. Hence the Mysteries take their beginning; that when you approach to that awesome cup, you may so approach, as drinking from the very side.’ <sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Basil, Lib. *De Spiritu Sancto*, c. XV, n. 35.

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium*, tract. LXXX, n. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, tract. XV, CXX, (VIII).

<sup>33</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Joannem*, Hom. LXXXV, n. 3.

## Chapter 12

### Instructive Signs

#### Preview

In this short chapter Rosmini delineates the periods in the history of the chosen people in which instructive signs were used and quotes St Paul's letter to the Romans at length. He allots actual numbers of years in accordance with the thought of his time, but this does not affect his survey of God's instruction to his chosen ones. We conclude with a further explanation of instructive signs and in particular emblematic signs. Rosmini treats of the instructive signs given to the people of the Old Covenant in a large and detailed section of his work. This is placed in an Appendix at the end of this book for the convenience of the reader who may wish to avoid a detailed study of the signs given to the chosen people.

In spite of man's fallen state God did not cease to provide him with natural signs, revealing truths to him and instructing him in this way. Although they were primitive ones they revealed to man certain truths about salvation. For those who had obtained grace through faith, God also added others which would indirectly help them on towards their supernatural destiny. Although the signs were purely natural ones they could be used by man in the state of grace, providing him with greater light, since when man is endowed with grace, everything in him is capable of being enlivened.<sup>1</sup>

#### The periods during which instructive signs were used

Rosmini distinguishes two periods during which these instructive signs were used by God:

a) from the time of Adam to Abraham during which time they were given to the whole human race;

b) from the time of Abraham when they were given to him and his descendants alone. The reason for this, says Rosmini, was that people drifted away from God and no longer discerned the signs he gave them. God destroyed them in the great flood except the family of Noah. But even his descendants went astray so God chose the faithful Abraham. His race would not fail to receive and preserve the deposit of faith until Christ came, though there would be many failures along the way. In this way God ensured that the help he was giving the human race would not be lost altogether. When Christ came he would once again commit to the whole human race the truths which had been preserved. Meanwhile St Paul points out that law did not save the chosen people who stumbled, though they did not fall. Rosmini quotes his letter to

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 10, pp. 154, 156.

the Romans. *‘But through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles’*.<sup>2</sup> But the Hebrews were not abandoned and a remnant will be saved, *‘Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!’*<sup>3</sup> *‘So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, “Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”’*.<sup>4</sup> Although the Gentiles were not worthy for preparatory light of the law and the initial revelation, yet they were ready for the full light of Christ before the chosen people. So St Paul also says that the Gospel *‘is the power of God for the salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek’*.<sup>5</sup> *‘For God shows no partiality’*.<sup>6</sup> Indeed we call Abraham, ‘our father in faith’, the faith he has prior to circumcision.<sup>7</sup>

Rosmini reminds us of God’s call to Abraham *‘Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”’*.<sup>8</sup> This was the beginning of the instructive signs which God gave to the chosen people. With the birth of Isaac the sign of circumcision was instituted as a religious ceremonial which would mark them out from other nations.<sup>9</sup> *‘And here, it seems to me, begins the full institution of that race designed to receive and preserve the divine communications. Hence it is that St. Paul unites together the institution of the Hebrew race to this destiny saying, “Then what advantage has a Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. For ,n the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.”’*<sup>10</sup> Hence the selection of the Hebrews as the recipients of divine revelation depended on the rite of circumcision.<sup>11</sup> Rosmini assigns the length of time during which the signs assigned to the chosen people took to develop.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Rom* 11: 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, v.12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vv. 25–26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 11.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 4: 11–12.

<sup>8</sup> *Gen* 12: 1–3.

<sup>9</sup> Rosmini, in keeping with the scholarship of his day tends to assign definite dates to the beginning of salvation history. Hence Isaac was circumcised about 450 years after the deluge. But this arbitrary assigning of dates makes no difference to the essential story of the providential events of the Old Testament. After all modern scholarship suggests dates based on modern historical and archaeological research.

<sup>10</sup> *Rom* 3: 1–2.

<sup>11</sup> *AS*, lib. IV, cap. 6, art. III, pp. 71–72.

<sup>12</sup> To be precise Rosmini assigns the date of the end of ancient revelation to 453 BC or the year of the world 3551. This supposes according to him that Jesus was born in the year of the world 4004!

## **The end of ancient revelation**

He suggests that the end of ancient revelation could be assigned to the renewal of the Covenant with the Lord by Nehemiah. This was a figure of the New Covenant of Christ and showed that the Old Covenant had reached its end. Another figure showing the same thing was that of the new fire, which had been miraculously obtained from the liquid into which the old fire had meanwhile changed and which was kindled by the rising sun.<sup>13</sup> The second temple built and dedicated anew at that time and destined to receive the Messiah, was a fine image of the new spiritual Church which was to be founded by the Redeemer, when the ancient Church should have passed away. In other words all the signs were that the ancient order had come to an end and that the chosen people were to await the coming in of the new order. The Old Testament prophets cease about this time, the last of which was Malachi. Rosmini interprets the messenger of chapter 3 as the Messiah who would visit his temple. *‘See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight — indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.’*<sup>14</sup> And a pure offering would be made in every place from the rising of the sun to its setting, *‘For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.’*<sup>15</sup>

Rosmini sees the end of the prophets corresponding to the beginning of the seventy weeks of Daniel which makes clear the precise coming of the Lawgiver, the beginning of which falls in the year of the New Covenant celebrated by Nehemiah in 453 BC.<sup>16</sup> There is an increasing precision in prophecies relating to the coming Messiah culminating in the seventy weeks in Daniel. This revelation was received at the end of the Babylonian captivity.<sup>17</sup> Rosmini says that the prophecy of the seventy weeks must belong to the last of the prophecies. We have a foreshadowing of the liberation of the world by the Messiah. All the former prophecies pointed to this solemn type of the Babylonian captivity and the liberation of the chosen people from it.

The time of the Old Covenant was a preparation for that of the New. During this time the people were given instructive signs to establish their knowledge and worship of the one true God. The New Covenant would establish the knowledge and worship

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<sup>13</sup> 2 Macc 1: 19–36; Ezra 6 (and 1 Esd).

<sup>14</sup> Mal 3:1–4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid 1:11.

<sup>16</sup> A more modern dating is 445 to 433 BC.

<sup>17</sup> Modern scholarship dates the prophecy to the years between 167 and 164 BC, though the events are written as taking place earlier, during the reigns of Belshazzar, Darius the Mede and Cyrus King of Persia and located in Babylonia.

of the Trinity; this was the mission of Jesus Christ. All these instructive signs of the Old Covenant were designed to destroy idolatry and establish knowledge of their Creator.

### **The return from Babylon and the second covenant**

The return from Babylon, the re-building of the temple and the second covenant under Nehemiah was a new beginning which remained loyal and firm until the coming of Christ. Rosmini quotes from the book of Nehemiah when, after hearing of the sad state of things in Jerusalem, he wept, fasted and prayed for that day and said, *‘Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, “If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name.” They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name.’*<sup>18</sup> Zechariah calls the new Jerusalem the city of faith. *‘Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts shall be called the holy mountain.’*<sup>19</sup> And Ezekiel spoke to his fellow Babylonians in prophecy saying, *‘As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me out of the temple. He said to me: Mortal, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will reside among the people of Israel for ever. The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their whoring, and by the corpses of their kings at their death. When they placed their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they were defiling my holy name by their abominations that they committed; therefore I have consumed them in my anger. Now let them put away their idolatry and the corpses of their kings far from me, and I will reside among them for ever.’*<sup>20</sup> Even the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes was unable to shake their loyalty to the one true God and their expectation of a Messiah.

### **Summary of the periods during which instructive signs were given to the chosen people**

Rosmini sums up the periods during which instructive signs were given to the chosen people. He sees the first period lasting 400 years from the time of their revelation to the House of Jacob, when the chosen people remained in the society of the family, then came their escape from Egypt and their constitution as a nation at Mount Sinai. This lasted, says Rosmini, ten centuries, the first four of which were passed under the teaching of the Mosaic law and God’s providential events. The

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<sup>18</sup> *Neh* 1: 8–11.

<sup>19</sup> *Zech* 8: 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ezek* 43: 4–9.

remainder of the time started with David who was recognised as king of Judah 445 years after Mt Sinai. During this time their understanding was augmented through the revelations which God made to them especially in the Psalms, the Sapiential Books, and the Prophets. Rosmini gives what might have been two reasons why such a long period (four and a half centuries) elapsed between the revelation to the House of Jacob and establishing them in a sound doctrine of the oneness of God and worship of him and the coming of Christ. Firstly the period was needed for meditation and study on the revelation God had given them and so that they should put it into practice by their actions and secondly, so that other nations might benefit too. During this long period the chosen people were scattered among other nations through wars and deportations and enabled other nations to benefit from God's revelations to the Hebrews. Their loyalty to God in slavery was an occasion used by God for spreading his word through pagan nations. In the book of Tobit we read, '*Acknowledge him before the nations, O children of Israel; for he has scattered you among them. He has shown you his greatness even there. Exalt him in the presence of every living being. Because he is our Lord and he is our God; he is our Father and he is God forever*'.<sup>21</sup>

A further means which God used for making his revelation known was through the translation of the scriptures into Greek, namely the Septuagint version. Rosmini mentions the traditional theory, namely the translations by 72 Israelites and sent by Eleazer the High Priest at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus II, who was king of Egypt from 287–247 B.C.<sup>22</sup>

Thus in St Luke's Gospel the angel said to Zechariah that John the Baptist would '*make ready a people prepared for the Lord*'<sup>23</sup> And Jesus himself said, about the Gentiles, '*But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for the harvesting*'.<sup>24</sup>

### **Emblematic Signs**

Words are signs of ideas and represent them. If we do not understand the language, short of other signs or sensations, we would not know the ideas to which these signs referred. Sensations which give perceptions and then the first ideas of things are indispensable for the use of vocal language. Our mastery of a foreign language depends on our learning the words which correspond to the ideas we hold in common. If we are fluent in that language we shall also think in it, without consciously and laboriously connecting the word with the idea. Sensible perceptions

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<sup>21</sup> *Tob* 13: 3–4.

<sup>22</sup> The modern accepted theory is that owing to the loss of Hebrew in Egypt, people zealous for the law united to compile a Greek translation of the Pentateuch. This was about the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The Law, the Prophets and at least parts of the other books existed before 130 BC.

<sup>23</sup> *Lk* 1:17.

<sup>24</sup> *Jn* 4: 35. Rosmini quotes the Latin Vulgate, 'to prepare unto the Lord a *perfect* people'. (Italics mine).

were even more important for man to learn the divine language by which God communicated to him knowledge of himself and super-sensible things.

<b>Our Natural Development</b>
1. The formation of images and ideas by sensible perception of material things and our intellectual perception of them.
2. We then communicate our ideas by means of language. We can recall them to the mind of others, alter them, or divide them to form abstractions or make different combinations of them by judgements and reasonings.
3. We can find in images and ideas of material things analogies with supersensible and divine things.
4. These take place mainly by language.

As we have seen, the whole universe was an emblem of the spiritual universe. God so ordered the events and ups and downs of the external world and society that they would be a continual emblem of religious teaching gradually communicated to humanity.

It is clear that God could not have instructed us in divine things which do *not* fall under the senses by words only, but that they should be signs of material and sensible objects and then that these objects should be emblems of super-sensible things by analogy. This reasoning is mentioned by Dionysius the Areopagite and also St Thomas Aquinas (**Ref. 1**).

First and foremost material things are perceived by the external senses or feeling and secondly by the imagination, which recalls these perceptions, so all signs are reduced to perceptions and images. The two things which can be experienced by the senses are 1. external facts and 2. signs expressly instituted to represent things. These belong to the perceptions. As regards the imagination there can be either 1. visions (sleeping or waking) and 2. metaphorical discourse, e.g. parables, allegories and enigmatic language.

<b>Types of Emblematic Signs</b>
1. facts or external events.
2. Ceremonies.
3. Visions.
4. Enigmatic language.

Ref. 1.	Dionysius and St Thomas on our natural development
Dionysius the Areopagite	‘For it is not possible for our mind to be raised to that immaterial representation and contemplation of the Heavenly Hierarchies, without using the material guidance suitable to itself, accounting the visible beauties as reflections of the invisible comeliness (Ps. xix.); and the sweet odours of the senses as emblems of the spiritual distribution.’ <sup>25</sup>
St Thomas	‘As Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. i), the things of God cannot be manifested to men except by means of sensible similitudes. Now these similitudes move the soul more when they are not only expressed in words, but also offered to the senses. Wherefore the things of God are set forth in the Scriptures not only by similitudes expressed in words, as in the case of metaphorical expressions; but also by similitudes of things set before the eyes, which pertains to the ceremonial precepts.’ <sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, *De coelesti hierarchia*, cap. I. § III.

<sup>26</sup> ST, I II, XCIX, art. III, ad 3.



## Chapter 13

### The Sacraments before and after Christ

#### Preview

Rosmini once again draws our attention to the fact that the grace of the Old Testament was deiform grace, whereas that of the New Law was triform grace in which each person of the Blessed Trinity dwells in the soul, through a real perception and not simply an idea. This is a recurring theme right through this teaching of Rosmini. The persons of the Word and the Holy Spirit had not yet been given since the Incarnation had not yet occurred. However the Father prepared the chosen people for the coming of the Word. He then goes on to speak of the Sacraments of the New Covenant. This section is rich in literal and spiritual exegesis informed by his philosophy. The power of the Sacraments in the New Covenant is due to the communication of the Word empowering the material element, used as a vehicle of grace together with the internal action of the Holy Spirit. But the person of the Word had not been communicated to the people of the Old Covenant and therefore they could not have been incorporated into Christ in this way. Rosmini continues his theme of deiform and triform grace already explained. The power of the sacraments in the New Covenant springs from the real perception of the Trinity whereas that of the Old Covenant finds its origin in Christ's ideal action on them. The Sacraments of the Old Law were a foreshadowing of the real things to come. They did not contain grace. Power did not come from the Mosaic Law which simply taught the people what they ought to do. The action in them was a mental one, an initial perception only. They lived by signs and symbols as we have seen. They understood the law only in a superficial way and lacked the supernatural light which would come to them with the coming of Christ. Justification came from faith which was reckoned to them as righteousness in virtue of the coming Messiah. Rosmini once again has recourse to the letter to the Romans. The form of the Sacraments of the Old Law was faith in those who received and administered them, not grace as in the New Covenant.

#### How the sacraments of the New Law communicate grace

We said earlier that the grace of the Old Covenant was deiform whereas the grace of the New Covenant was triform. The principle of revelation by which grace was obtained under the Old Covenant was the Word Hidden; under the New Covenant it was the Word Manifested.

Now, every revelation is attributed to the Word by appropriation. The person of the Word did not of course act alone, all three persons acted together, but it means that there is a certain resemblance by analogy between the things revealed and the Word as

generated by the Father, as it were the intellect pronouncing an interior word. What was revealed in the Old Covenant was not sufficient to give to souls any perception of the Word. The divine Word was the principle of revelation in the same way as the word of a teacher is the principle of knowledge of the disciple, except that in the case of human teachers the words are distinct from the truths they convey. But if his words were the truths themselves so that he had the power of presenting them immediately to the minds of his pupils, then these truths would be the principle of the disciples' knowledge. The teacher could still be called the principle of the knowledge of the disciple since he has the power of communicating these truths. So in the Old Covenant the truths conveyed to the spirit of human beings was the Word and the Master who conveyed the truths was God the Father.

In this first state the aim of the Father was to infuse into minds an outline of the Word in preparation for the perfect image of the Word.

'The term of this internal operation, therefore, was the Word, but in the beginning it was the Father. For since it is the Father who generates and sends from himself the Word, to him also belongs the designing in minds the first outlines, as it were, of the Word himself. This is what Christ himself says when he affirms that it is the Father who draws men to him "*No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me.*"<sup>1</sup> He is not content to say simply "the Father" but he says "the Father who sent me" that is to say "who has generated me and sent me also into minds, by that same act by which he has generated me"; in which words he accurately expresses the mode by which the Father draws men to the Word, which is that act of sending the Word himself and of impressing the outline of the Word on their intelligence."<sup>2</sup>

This, then, is a preparation for the reception of the Word in those who do not yet possess him. The Word acts in them as soon as he is formed in them. St Paul says to his listeners, '*My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.*'<sup>3</sup>

In this second state the Father has sent the Word into the world through the Incarnation, '*My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.*'<sup>4</sup> Once the Word had come the Father gave him the labour of the work of completing human salvation. Jesus said, '*I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.*'<sup>5</sup>

The Father was like one who speaks without being seen; '*Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.*'<sup>6</sup> They hear from the Father meaning that they perceive the outlines of the Word in their spirit without knowing the principle that

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<sup>1</sup> *Jn* 6: 44.

<sup>2</sup> *AS*, lib. IV, I, cap. VII, sez. I, art. I, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> *Gal* 4: 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Jn* 4: 34.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 17: 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 6: 45.

communicates them. Prophecy had declared that no one should know where Christ would come from and Jesus says, '*Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father.*'<sup>7</sup> In order that human beings should be sanctified it was necessary for the Word to become incarnate and to communicate to the human spirit through the person's senses. Thus external revelation completed internal revelation.

If the humanity of Christ had always been present to human beings there would have been no need for the sacraments. The sight of his most sacred humanity, the contact with him, were all sensible means through which we might have received grace. The virtue which went out of him healed not only bodies but also souls. He speaks about healing '*a man's whole body on the Sabbath*'<sup>8</sup>. His words were '*spirit and life*'<sup>9</sup>. He said to his disciples, '*You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.*'<sup>10</sup> The sight of his sacred humanity raised the soul to contemplate the Word and through him, the Father. He said to Philip, '*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*'<sup>11</sup> But after his Ascension it was necessary that he leave sensible signs since he would no longer be present to the senses. Christ would be perfectly glorified and if he was made manifest to men like this they would already be in paradise. But they needed to be perfected by faith. These means were the sacraments. Jesus said '*Holy Father while I was with them...I protected them in your name.*' And he adds, '*sanctify them in the truth.*'<sup>12</sup> He attributes the sanctifying effect of the sacraments to his Father, the original source of the Holy Spirit and as he proceeds through the Son he says '*sanctify them in the truth*' which is the same as '*sanctify them in your Son*' for he says '*I am the truth.*'<sup>13</sup>

The most eminent of the Sacraments is, of course, the Holy Eucharist. By this means Christ remains in a hidden manner on the earth while at the same time he is manifest in glory in heaven.

Rosmini holds the traditional view that Christ prescribed the words, the material and the sacred rites, to which he added his sanctifying power. He quotes St Thomas.

'A sacrament in causing grace works after the manner of an instrument. Now an instrument is twofold. The one, separate, as a stick, for instance; the other, united, as a hand. Moreover, the separate instrument is moved by means of the united instrument, as a stick by the hand. Now the principal efficient cause of grace is God Himself, in comparison with whom Christ's humanity is as a united instrument, whereas the sacrament is as a separate instrument. Consequently, the saving power must needs be derived by the sacraments from Christ's Godhead through His humanity.'<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jn v. 46.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 23.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 63.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 15: 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 14: 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 17: 12; 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 14: 6.

<sup>14</sup> ST, III, LXII, art. V.

How does the humanity of Christ communicate virtue to the matter of the sacraments? We know he actually touched some of the materials, e.g. water, oil to which he added the sanctifying power issuing from his body. Rosmini quotes St John Chrysostom. It is not absurd to believe that at the time the sacrament is conferred the humanity of Christ is present in contact with the matter of the sacraments, after all we believe that at the words of the priest in the Holy Eucharist the bread and wine become the body and blood of the Lord. St Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of this **(Ref. 1)**. As regards the sacraments of Orders, Reconciliation and Matrimony it is the soul of Jesus Christ which is the immediate agent because these sacraments are conferred by judiciary or priestly power, or finally by an act of love. Christ as judge, Christ as priest, Christ as spouse.

The external part of the Sacraments of the New Law is the matter but the invisible and internal part is the Holy Spirit, the true form of the sacraments. *‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born from above’*.<sup>15</sup> The principal and active part is the work of the Holy Spirit, *‘What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit’*.<sup>16</sup> But these two parts external and internal form one sole sacrament.

St Thomas says, ‘there is nothing to hinder an instrumental spiritual power from being in a body, in so far as a body can be moved by a particular spiritual substance so as to produce a particular spiritual effect; thus in the very voice which is perceived by the senses there is a certain spiritual power, inasmuch as it proceeds from a mental concept, of arousing the mind of the hearer. It is in this way that a spiritual power is in the sacraments, inasmuch as they are ordained by God unto the production of a spiritual effect.’<sup>17</sup>

Put simply, human speech is the product of two causes, the human intelligence and the human voice; so the sacraments are a product of internal operation of the spirit and the external human act.<sup>18</sup> Rosmini quotes St Augustine **(Ref. 2)**. These two objects do not simply act simultaneously without influencing each other. St Paul says, *‘Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word...’*<sup>19</sup> Christ is acting intrinsically with the washing of water, the instrument.

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<sup>15</sup> *Jn* 3: 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> ST, III, LXII, art. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Rosmini maintains that the external part of the sacrament considered on its own can be called the instrumental and physical cause acting indirectly to produce the effect; but the sacrament considered as a whole, i.e. taken together with internal action of the Spirit, is the direct physical cause of the effect.

<sup>19</sup> *Eph* 5: 25–26.

The holy Fathers frequently consider the sacraments in this totality; and make use of various similitudes in order to make clear the conjunction there is of the internal and spiritual element and the external and material element. Some liken this union to that of the heat with the water when it is heated. We find the comparison used by St. Cyril of Alexandria. Others very appropriately compare the union of the divine power with the matter of the sacraments to the intimate union of the soul with the body; St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks in this sense of the mode by which a material object may operate a spiritual effect on the soul. He says it is as inexplicable as generation in which the soul is added to matter (**Ref. 3**).<sup>20</sup>

Rosmini suggests that the matter sanctified by the form acts on a person's vital principle of life, but this action on the vital principle is not necessarily adverted to. This is the reason why actual contact is necessary in the sacraments of the Eucharist, baptism, confirmation and the anointing of the sick. A modification of human nature takes place. In order that we have a perception of God, all that is needed is that we should receive the faculty of perceiving him, just as man perceives the light through the faculty of sight. The new life by which man is made capable of seeing God would seem to subsist in man in a way analogous to that by which intelligence begins in man, the faculty of the vision of initial being is produced in the act of generation. In the same way the animality comes to be organised in man by means of carnal generation, so that it simultaneously receives the light of intelligence. In the same way, since the divine light or rather God himself is united with the humanity of Christ, it is not surprising that on the contact of the divine flesh with that of human beings, this divine light is also communicated, that is, human beings receive the supernatural power of the vision of God. Rosmini draws a simile with a piece of iron which gets hot if it comes into contact with a heated body, or gets magnetised by another magnetised piece. Jesus said, speaking of his Ascension into Heaven, '*In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live*'.<sup>21</sup> In other words his disciples will see him with the supernatural eyes of faith. But the world has not the life necessary for the supernatural vision which the Apostles possessed, namely, the life of Christ. From a supernatural life there arises a supernatural power of vision.

In the case of the sacrament of Reconciliation the essential end is the forgiveness of sins which comes about through the pronouncement of the priest's words of absolution. The only other requirement is the right dispositions of the penitent. The essential end of Holy Orders is the power over the real and mystical body of Christ and not to heal or directly benefit the person ordained. This power comes from the ordaining bishop. Finally the end of the sacrament of Matrimony is to sanctify the love which unites a man and a woman together. Christ communicates his love to those baptised couples who observe all that the Church has established that it may be

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<sup>20</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. V, footnote p. 144.

<sup>21</sup> *Jn* 14: 19.

recognised as a sacrament. Part of this teaching is that the couple who marry each other are the ministers of the sacrament. The Church sees in such marriages the image of her union with Christ and he communicates the grace of his love.

**The sacraments of the Old Covenant did not possess the power of those of the New Covenant.**

The grace of the New Covenant, that is, triform grace, the perception of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is communicated to us by the Word through whom alone we can know the Father and receive the Spirit. The Word communicates himself to us through his humanity full of grace and power, not just because totally ruled by God, but also because of his sufferings through which he paid the debt of our redemption and merited to do everything that we needed.

St Thomas says, 'Christ's Passion, according as it is compared with His Godhead, operates in an efficient manner: but in so far as it is compared with the will of Christ's soul it acts in a meritorious manner: considered as being within Christ's very flesh, it acts by way of satisfaction, inasmuch as we are liberated by it from the debt of punishment; while inasmuch as we are freed from the servitude of guilt, it acts by way of redemption: but in so far as we are reconciled with God it acts by way of sacrifice...' <sup>22</sup>

In St John's Gospel Jesus says, '*As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*' <sup>23</sup> Rosmini says that in this translation 'all whom thou hast given him' taken literally would mean every object placed within the power of Christ, including the material elements of the sacraments. Eternal life is knowledge of the Father and the Word. Elsewhere Jesus says, quoting Deuteronomy, '*One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*' <sup>24</sup> This agrees with the other passage that every material object if animated by the Word is sufficient to give eternal life. 'Now this communication of virtue and sanctity, which passes to those who receive the sacraments and which pass from the Word in that humanity assumed by him, through sensible things which are the matter of the sacraments when certain words are spoken and acts performed, are all *real* actions which could in no way have taken place before the real incarnation of Jesus Christ.' <sup>25</sup> The people of the Old Covenant could never incorporate themselves into Christ in this way.

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<sup>22</sup> ST, III, XLVIII, art. VI, ad 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Jn* 17: 2–3 [Douai].

<sup>24</sup> *Mt* 4: 4.

<sup>25</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. VII, p. 149.

## **The power in the sacraments of the Old Covenant**

So the sacraments of the New Covenant act in human beings through a real and necessary action. But the principle of *natural* morality consists in an *idea* according to which the will operates. The principle of *supernatural* religion consists in a *perception* which moves us prior to any deliberation of the will. The grace of the sacraments is a principle anterior to the will. It operates in the essence of the soul before it acts on the powers of the soul. St Paul warns his converts not to glory in their own work which will not save them but in the power of Christ, in other words they cannot be saved by a moral principle but by the religious principle.

*‘May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!’*<sup>26</sup> Again in his letter to the Romans, Paul says, *‘For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.’*<sup>27</sup> All have sinned and are incapable of observing justice. *‘There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one.’*<sup>28</sup> Human beings are saved through God’s own justice infused through the sacraments and which has faith for its basis. *‘The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, (not through their own merits) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed, (The merit of whose blood is applied to the sacraments.)... For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.’*<sup>29</sup> We should note that St Paul speaks of faith given by the sacraments, not faith alone. The gift of justification is wholly gratuitous. Thus in the letter to the Colossians we read, *‘when you were buried with him in baptism you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead’*.<sup>30</sup>

So no real action could issue from the sacraments of the Old Law, people were not saved by the real action of Christ on them but rather in the order of ideas, through his ideal action on them. Christ existed in their minds and acted on them in this way.

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<sup>26</sup> *Gal* 6: 14–15.

<sup>27</sup> *Rom* 3: 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–25; 28. Words in brackets are Rosmini’s.

<sup>30</sup> *Col* 2: 12. The Greek says, *‘by the faith of the energy of God in baptism by which Christ rose from the dead’*.

If we compare the nature of these two orders we can see the difference in the power of these old and new sacraments. The old order was ideal, the first element of the real order is the completion and perfection of the ideal order, so the new sacraments are the completion and perfection of the old ones. The idea is the type and exemplar of the thing, so the old sacraments were representations of the real things; they were shadows of things to come; the body casting this shadow was the body of Christ. *‘These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ’*<sup>31</sup> **(Ref. 4)**. Rosmini quotes the Fathers regarding these scriptural texts.

The ancient sacraments exerted no action on the soul and therefore could not contain grace. In John’s Gospel we read, *‘The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’*.<sup>32</sup> Rosmini says that the word ‘came’ indicates the energy and efficacy of grace. This agrees with what Pope Eugenius IV wrote to the Armenians **(Ref. 5)**. The sacraments of the Old Law also aroused faith in the promises of the future Messiah and the certain hope of the redeemer. The first letter of St Peter says, *‘Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated, when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory’*.<sup>33</sup> The author of the letter to the Hebrews shows that all the ancient Fathers received their salvation and virtue from faith, that Christ was the author of this and the perfecter of it. *‘Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith’*,<sup>34</sup> that is to say, Jesus existed in the minds of human beings and in their faith and so directed their lives.

Salvation, then, came from faith in Christ. Rosmini quotes liberally from the letter of St Paul to the Romans in explaining this. But first, a quote from St Thomas.

‘We cannot say that the ancient sacraments had virtue to confer justifying grace or the passion of Christ... For the passion of Christ is united to us by two ways, that of faith and of the sacraments; but these two ways are very different. The union by way of faith is effected by an act of the soul, and that by way of the sacraments by means of exterior things. Now there is nothing to hinder that which is posterior in time from moving even before existing (in reality) in as much as it precedes in the act of the soul (viz. in as much as it is *ideally* conceived) and thus the end being apprehended and desired moves the agent, although it is only *realised* later. But that which is not yet in the nature of things does not move (man) in the way that the use of exterior things moves him (viz. as he is moved by *real* things) and thus the efficient cause cannot be posterior to the effect as the final cause can be. Hence it

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<sup>31</sup> *Col* 2: 17

<sup>32</sup> *Jn* 1: 17.

<sup>33</sup> *1 Pet* 1: 10–11.

<sup>34</sup> *Heb* 12: 1–2.



is clear that the passion of Christ which is the cause of the justification of man is calculated to convey the virtue of justification to the sacraments of the New Law but not to those of the Old Law. Nevertheless the ancient Fathers were justified as we are by faith in the passion of Christ.<sup>35</sup> Now if faith under the Old Covenant was the principle of justification with the sacraments which were signs of their faith, we can see how justification among the Gentiles might follow by their faith.<sup>36</sup>

St Paul says, *'We say, "Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness." How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.'*<sup>37</sup> To be effective and operative this faith had to be accompanied by obedience, so St James says, *'Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works.'*<sup>38</sup> So the sacraments of the Old Law justified man not through their own power but through the faith of those who received them. This is why the sacraments are sometimes looked on as useless if not accompanied by faith, and without this they were not acceptable to God.

### **The salvation and perfection of those living under the Old Covenant**

The salvation and perfection of human beings is beyond their merely natural powers. St Paul points this out in his letter to the Romans chapters 1 and 2 where he outlines the effects of sin and the corruption of man due to it.

The Mosaic Law did not suffice for the salvation of man because it only gave him the knowledge of what he ought to do but not the power to perform it. Since neither this Law nor the natural powers of man avail for his salvation, there must be another principle required.

St Paul says that this is *'the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek'*.<sup>39</sup> It is due to the gratuitous mercy of God. 'It is not justice that is able to save man, but the gratuitous mercy of God who saves even his enemies. Therefore St. Paul says that *'apart from law the righteousness of God has been disclosed'* (namely his holy mercy ) that this *'righteousness of God* (and not that of man) is manifested by faith in Jesus Christ (which alone can save)... *since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*' which shines forth in a mercy which is so prevenient. He concludes, *'they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus'* — so that man can glorify in nothing.<sup>40</sup> He brings

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<sup>35</sup> ST, III, LXII, art. VI. Cf. AS, *Ibid*, art. IX, p. 154.

<sup>36</sup> Gen, 15: 6. ST, III, art. LXII, art. VI.

<sup>37</sup> Rom 4: 10–11.

<sup>38</sup> Jas 2: 21–22.

<sup>39</sup> Rom 1: 16.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 21–27.

forward the example of Abraham, whose justification also came from a gratuitous mercy in consequence of his faith, not through a justice due to his own works. *‘For what does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness”’.*<sup>41</sup> From this expression St. Paul argues that Abraham was justified by faith, not because he had merited this according to strict justice but by a gift, the grace of God: because the Scripture says *‘it was reckoned to him as righteousness’* by which is signified that this justification was not strictly due from God. *‘Now to one who works (says the Apostle), wages are not reckoned as a gift, but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness’.*<sup>42</sup> This is that blessedness which David commends in those whose sins are remitted.<sup>43</sup> They were guilty but yet they are blessed because God has pardoned them and saved them without their merit, of his own power. If the justification of Abraham had been due to him of justice, the Scripture would have ascribed it to his own good works; but it does not do so; but ascribed all to his faith, and not to his works; it could therefore have only been gratuitous. *‘He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit’.*<sup>44</sup>

St Paul says *‘if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God’.*<sup>45</sup> He would have satisfied his fellow men who judge according to natural reason but he would not have satisfied God who judges according to the Gospel law. *‘Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.’*<sup>46</sup> There is no way of salvation except through the action of God. It was faith that was reckoned as virtue to Abraham.<sup>47</sup>

All this does not mean that the human will is excluded thereby excluding good works. But the power of God strengthens the will, making it capable of fulfilling the law. It is important to note that in the Old Testament God did not the grant the chosen people the real communication of himself but through effects or gifts. God communicated himself completely and substantially in the Incarnation. However the incarnate God was revealed to those of the Old Testament in an ideal manner vivified

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<sup>41</sup> *Rom* 4: 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 4–5.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 6–8.

<sup>44</sup> *Titus* 3: 5. *AS*, *ibid.*, art X, pp. 159–160.

<sup>45</sup> *Rom* 4: 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 27–30.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 3.

by grace. The real power of grace gave them an *initial* perception of Christ; what Rosmini calls an idea-perception. This was the matter of the supernatural faith of the Old Testament.<sup>48</sup> This whole action of God was a *mental* one, but in the New Covenant he does not operate by way of the mind only but by sensible nature because the Word became flesh and his sacred humanity became the instrument acting on our corporeal nature. '*Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death*'.<sup>49</sup> The perception given to those of the Old Testament can be called *deiform* not because of the negative idea but by the divine force which accompanied it. It was an effect or gift of the Word, but not the Word himself. But in the New Covenant God-incarnate was communicated really and fully to human nature and we perceive him in his real term and nature; we have an internal positive representation or intuition of God.<sup>50</sup>

### **Signs and symbols in the Old and New Covenants**

Since God-incarnate was only indicated before the coming of Christ it means that the people knew him only by means of others things which they perceived which served as symbols or signs. This negative idea could not exist without them. Under the New Covenant, however, we have a *perception* of the God-man and therefore a *positive* idea, without the need of symbols. But the latter are needed for that part of our knowledge of the divine things which are not acquired by grace but solely when we see God face to face, that is, in glory. So St Paul says, '*But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ... For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known*'.<sup>51</sup> There are therefore three states of our need for instructive and indicative symbols: a) the state in which we shall perceive reality in all its entirety, then symbols will cease, the time of perception only; b) the state in which we perceive the real partly and do not perceive it partly. In this state there is no need for signs for the part which we really perceive, but only for that part which is imperceptible; this is the state of the New Covenant. St Paul says in relation to this state '*For we know only in part and we prophesy only in part*', and c) the state of the people of the Old Covenant, the days of symbols and indications of which St Peter

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<sup>48</sup> Rosmini speaks here of the perception given in the Old Covenant as a divine energy given to the negative idea.

<sup>49</sup> *Heb* 2: 14–15.

<sup>50</sup> This seems to contradict Rosmini's teaching that we cannot have a positive idea of God in this life. However he appears to unite this positive idea with the perception we have of God as the 'all good', or 'all being'. In the next section he makes the distinction between what we can perceive through grace in this life and that which we shall perceive only in glory. So it does not seem that we can identify it with the positive ideas we experience in our perception of finite and contingent beings.

<sup>51</sup> 1 *Cor* 13: 8–12.

speaks, where the light shines in a dark place when the sun had not yet risen and there was only the light of prophecy: *'You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.'*<sup>52</sup>

People therefore under the Old Covenant were necessarily bound to and burdened by a multitude of practices and external and material symbols, because without them they could not be sustained and mentally shed light on the object of their faith. This condition was what the Scriptures themselves call an insupportable yet necessary yoke.

All that was needed in order to make useless the whole of this heap of observances, was the increase of a single light within their minds, so that that servile condition should no longer be necessary. All that was needed was for God to communicate *himself* really to us, which was done by the Word in becoming incarnate.

Hence comes the *freedom* of the Christian; and since the word is the substantial Truth, therefore he says *"the truth shall make you free"*.<sup>53</sup> And once again *"So if the Son makes you free you shall be free indeed"*.<sup>54</sup>

But under the New Covenant, signs have the role of becoming channels of the real action which the Word exerts upon us and by which he communicates himself to us; they impart a real power of communicating with God.

### **Shadows and realities**

In the Old Law there were indications of things to come. The indications were material, external and natural things. But they indicated spiritual things which were mainly interior and supernatural. St Paul draws a distinction between the letter and the spirit of the law: the letter was the indications, these had to be grasped by the spirit. The spiritual thing, the ultimate end of the law, remained in obscurity and in shadow. The chosen people were not given the internal light which would have revealed the reality. So the Hebrews did not fully understand the law in its profound and spiritual truth but only in a superficial way. Christ was the light that revealed the Scriptures. On the road to Emmaus he said to the two disciples: *"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"* Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.<sup>55</sup> And St Peter says, that the ancient prophets did not express the divine revelations for themselves but for the Christians who could fully understand them after the coming of the Holy Spirit: *'It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look.'*<sup>56</sup> In his letter to the Romans St Paul says that the

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<sup>52</sup> 2 Pet 1: 19.

<sup>53</sup> Jn 8: 32.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 8: 36. AS, lib. IV, cap. VII, art. X, p. 169.

<sup>55</sup> Lk 24: 25–27.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Pet 1: 12.

Hebrews were ignorant of Christ and therefore of the end and spirit of the law.<sup>57</sup> He goes on to say that since the Old Law lacked the light of the Holy Spirit and left man in obscurity, presenting to him simply precepts of external observances it was unable to defend him with any external sanction from interior sins which God alone sees and punishes. Although it prohibited bad desires it hadn't the force to cause them to avoid them.<sup>58</sup> He also says that God has made him a minister of the New Covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit: '*for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life*'.<sup>59</sup> Christ called the Pharisees who attended to the letter of the law, '*blind guides of the blind*'.<sup>60</sup>

### **Justification under the Old Law and under the New Law**

If people were reconciled with God only when Christ died, how is it that passages of Scripture say Abraham and others were justified? The answer to this is that there were two types of justification, that of the Old Covenant and that of the New. St James says: '*Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?*'<sup>61</sup> He is speaking of the justification of the Old Covenant. When St Paul says that Jesus '*was raised for our justification*'<sup>62</sup> and that we are justified through Christ, he is speaking of the justification of the New Covenant: '*Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*'<sup>63</sup> He goes on to speak as if they had not been justified before, as if the justification of the Old Covenant was nothing. The mass of precepts and regulations of the Mosaic Law had a supernatural end without manifesting this; this was their justification. It proceeded not from the works of the Law but from faith.

It was the feeling or sentiment of believing and confessing themselves sinners, incapable by *their own strength* ever to attain justification; and nevertheless of nourishing in their souls the certain hope of being saved, not through their own merits but gratuitously by Christ who was to come. They had to believe in Christ who justifies the sinner as St. Paul says '*and to one who does not work but him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.*'<sup>64</sup> This profound act of humility, this abandonment into the hands of God, this confidence in his goodness and power of Christ was a thing so great in the eyes of God that he could not abandon men, sinners though they were, who had recourse to him who placed all their confidence in him. In this way not being abandoned by God constituted the justification of these ancient faithful so that *their*

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<sup>57</sup> *Rom* 10: 2–4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 7: 7–8.

<sup>59</sup> *2 Cor* 3: 6.

<sup>60</sup> *Mt* 15: 24.

<sup>61</sup> *Jas* 2: 21.

<sup>62</sup> *Rom*, 4: 25.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 5: 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 4: 5.

*will was rectified*, although the payment of the debt *was suspended* which could be paid by Christ alone.<sup>65</sup>

Since therefore this justification was based on firm expectation of that Christ who justifies by communicating himself to human beings, it is clear that in comparison with the justification of Christians who have inherent within them 'life', namely Christ, who in Scripture is called '*the life*' (Jn 14: 6) it is not that justification which opened to those just men the gate of heaven, since this could be opened only by Christ, after the debt of sin had been paid by him. Therefore the Sacred Scriptures declare that Christ by his death really imparted salvation and justification even to the ancient patriarchs.<sup>66</sup>

The effects of this justification were:

- a) that there still remained a spirit of fear and servitude because they had not received the spirit of sonship, unlike those of the New Covenant. '*For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!"*';<sup>67</sup> because those of the New Covenant had received the Holy Spirit after Christ's Ascension into heaven. '*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*'<sup>68</sup> The condition of those living in the days of the Old Covenant was characterised by ignorance and darkness.
- b) The reign of sin was not entirely destroyed. Although the payment of the debt of eternal punishment was suspended it was not yet cancelled. The people of the Old Covenant, therefore, were still subjected to the servitude of sin. St Paul said to the converted Hebrews: '*For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace*'.<sup>69</sup> The *domination* of sin does not however imply that these holy people were not truly justified. They did have a rectitude of will and of faith, nevertheless they were excluded from eternal life until the coming of the Redeemer. Justification under the Old Law did not free them entirely from sin but this needed to be completed and perfected by the real incarnation and death of Jesus Christ.
- c) The third characteristic was that of faith in being saved through whatever means God had provided. This, in effect, was faith in Christ who was to come. So, St Paul said concerning faith, '*Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made...*'<sup>70</sup>. And again, '*Christ redeemed us*

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<sup>65</sup> 'St. Paul starting from this principle, 'that the ancients could find their way to justification and salvation only by an act of humility and of faith, without any merit on their part', concludes that this salvation and justification was possible for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews because men's sins are in this way no hindrance to the justification of man, since such justification comes simply from the gratuitous mercy of God. *Rom* 4: 9–23.' *AS, ibid.*, p. 178, footnote.

<sup>66</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. X, pp. 178–9.

<sup>67</sup> *Rom* 8: 15.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 14.

<sup>70</sup> *Gal* 3: 19.

*from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us... that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.... Now the promises were made to Abraham and his offspring... but the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*<sup>71</sup>

### **The effect of the sacraments of the Old Law**

Just as in the Sacraments of the New Law the things, actions and words are the *material part* of the sacraments and the *formal part* is grace, so under the Old Law it is *faith* in those who receive and administer them instead of *grace* that constitutes the *form* of those sacraments. From this faith arose justification in proportion to this faith. The sacraments vivified by faith were the simultaneous cause of justification. This justification comprised the suspension of the debt owed to sin and the rectification of the will. The latter was due to faith, the former was due to the sacrament vivified by faith. The will thus was pointed in the right direction but still had to become more perfect. For this reason the just who died did not see God immediately. So the effect of the Sacraments of the Old Law was not a commencement of future glory, as St Thomas and the Fathers called the New Law.<sup>72</sup> The effect they produced was simply to dispose people for the immediate full *deiform and triform union*. The sacraments of the New Law on the other hand give *life* which consists in the perception of God.

I would observe (there) in passing another difference between the ancient sacraments and those of Christ which was commonly noted by the holy fathers. In the sacraments of Moses the rite was established but not the words, as in the sacraments of Christ that were to accompany this rite. Moreover the words in the sacraments of Christ are the form or operative element which gives virtue to the matter. This difference was very appropriate, the reason being that revelation and faith under the Old Covenant were implicit and imperfect; in the New Covenant on the contrary they were explicit and perfect; and the nature of the sacraments had to be in harmony with that of the faith and revelation. We must also consider that a rite by itself without the addition of words is in truth an enigma whose meaning is obscure and doubtful. The words on the contrary which have a proper and clear sense, explain the enigma, and throw clear light on its meaning. Now under the Old Covenant the truth believed was proposed obscurely and involved in enigmas; but under the New Covenant the truth itself is given; it was therefore fitting that words should be added which should clear up all that was obscure and that a force should come from them for the sanctification of souls, signifying thereby that all sanctity in the New Covenant proceeds from the revelation and faith in the Word manifested to man, and if, together with

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<sup>71</sup> *Gal* 3: 13, 14, 16, 22.

<sup>72</sup> ST, I II, CII, art. IV.

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the words, the enigma of the rite is retained. This is because, as St. Thomas says, following in the footsteps of the holy Fathers, ‘As Dionysius says (Eccl. Hier. v), the state of the New\_Law is between the state of the Old Law, whose figures are fulfilled in the New, and the state of glory, in which all truth will be openly and perfectly revealed.’<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> ST, III, LXI, art. IV, ad 1. *AS, ibid.*, cap. VII, sez. II, art. VIII, p. 200, footnote.



<b>Ref. 1.</b>	<b>Christ's sanctifying power in the Sacraments</b>
John Chrysostom	"The water of baptism would not ever be able to take away the sins of believers if it were not sanctified by the touch of the Lord." <sup>74</sup>
Cyril of Jerusalem	"St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his third Mystagogic Catechism says: "In the same way that the eucharistic bread, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer common bread, but the body of Christ; so also this oil after it has been consecrated, is no longer common oil but the chrism of Christ". <sup>75</sup>
<b>Ref. 2.</b>	<b>Augustine speaks about the internal act of the Spirit and the matter of the sacrament.</b>
	"By the water, therefore, which holds forth the sacrament of grace in its outward form, and by the Spirit who bestows the benefit of grace in its inward power". <sup>76</sup>
<b>Ref. 3.</b>	<b>The Fathers speak about the transforming of the baptismal water by the Holy Spirit</b>
Cyril of Alexandria	"As the water in a vessel placed on the fire acquires the force of the fire; so that material water, by the efficacy of the Spirit is transformed into a certain divine ineffable force, sanctifying all those on whom it is poured." <sup>77</sup>
Gregory of Nyssa	"Now by a similar train of reasoning, water also, though it is nothing else than water, renews the man to spiritual regeneration, when the grace from above hallows it. And if any one answers me again by raising a difficulty, with his questions and doubts, continually asking and inquiring how water and the sacramental act that is performed therein regenerate, I most justly reply to him, "Show me the mode of that generation which is after the flesh, and I will explain to you the power of regeneration in the soul." <sup>78</sup>
<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>Basil on Col. 1: 17</b>
Basil	St. Basil goes so far as to say that the ancient sacraments had nothing with the new except the name. 'what comparison between washings and washings, which have nothing common but the name, while in fact the difference between them is as great as that between the sign of truth and truth itself, between shadows or images and real subsistence.' <sup>79</sup>

<sup>74</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Joannem Homiliae*, homil. XXV.

<sup>75</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogica*, III, cap. III.

<sup>76</sup> Augustine, *Ep. Ad Bonifacium*, XXIII (XCVIII).

<sup>77</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, lib. II.

<sup>78</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio in baptismum Christi*.

<sup>79</sup> Basil, *Lib. de Spir. Sanct.* 19.

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Ref. 5.	The Fathers on John 1: 17
Augustine	‘The law itself, by being fulfilled, becomes grace and truth through Jesus Christ’... <sup>80</sup> And again, ‘the sacraments are not all the same, because some sacraments confer salvation, others promise the Saviour. The sacraments of the New Covenant confer salvation, these of the Old Covenant promised the Saviour’. <sup>81</sup>
Pope Eugenius IV	‘Those sacraments (of the Old Law) did not cause grace; but only prefigured and showed that it would be given through the passion and death of Christ; but our sacraments both contain grace and confer it on worthy recipients’. <sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Augustine, *Contra. Faustum Manichaeum*, lib. XVII, cap. VI.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. XIX, cap. 13.

<sup>82</sup> Eugene IV, in decreto. seu instructione Armenorum, , edita 1439 § 9.

## Chapter 14

### The Sacraments of the Old Covenant

#### Preview

Before the fall our first parents gave God fitting worship. After the fall, humanity experienced the evil which had overtaken it and this is depicted by the Flood during which only a faithful remnant remained. It is also the occasion of the first covenant between God and human beings. Rosmini reiterates that God's revelation is partly made through instructive signs among which are the sacraments. Those of the Old Covenant were, Circumcision, The Paschal Lamb, Priestly Consecration, Food Offerings and Legal Purification. Rosmini follows St Thomas closely in this section.

As creatures of God we are made for his honour and glory. We are therefore ordained for the service of God. The twofold commandment of charity imposes the duty of loving the Lord with all our strength and therefore we should be wholly consecrated to divine worship. This has to be preferred above all else, even our lives. This is the origin of sacrifice, except that God did not demand human lives in Old Testament worship and was content with the offering of the first fruits of man's labour, both animals and the fruits of the earth. The most perfect sacrifice is that of the New Covenant, Christ himself, who continues to renew his sacrifice on our altars in the Eucharist. Every Christian is asked to follow Christ. The perfection of morality implies that every Christian should be in some sense a priest.

In the state of innocence man gave God perfect and fitting worship and he was disposed to sacrifice himself for God should this ever be necessary. In man's fallen state when his mind became obscured by sin and his heart corrupted he became ignorant of this duty. He forgot all that he owed to God and so to renew his communication with God a positive contract was required to remind him that he existed only for the worship and honour of God. Furthermore God had made known to him that he was angry with him. A renewal of the Covenant between God and his creature could only be effected by an act of gratuitous divine mercy. This is shown clearly in the first express covenant between God and man as a result of the flood which, the Bible tells us, was God's punishment on evil humanity. The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of its heart was continually evil. *'And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created — people together with animals and creeping things and birds*

of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favour in the sight of the LORD.<sup>1</sup>

After the flood had subsided God made a Covenant with Noah and said: ‘I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done....As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth’. God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”<sup>2</sup> This sign was a perpetual memorial of the Covenant God had made with Noah.

As we saw earlier, revelation was made partly by the means of instructive signs among which were the sacraments. Permanent signs were established as memorials of the positive covenants that had been made between God and man. Some of these permanent signs were religious ceremonies, such were the sacraments.

St. Thomas classifies the things which have reference to the worship as follows 1) *sacrifices* in which the worship of God consists; 2) *instruments of worship and sacred things*, such as the tabernacle, the sacred vessels and other utensils that were employed in the temple; 3) *the dedication of persons to the divine worship* including sacraments; 4) *the places and the observances* regulating the manner of life of those who are dedicated to the service of God and distinguishing them from others.

“The ceremonial precepts are ordained to the Divine worship. Now in this worship we may consider the worship itself, the worshippers, and the instruments of worship. The worship consists specially in “sacrifices,” which are offered up in honour of God. The instruments of worship refer to the “sacred things,” such as the tabernacle, the vessels and so forth. With regard to the worshippers two points may be considered. The first point is their preparation for Divine worship, which is effected by a sort of consecration either of the people or of the ministers; and to this the “sacraments” refer. The second point is their particular mode of life, whereby they are distinguished from those who do not worship God: and to this pertain the “observances,” for instance, in matters of food, clothing, and so forth.”<sup>3</sup>... “The sacraments are, properly speaking, things applied to the worshippers of God for their consecration so as, in some way, to depute them to the worship of God.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gen 6: 5–8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 8: 21; 9: 9–13.

<sup>3</sup> ST, I II, CI, art. IV.

<sup>4</sup> ST, I II, CII, art. V.

As we see above, St. Thomas understands sacraments to be actions which dedicate the person to the worship of God. In other words they are certain external signs which constitute the Covenant by which man consecrates himself to God and God promises his protection to humanity.

There are two reasons for a positive Covenant between God and man, the ignorance of man by which he knows only in a languid way his relation with his Creator and man's state of sin, in which he has need for God to positively draw near him.

St Thomas says, 'The sacraments of the Church were instituted for a twofold purpose: namely, in order to perfect man in things pertaining to the worship of God according to the religion of Christian life, and to be a remedy against the defects caused by sin.'<sup>5</sup>

Before the call of Abraham, men offered sacrifices to God for the forgiveness of sins but these sacrifices were not sacraments because they were not signs of any covenant between God and man, but just a religious act to obtain the divine favour. It seems likely that a rite was introduced for the consecration of priests who would have firstly been fathers of families, there being just a domestic society at the time. But later when tribes were formed, some of the most notable men would be chosen such as a king who would be both a leader and a priest, for example Melchizedek.<sup>6</sup> Judging from the book of Exodus there were other priests prior to the institution of the Levitical priesthood. '*Even the priests who approach the Lord must consecrate themselves or the Lord will break out against them*'.<sup>7</sup> External purifications and expiations may have belonged to those ancient sacraments. But we do not find in Sacred Scripture any positive divine institution of these sacred ceremonies which is necessary for sacraments properly so-called. They would have been instituted by man out of religious sentiment, although they might have been divine by reason of the instinct of the Holy Spirit which suggested them to the saints of the Old Covenant.

St Thomas says, 'Since, however, even before the Law some of the leading men were gifted with the spirit of prophecy, it is to be believed that a heavenly instinct, like a private law, prompted them to worship God in a certain definite way, which would be both in keeping with the interior worship, and a suitable token of Christ's mysteries...'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> ST, III, LXV, art. I.

<sup>6</sup> *Gen* 14: 17–20.

<sup>7</sup> *Ex* 19: 22.

<sup>8</sup> ST, I II, CIII, art. I.

## **The individual sacraments**

### **Circumcision**

New sacraments began which are signs in the Old Testament of the Covenant, the first being that of circumcision. This was first and foremost the sign of the Covenant between God and Abraham and had its origin in domestic society. But it became a national sacrament when the Hebrews were constituted a nation either when they came out of Egypt or entered the promised land. This distinction was mentioned by Jesus when he said, *‘Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs)’*.<sup>9</sup> Although circumcision was confined to the males of the tribe and then the nation, women were also included in the sacrament by reason of solidarity through marriage. God saw that Abraham was faithful and proposed the Covenant by which Abraham and his descendants promised to continue in perfect faith, and as a sign of this, Abraham submitted to circumcision. St Paul says, *‘We say, “Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.” How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised.’*<sup>10</sup> By this rite all the Hebrews protested that they desired to have the same faith as their father Abraham.

Rosmini says that Abraham had seen by supernatural light the promise of the future Messiah as Jesus expressly declared, *‘Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad.’*<sup>11</sup> Those who were unable to raise their minds to more elevated and spiritual things could assert that they believed what Abraham had believed. The faith, therefore, signified by circumcision, was faith in Christ which would descend from Abraham by generation.

### **The Paschal Lamb**

The ultimate aim of these promises was to lead mankind to moral perfection and this was gradually effected by a series of events as we have said. Man was by nature a sinner, so the first thing was to redeem him from sin and from the penalty of death which he deserved. But man would have to believe in a redeemer realising that he could not achieve salvation by himself. The first Covenant was therefore a general one whereby God promised his protection and man promised to worship God. This contained a particular Covenant effecting the first whereby God promised mankind the Redeemer whom he needed. Man in his turn promised to believe with confidence

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<sup>9</sup> *Jn* 7: 22.

<sup>10</sup> *Rom* 4: 9–12.

<sup>11</sup> *Jn* 8: 56.

in that Redeemer, and to hope for his salvation from him alone. God represented this great truth by the slavery of the Hebrews in Egypt and their liberation from slavery. This represented the spiritual slavery of sin and the ceremony of the Paschal Lamb foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ.

Rosmini, following St Thomas, comments on the passage from chapter 12 in Exodus. It is a good example of his spiritual exegesis.

We must observe that the angel of the Lord, in his passing through Egypt to cause death to the first born of the Egyptians, saved from death the houses of the Hebrews that were marked with the blood of the Lamb. This blood was well adapted to represent the blood of Christ who, being immolated, appeased God in the hour of his justice which was signified by the hour of the passage of the angel. Now in this passage the Angel of the Lord brought to the Hebrews no good but only exemption from death. This shows fittingly the effect of faith in the death of Christ not yet accomplished but to come, viz. that it brought to the faithful together with remission of sin the suspension of the debt or penalty due to it, not, however, the positive good of eternal glory given to man solely through the virtue of the price paid by the blood of Christ.

But since Christ sacrificed on the cross must also be given in food to his disciples, so among the Hebrews the lamb when slain was to be eaten, and this in haste through the supreme desire to escape from Egypt, and avoid the anger of God.<sup>12</sup> The lamb was to be cooked in the fire which represented charity, with the unleavened bread which represented a pure life and with the bitter wild lettuce emblematic of penance, their loins girded to represent chastity, and their feet shod with good works and in order to foreshadow the unity of the faithful who belong to one sole family, the father of which is God, they were to eat it in each house, and no part of the victim might be carried outside.<sup>13</sup>

St Thomas says, "The stress they suffered while in Egypt was denoted by the wild lettuces. The figurative reason is evident, because the sacrifice of the paschal lamb signified the sacrifice of Christ according to 1 *Cor.* 5: "Christ our Pasch is sacrificed." The blood of the lamb, which ensured deliverance from the destroyer, by being sprinkled on the transoms, signified faith in Christ's Passion, in the hearts and on the lips of the faithful, by which same Passion we are delivered from sin and death, according to 1 *Pet.* 1:18: "You were... redeemed... with the precious blood... of a lamb unspotted." The partaking of its flesh signified the eating of Christ's body in the Sacrament; and the flesh was roasted at the fire to signify Christ's Passion or

<sup>12</sup> "The reason of the haste commanded to the Hebrews in eating the lamb is expressed in these words "you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover" by which was expressed the swiftness of the passing of the angel, symbol of the divine justice." *AS*, lib IV, I, cap. VII, sez. II, art. VIII, footnote, p. 204.

<sup>13</sup> *Ex* 12: 19. *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 203–4.

charity. And it was eaten with unleavened bread to signify the blameless life of the faithful who partake of Christ's body, according to 1 *Cor.* 5: 8: "Let us feast... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The wild lettuces were added to denote repentance for sins, which is required of those who receive the body of Christ. Their loins were girt in sign of chastity: and the shoes of their feet are the examples of our dead ancestors. The staves they were to hold in their hands denoted pastoral authority: and it was commanded that the paschal lamb should be eaten in one house, i.e. in a Catholic church, and not in the unauthorised assemblies of heretics.<sup>14</sup>

This second sacrament consecrated the people to God in a more explicit way. They promised to believe that salvation was to come from God by means of the Redeemer and his passion and as a result they were to reach heaven which was typified by the promised land. This sacrament was called a sign, *'The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.'*<sup>15</sup> It was a memorial that they were to keep forever.

The Lord told Moses to consecrate to him all the first born both of humans and beasts.

### **Priestly consecration**

A special covenant was made by God with the family of Aaron. This family bound itself in a special way to the divine worship and on his part God promised to this family his special protection and that he himself would be the portion of their inheritance. The material maintenance which they received in sharing the victims offered for sin, requests and thanksgiving was a symbol of this.

This priestly consecration was a sign of this special Covenant between God and the priesthood of Aaron. The priests were to occupy themselves with the worship of God and the sacred ceremonies, but also the first general and moral Covenant, to seek truly the divine glory, to be holy and ministers of holiness. *'I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.'*<sup>16</sup>

### **The food offerings to the Lord and the instrument of the priests**

The priests had a share in the things offered to the Lord, and lived on them. This was considered by St Thomas to be another Sacrament of the Old Law.<sup>17</sup> This was a sign of the Covenant which God made with Levi. The Levites were maintained by the Lord, i.e. by the offerings made to him, and this food granted to the priests by God

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<sup>14</sup> ST, I II, CX, art. V, ad 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ex 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 29: 44–46.

<sup>17</sup> ST, I II, CII, art. V.



symbolised the spiritual and divine food by which God nourished those who, in a particular way, were dedicated to his worship; this food is God himself who is called the portion of the priests.

### **Legal purification**

St Thomas numbers the legal purification and expiations among the sacraments of the Old Law because they were ceremonies, which, by purifying man, disposed him for the worship of God.<sup>18</sup> Just as the people were consecrated to God through circumcision and the priests were consecrated to God through ordination, so there were two kinds of sacred food, the one common to the people such as the Paschal Lamb, the other proper to the priests, namely their portion of the victims immolated and the other kinds of food offered to the Lord. There corresponded to these two kinds of priesthood, two kinds of cleansing and purification; as regards the people, the purification properly speaking from exterior impurities and the expiations for sin; as regards the priests and Levites the washing of their hands and feet, and the shaving of all bodily hair.

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<sup>18</sup> ST, I II, CII, art. V.

## Chapter 15

### The Sacramental Character of the New Covenant

#### Preview

Rosmini reviews his teaching on the Sacraments of the Old Law and reiterates that with the coming of Christ there was no more need for Old Testament symbols. The essence of the New Covenant is the internal union with the person of the Word, though some symbols are necessarily retained, namely, the sacraments of the New Law. The external signs of the Old Testament give way to the internal sign, the character impressed on the soul. The Holy Spirit impresses this character which is a permanent mark, unlike grace which can be lost through sin. It constitutes us in the supernatural order. This gives the soul the aptitude to receive and bestow the Sacraments of the New Covenant. It is a participation in the priesthood of Christ. Rosmini says the logical order of the aspects of the character are the character itself leading to the priesthood and its exercise in worship, which in turn leads to sharing in grace. Rosmini follows the traditional teaching of the Church in explaining that the three sacraments which confer a character are Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. He also sees in the character a pledge of the protection of the angels and a pledge of future glory in accordance with the teaching of the Fathers. In this section, too, he follows closely the teaching of St Thomas.

As we saw in the previous chapter, God renewed his Covenant several times during the history of the chosen people binding them closer to himself as their understanding and faith increased. He instituted the sacraments of Circumcision, the Paschal Lamb and the Consecration of priests at each stage renewing and increasing the consecration of priests and people and stimulating the people to worship him. These signs of the Covenant proceeded simultaneously with the development of divine revelation and the faith of mankind which became more and more explicit, as also the circumstances of the incarnation which were indicated by external revelation.

But when the Word became incarnate there was no longer need for many external signs. The spiritual promises made in the Old Covenant were now fulfilled. Isaiah had spoken of the future Redeemer, *'I have given you as a Covenant to the people, a light to the nations'*<sup>1</sup> and *'I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages'*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Isa* 42: 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 49: 8.

With the coming of Christ and his dwelling in the soul of human beings there was no need of further communications. The debt owed to God by sinful man was now *actually* paid.

The essence of the New Covenant as opposed to the old is that it is interior and not bound up with external apparitions and external demonstrations of God's power and majesty. It takes place by a real and personal union of the Word with human nature and then through grace.

This New Covenant is found clearly promised in the Old Testament and described by the prophets. Jeremiah says: *'The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt — a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. (i.e. I showed my power chastising their unfaithfulness). But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, (the internal and spiritual covenant) and I will write it on their hearts; (by the perception and light of the Word) and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD", for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; (the illumination shall no more be given from man to man, who can communicate by symbols only, and not the supernatural truth itself: but God will give it by the interior light of the Word which shall be communicated not to adults only but even infants illuminated by baptism) for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.'*<sup>3</sup> Thus the abolition of sin through baptism is a completely new thing, characteristic of the New Covenant.

The latter re-unites man with God and restores the moral perfection he had before the fall. He was constituted in the divine worship itself because it was already operating in him because of his substantial and intrinsic union with God. He had the feeling of this union by which he acquired the likeness of his Creator.

The signs of contracts in the Old Testament were external, such as circumcision, but in the New Testament, though it requires external means which constitute it, that is, the Sacraments of the New Law, there is an interior sign which impresses itself on the soul itself. This is the indelible character (**Ref. 1**). It would seem that Augustine introduced this term as used and approved by a General Council in his *De baptismo contra Donatistas*, (on Baptism against the Donatists). This character was foreshadowed in ancient times and promised by the prophets. Isaiah says, *'For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. From them I will send survivors...'*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jer 31: 31–34. Words in brackets are Rosmini's commentary.

<sup>4</sup> Isa 66: 18–19.

Now what is this sign? Grace is an intellective communication of the Word revealing himself to the soul and this vision of the Word is the supernatural light, the source of all supernatural activity. This communication can be *transient* or *permanent* (or, as we say, *habitual*). Sanctity only comes about with our co-operation with grace, so not every impression of the Word which takes place in the intellective part of our soul constitutes grace, but only when we do not resist its influence. However, the impress of the Word may remain in the soul, in its intellective part, even if we refuse to obey it and this happens in the sacraments of *Baptism*, *Confirmation* and *Holy Orders*, which confer an indelible character. This character consecrates us to the Word and calls us to supernatural worship. The character endows us with this power. Whether we respond to it depends on us.

### **The character is impressed by the Holy Spirit**

Rosmini goes on to say that all this is confirmed by tradition and, as is his wont, goes first to the Scriptures, pointing out that St Paul speaks of the character when he says, ‘*In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit*’, and again, ‘*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*’,<sup>5</sup> namely, in your baptism. The impress of the character is thus an action of the Holy Spirit. The Fathers of the Church support this (**Ref. 2**). Here we see clearly expressed the difference between external sign of the Covenant between God and the Israelites and the internal spiritual sign of Christians. For since before Christ came the Holy Spirit was not as yet given, the ancient sacraments could not give the indelible character which is impressed by the Christian sacraments.<sup>6</sup>

St Thomas says, ‘As stated above (62, 6) the sacraments of the Old Law had not in themselves any spiritual power of producing a spiritual effect. Consequently in those sacraments there was no need of a spiritual character, and bodily circumcision sufficed, which the Apostle calls “a seal” (*Rom* 4: 11).’<sup>7</sup>

‘The Apostle speaks there of that sealing by which a man is assigned to future glory, and which is effected by grace. Now grace is attributed to the Holy Ghost, inasmuch as it is through love that God gives us something gratis, which is the very nature of grace: while the Holy Spirit is love. Wherefore it is written (1 *Cor*, 12: 4): “There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit”.’<sup>8</sup>

So the grace and character are distinct but both proceed from the Holy Spirit. The Fathers call the character the *seal of Christ* and attribute to it, as its principal effect, the configuration of the soul to Christ.

<sup>5</sup> *Eph* 1: 13 and 4: 30. *AS*, lib. IV, cap. VII, sez. II, art. IX, p. 216.

<sup>6</sup> *ST*, III, LXIII, art. V.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, LXIII, art. I, ad 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, art. III, ad 1.

Since Christ or the Word is the image of the Father, tradition teaches that in the indelible character we receive the image of God

The character being the impression of the Word must necessarily be light and splendour. The Word is light to the soul to which it communicates itself. As well as Ambrose saying this, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite says the same (**Ref. 3**). This is an intellectual light which gives knowledge to the soul. Note that Ambrose speaks of a sign (the character) and also the grace of the sacrament which makes us a partaker of the saints.

The divine Word unites himself to the essence of the intellective soul and if the character, as has been shown is an impress of the Word, it must reside in the essence or substance of our soul. It produces a modification of the soul which receives a new light. Rosmini also agrees with St Thomas who says that it resides in the intellectual power of the soul in so far as this impress of light (the character) is the foundation and principle of this power.<sup>9</sup>

‘A character, according to its definition given above, is imprinted in the rational soul “by way of an image.” But the image of the Trinity in the soul is seen in the powers. Therefore a character is in the powers of the soul.

I answer that, as stated above, a character is a kind of seal by which the soul is marked, so that it may receive, or bestow on others, things pertaining to Divine worship. Now the Divine worship consists in certain actions: and the powers of the soul are properly ordained to actions, just as the essence is ordained to existence. Therefore a character resides not in the essence of the soul, but in its power.’<sup>10</sup>

The character being a new supernatural power produces effects of which there are chiefly two: the aptitude and the right which the soul has to receive or administer the other sacraments: the other power is to share in the grace of Jesus Christ.

### **The right to receive or administer other sacraments**

Through the indelible character given in Baptism the soul is able to receive all the effects of the other sacraments. This character receives force and confirmation from the Sacrament of Confirmation. By the character in the Sacrament of Orders man acquires a new power by which he consecrates the Eucharist, remits sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick and administers validly the Sacrament of Confirmation and Orders. The power which man acquires in relation to

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<sup>9</sup> It might seem that Rosmini contradicts himself here. Having said the character resides in the essence of the soul, he now says with St Thomas that it resides in the powers of the soul. But he makes a distinction. The character may be regarded from two aspects, as a *sign* and in as much as it *acts*. In so far as it is regarded as *acting* it is a power, in so far as it is regarded as *sign* it is an impression, a modification of the soul which receives a new light and as such it is in the essence of the soul.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, art. IV.

the other sacraments is passive or active. The character of Baptism and Confirmation is passive; that of Orders is active in as much as man is able to impart to others by means of certain rites, the character and the grace or the faculty of administering the sacrament with valid effect.

### **The character constitutes us in the supernatural order**

Just as, in the natural order, we receive intelligence by means of the light of being, so we receive a supernatural intelligence by the gift of the light of the Word which constitutes the sacramental character. The addition of the light of reason is a creation in the natural order; through the sacraments the light of the Word is a creation in the order of grace, and just as man can never lose his intelligence, so he cannot lose the character which is indelible.

St Thomas says, 'Since, therefore, the subject of a character is the soul as to its intellective part, where faith resides, as stated above (4, ad 3); it is clear that, the intellect being perpetual and incorruptible, a character cannot be blotted out from the soul.'<sup>11</sup>

Theologians say that the character is indelible because it is impressed on the soul which is an incorruptible subject. This agrees with what Rosmini says that the character resides in the substance of the soul which is modified or increased by the character.

The spiritual generation of man takes place through the character. Jesus said to Nicodemus, '*Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.*' and again '*Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.*'<sup>12</sup> So we really need baptism. It is not grace which gives this first generation, since baptism can exist without grace. It is the character, the necessary effect of baptism, which constitutes its nature. Augustine says, 'Wherefore it is manifest that it is possible that, with defective faith, the sacrament of baptism may yet remain without defect in any man;...' <sup>13</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem calls baptism 'the holy and indelible seal'<sup>14</sup> because this constitutes the essence of the sacrament, as the baptism of Christ. This generation is not the operation of the will but of the nature. Grace, however, can exist only when the will is converted to good and this is essential for grace; so the regeneration of grace is never effected except in the will. St Augustine says that baptism can never be repeated (**Ref. 4**).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> ST, III, LXIII, art, V.

<sup>12</sup> *Jn* 3: 3, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib. III, cap XIV, n. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis*, XVI. 'He to this day seals the souls in Baptism'.

St Thomas says, 'Baptism is a spiritual regeneration; inasmuch as a man dies to the old life, and begins to lead the new life. Whence it is written: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, He cannot see [Vulg.: 'enter into'] the kingdom of God." (Jn 3: 5) Now one man can be begotten but once. Wherefore Baptism cannot be reiterated, just as neither can carnal generation. Hence Augustine says on Jn 3: 4: "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again?". "So thou," says he, "must understand the birth of the Spirit, as Nicodemus understood the birth of the flesh... As there is no return to the womb, so neither is there to Baptism".'<sup>16</sup>

The Councils of Florence and Trent, too, state that it cannot be repeated because of the indelible character.

We must remember that so long as the will is not affected by the light of the Word we cannot say there is grace. Before the light influences and sanctifies the will it necessarily illuminates the intellect; for the intellect is anterior to the will, and the will only inclines itself towards that which is known. The light therefore of the Word first of all shines in man in a state which is not as yet grace; that comes later. But generation is the first step in which a person begins to exist; hence generation properly speaking cannot be attributed to the grace which belongs to the generated man, but rather to that person's impression of the Word which we call *character*.<sup>17</sup>

Disobedient and rebellious children do not cease to be the children of their parents. Christ gives us an example in the parable of The Prodigal Son. Likewise the baptised, no matter how sinful they are they still retain their relationship to their heavenly Father which has come about by being stamped with the indelible seal we call character. Just as the family of Abraham were characterised by circumcision so the *character* distinguishes the family of God. Christ alone is son by nature but we are children by adoption because the Word has become, as it were, part of our nature. It is Christ who signs us with the impress of himself.

### **The character is a participation of the priesthood of Christ**

Theologians call the character a consecration of the soul, this implies being set apart for divine worship, whereas external rites can only signify the will to devote an object to divine worship. But this consecration is internal. Having received the character the soul is forever united to the Word and therefore truly and perpetually consecrated to and by the Word.

St Thomas and all theologians say that the sacramental characters are simply a participation of the priesthood of Christ, derived from Christ himself.

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<sup>16</sup> ST, III, LXVI, art. IX.

<sup>17</sup> AS, *ibid.*, p. 226.

St Thomas says, ‘Secondly, each of the faithful is deputed to receive, or to bestow on others, things pertaining to the worship of God. And this, properly speaking, is the purpose of the sacramental character. Now the whole rite of the Christian religion is derived from Christ’s priesthood. Consequently, it is clear that the sacramental character is specially the character of Christ, to whose character the faithful are likened by reason of the sacramental characters, which are nothing else than certain participations of Christ’s priesthood, flowing from Christ Himself.’<sup>18</sup>

The priesthood of Christ did not simply terminate in the offering of external sacrifices, which had in them no inherent virtue, but he offered an interior infinite sacrifice which was the greatest possible act of worship, the fulfilment of all possible moral perfection. ‘This virtue of Christ as priest, of appeasing God and drawing him down, as it were, to dwell in those souls to whom he applied the effect of that priesthood, is imparted to Christians and forms the indelible *character*’.<sup>19</sup> St Robert Bellarmine says that in virtue of the character a covenant is contracted between God and man by which God binds himself to concur in the sacramental actions.<sup>20</sup> Rosmini says that this is rather in virtue of the priestly power of the Word being impressed on the soul. Christ causes the soul to return to the condition of the primitive state of innocence in which there was no need of any positive agreement between God and man. On Mount Sinai God promised the Hebrew people that they would be a royal priesthood and a holy nation consecrated to divine worship; Christ would fulfil this promise. ‘*Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant... you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation*’.<sup>21</sup> The writers of the New Testament speak of this promise as no longer in the future but realised by Christ, ‘*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*’.<sup>22</sup>

### **The relation of the character and grace**

‘We have seen that the *character* given to the soul is ‘a permanent union of the Word with the essence of the intellective soul, by which the soul perceives the Word and is informed by the Word.’ It is also a ‘power’ because the soul now has a supernatural power which it did not have before. In turn this power makes the soul capable of exercising the worship of the priesthood of Christ and partaking of grace.’<sup>23</sup>

The logical order of these aspects is, a) the character in the soul, b) the character as the power of priesthood c) the character as the power of grace. The following quotations from St Thomas support this. He first says:

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Bellarmine, *De Sacram. in gen* Lib II, cap. XIX.

<sup>21</sup> *Ex* 19: 5–6.

<sup>22</sup> 1 *Pet* 2: 9.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *AS, ibid.*, p. 231.



“The sacramental character is a thing as regards the exterior sacrament, and a sacrament in regard to the ultimate effect. Consequently, something can be attributed to a character in two ways. First, if the character be considered as a sacrament: and thus it is a sign of the invisible grace which is conferred in the sacrament. Secondly, if it be considered as a character. And thus it is a sign conferring on a man a likeness to some principal person in whom is vested the authority over that to which he is assigned: thus soldiers who are assigned to military service, are marked with their leader’s sign, by which they are, in a fashion, likened to him. And in this way those who are deputed to the Christian worship, of which Christ is the author, receive a character by which they are likened to Christ. Consequently, properly speaking, this is Christ’s character.”<sup>24</sup>

Then he says that the character disposes the soul directly for the worship of God seemingly as a *consequence* of the character and therefore the character as a power.

“Now a character disposes the soul directly and proximately to the fulfilling of things pertaining to Divine worship: and because such cannot be accomplished suitably without the help of grace, since, according to *Jn* 4: 24, “they that adore God must adore Him in spirit and in truth,” consequently, the Divine bounty bestows grace on those who receive the character, so that they may accomplish worthily the service to which they are deputed. Therefore the subject should be ascribed to a character in respect of those actions that pertain to the Divine worship, rather than in respect of grace.”<sup>25</sup>

St. Thomas here seems to be considering the disposition or power of the soul to perform the things belonging to the divine worship as a consequence of the *character*, finally he mentions grace given to those who receive the character.

“These words of St. Thomas confirm what we have already proved namely that the Christian worship being principally interior is identified as to its principal part with sanctity. We see moreover in the same words, that the power to receive grace comes after the power to exercise the acts of worship, as the power to exercise the acts of worship comes after the character considered according to its proper notion of character.”<sup>26</sup>

The character produces grace. St Paul says, ‘*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption*’.<sup>27</sup> Grieving the Holy Spirit means to lose grace through sin, so in impressing us with the seal the Spirit also has given us grace. In this passage grace and the seal are united and the effect of one sole action of

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<sup>24</sup> ST, III, LXIII, III, ad 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, ad 1.

<sup>26</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>27</sup> *Eph* 4: 30.

the Holy Spirit, the basis of which is the character. In the second letter to the Corinthians he tells us that God has anointed us in Christ *'by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first instalment'*.<sup>28</sup> In the letter to the Ephesians he tells his converts that as a result of their belief in Christ they *'were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance ...'*.<sup>29</sup> In these passages, too, he unites the seal and grace. Rosmini quotes St Ambrose **(Ref. 5)**.

Baptism operates in virtue of the passion of Christ.

St Thomas says, 'As sins committed after baptism do not take away the virtue of the passion of Christ, so they do not take away baptism so that it requires to be reiterated but it is sufficient for penance to succeed the sin in order that the obstacle to the effect of baptism may be removed.'<sup>30</sup>

In other words once the obstacle to grace is removed by penance baptismal grace is once again reproduced in the soul. The same reasoning does not apply to penance because penance simply produces grace and not the character. The grace of penance (that is, the whole effect) is lost if we sin after absolution. What is said of baptism also applies to confirmation and Holy Orders because the character given by these two sacraments remains even if grace is lost.

Rosmini teaches that those who are signed with the character are guaranteed the protection of the angels. *'For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against a stone'*.<sup>31</sup> He reiterates that he sees the blood on the doorposts of the Israelites when the destroying angel passed over the houses in Egypt, as symbolising the character of the New Covenant impressed in virtue of the passion of Christ. He quotes Basil and Gregory Nazianzen to this effect **(Ref. 6)**.

The Fathers of the Church see, too, that the character, is a pledge of heavenly glory. This is the light of the Word who by revealing himself forms the glory of heaven. As we saw earlier St Paul says that Christ has put his seal on us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee **(Ref. 7)**.

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<sup>28</sup> 2 Cor 1: 21–22.

<sup>29</sup> Eph 1: 13.

<sup>30</sup> ST, III, LXVI, IX.

<sup>31</sup> Ps 91: 11–12.

*The Sacramental Character of the New Covenant*

<b>Summary</b>	
<b>Penance and the anointing of the sick</b>	Remove sin and the remains of sin from the soul which are obstacles to the infusion of the grace of the character and therefore do not impress a character but presuppose it.
<b>Matrimony</b>	Sanctifies the marital union. It supposes the character to have already been impressed. It does not give the character, for the intention of this sacrament is not to sanctify souls in general but this particular act of union. It gives an additional degree of special sanctity and grace when the persons are in a state of grace.
<b>Holy Eucharist</b>	It is the union of Christ with man by way of his humanity under the form of food. But the character resides in the intellectual part of man and not in bodies. Hence the Eucharist does not impress a character. The Eucharist operates in the corporeal part. Hence the whole person is sanctified by means of grace.
The three remaining sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders impress the character.	

Ref. 1.	The Fathers of the Church speak of the character
Theophylact	“The Jews were signed with circumcision receiving like animals a seal on their flesh, and we, as sons of God, besides the carnal condition receive the sign of the Spirit.” <sup>32</sup>
Clement	Calls the character ‘the sign of the covenants’. <sup>33</sup>
Augustine	‘But if we turn our eyes to the multitude of chaff within the Church, since these also who are perverse and lead an abandoned life in unity itself appear to have no power either of giving or retaining remission of sins, seeing that it is not to the wicked but the good sons that it was said, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained,” Jn 20: 23 yet that such persons both have, and give, and receive the sacrament of baptism, was sufficiently manifest to the pastors of the Catholic Church dispersed over the whole world, through whom the original custom was afterwards confirmed by the authority of a plenary Council; so that even the sheep which was straying outside, and had received the mark of the Lord from false plunderers outside, if it seek the salvation of Christian unity, is purified from error, is freed from captivity, is healed of its wound, and yet the mark of the Lord is recognized rather than rejected in it; since the mark itself is often impressed both by wolves and on wolves, who seem indeed to be within the fold,...’ <sup>34</sup>

Ref. 2.	The character is impressed by the Holy Spirit
Cyril of Jerusalem	Cyril says: ‘In the time of baptism the Holy Spirit seals thy soul’ and in another place, <sup>35</sup> ‘This (Holy Spirit) even to this day seals the soul in baptism.’ <sup>36</sup>
John Chrysostom	John Chrysostom likewise says ‘The Israelites have been signed but with the mark of circumcision, which may be given even to cattle; we as sons are signed by the Holy Spirit’. <sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Theophylact, *Expositioin Epistolam ad Ephesios*, cap. I, v. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Clement I, *De constitutionibus apostolicis*, lib. VII, cap. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *De baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib. VI, cap. I, n. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis, De decem dogmatibus*, dogma VII, De Spiritu Sancto.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, *Catechesis XVI De Spiritu Sancto*, cap. XXIV.

<sup>37</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Ephesios*, hom II, n. 2.

<b>Ref. 3.</b>	<b>In the character we receive the image of God</b>
Ambrose	‘As we die in Christ so in like manner we are signed in the Spirit, in order that we may have within us the splendour and the image and the grace of him’ which is the spiritual character. For although in appearance we are signed in the body we are in truth signed in the heart, in order that the Holy Spirit may express in us the likeness of the heavenly image. <sup>38</sup>
Dionysius the Areopagite	‘The divine majesty admits (so he speaks of the character) him who approaches him and gives him his light, as it were by way of sign making him holy and a partaker of the lot and order of the saints.’ <sup>39</sup>
<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>Baptism can never be repeated</b>
St Augustine states, ‘You ought to understand the birth of the spirit as Nicodemus understood the birth of the flesh, for as the entering of a man into his mother’s womb cannot be repeated so neither can baptism’. <sup>40</sup>	
<b>Ref. 5.</b>	<b>St Ambrose speaks about the character and its effects</b>
<b>The Character puts us in possession of grace: it is the power of grace</b>	
‘As we die in Christ, so in the Holy Spirit we are signed in order that we may maintain the splendour and the image of him and grace: which sign is the spiritual seal.’ <sup>41</sup>	
<b>He unites the gifts of the Holy Spirit with the character</b>	
‘You have received the spiritual seal the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and of virtue, the spirit of knowledge and of piety, and the spirit of holy fear: maintain what you have received’. <sup>42</sup>	

<sup>38</sup> Ambrose, *De Spirito Sancto*, lib I, cap.6.

<sup>39</sup> Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, cap. II, pars III, § IV.

<sup>40</sup> Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, tract. XI, n. 6.

<sup>41</sup> See above, note 39.

<sup>42</sup> Ambrose, *De mysteriis*, cap. VII, n. 42. The maintaining of these effects depends on the will, but the maintaining of the seal does not depend on the will because it is indelible.

<b>Ref. 6.</b>	<b>The angels protect those who are sealed with the character</b>
Basil	‘How shall the angel recognise and rescue thee from the hands of the enemy if he does not see in thee the seal? A treasure that is not sealed easily falls into the hands of robbers: sheep that are without a mark are easily ensnared’. <sup>43</sup>
Gregory Nazianzen	‘If thou shalt have fortified thyself by baptism, and in future shall defend thyself by means of that most beautiful and first assistance by which thy body is signed and thy soul also with the unction of the Holy Spirit, as if old Israel defended his first born by that nocturnal blood, what shall befall thee? Hear the words of the Proverbs of Solomon “If thou shalt sit down thou shalt be intrepid; if thou shalt sleep thou shalt enjoy sweet repose”. <sup>44</sup> Hear also the joyful tidings of David: “Thou shalt not be afraid of any terror by night, incursions of the devil at noontide.” This because thou art alive shall be to thee a great cause of security. For as the sheep when they are marked do not easily go astray, but those that are not marked are very easily taken by the wolf.’ <sup>45</sup>
<b>Ref. 7.</b>	<b>Theophylact — The character is a pledge of future glory</b>
	‘He has made us kings like to the Son of the Supreme King and Emperor, and heirs of the future kingdom, so that we reign and rule over all the absurd thoughts, and are constituted over the whole world. And as the ancient priest kings were anointed with oil, so now are we anointed by the Holy Spirit, God giving us a pledge into our hearts; for he who gives the pledge will also give the whole.’ <sup>46</sup>
<b>Antonio Rosmini</b>	
Because the indelible character left upon our souls in the Sacraments is our Lord Jesus Christ himself, ‘ <i>the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance</i> ’, <sup>47</sup> so Christ is the great lover in all of us. He is our power of love. Love is Christ’s very own Spirit diffused in our souls. He is the power of our love ‘ <i>by the grace of God, I am what I am</i> ’. <sup>48</sup> Love is Christ’s very own Spirit diffused in our souls, where he finds no obstacles, or conquers them. <sup>49</sup>	

<sup>43</sup> Basil, *Homilia XIII in sanctum Baptisma*, n. 4.

<sup>44</sup> *Prov* 3: 24.

<sup>45</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, orat. XL *in sanctum Baptisma*, n. XV.

<sup>46</sup> Theophylact, *Expositio in epistolam II ad Corinthios*, cap. I, vv. 21–22.

<sup>47</sup> *Heb* 1: 3 (Douai).

<sup>48</sup> 1 *Cor* 15: 10 (Douai).

<sup>49</sup> AR, *La dottrina della carità*, Sodalitas, Domodossola 1943, Discorso Quarto, *La Carità*, p. 106 [*A Society of Love*, trans. Denis Cleary, Durham 2000, p. 49].

## Chapter 16

### The Sacrament of Baptism

#### Preview

Christ sanctified the water at the river Jordan when he was baptised and thus instituted the sacrament of Baptism. (Later on in this section Rosmini reconciles this opinion of the Fathers and Schoolmen with that of St Leo the Great who teaches that Baptism was instituted after the resurrection.) The *matter* of Baptism (water and words) receives its sanctifying power from contact 'with the glorious and invisible body of Christ'; the *form* being the words used. These are the vehicle of grace and the internal action of the Spirit within us. Rosmini reflects on the possible varying of these effects between the Baptism of Christ and his resurrection. He also comments on St Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 6. Baptism consists in the bestowal of the character and grace and more particularly the remission of original sin (and for an adult past actual sins) and the good inclination of the will. This section concludes with Rosmini's explanation of the addition (the Johannine Comma) in St John's First letter 5: 6–8).

Rosmini's treatment of the sacraments, as with all his theology, is heavily influenced by tradition, especially that of the Fathers and St Thomas.

He begins by recapitulating what he has said about the Sacraments of the New Covenant in general compared with those of the Old Covenant. It is the humanity of Christ which is the vehicle of sanctification, so before Christ came on earth we could not obtain complete sanctification.

St Thomas says, '...the human nature is the instrument of the Divine action, and the human action receives power from the Divine Nature...'<sup>1</sup>  
'...Christ's flesh, wherein He endured the Passion, is the instrument of the Godhead, so that His sufferings and actions operate with Divine power for expelling sin.'<sup>2</sup>

As John says, '*The Law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*'<sup>3</sup> When he was on earth it was the contact with his body which communicated sanctity to body and soul. This is clearly seen in the case of the woman who was healed of her haemorrhages.<sup>4</sup> In order that sanctification might be communicated to

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<sup>1</sup> ST, III, XLIII, art. II.

<sup>2</sup> ST, III, XLIX, art I.

<sup>3</sup> *Jn* 1: 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Lk* 8: 43–48.

all people of every age he communicated the power which issued from his sacred body to material elements, in this way instituting the sacraments in which these material elements would be united to the form of the sacrament, namely the Holy Spirit.

This communication we believe takes place by means of a mysterious and ineffable contact with the glorious and invisible body of Jesus Christ with the elements that constitute the sacramental matter. For the sanctifying grace issuing from the body of Christ is such that it not only sanctifies the humanity of other men who come into immediate contact with it, but even gives sanctifying power to those inanimate elements which he unites to himself and touches and these elements being touched by other human beings produce sanctification in them.<sup>5</sup>

However, use of this sanctifying power was subject to the will of Christ. He did not manifest it as soon as he was conceived and born, though Mary would have received all these effects at her conception of Jesus.

#### **When was the sacrament instituted?**

Rosmini follows the opinion of the Fathers and the schoolmen is stating that Christ instituted the sacrament of Baptism by being baptised in the Jordan and sanctifying water by the touch of his humanity **(Ref. 1)**. Baptism derived its power from the sacrifice of the cross anticipated by Christ; but it did not produce all those effects which would come with the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.

As long as Christ lived on earth Baptism was not necessary for salvation because the Mosaic Law was not yet abrogated and also because the New Law was not promulgated until the day of Pentecost.

St Thomas says, ‘Sacraments derive from their institution the power of conferring grace. Wherefore it seems that a sacrament is then instituted, when it receives the power of producing its effect. Now Baptism received this power when Christ was baptized. Consequently Baptism was truly instituted then, if we consider it as a sacrament. But the obligation of receiving this sacrament was proclaimed to mankind after the Passion and Resurrection. First, because Christ's Passion put an end to the figurative sacraments, which were supplanted by Baptism and the other sacraments of the New Law. Secondly, because by Baptism man is “made conformable” to Christ's Passion and Resurrection, in so far as he dies to sin and begins to live anew unto righteousness. Consequently it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again, before proclaiming to man his obligation of conforming himself to Christ's Death and Resurrection.’<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *AS*, lib. IV, II, cap. I, art. I, p. 243.

<sup>6</sup> *ST*, III, LXII.



### *The Sacrament of Baptism*

As soon as Baptism was instituted it produced its two effects of character and grace. As we saw earlier the character logically precedes grace making the person new, but this new birth is completed by grace. As soon as we receive the character we have a new supernatural power within us but whether this is completed by grace depends on the state of the will. If it is contrary, grace is denied us and this supernatural action is not yet in act. As we saw earlier the character affects the nature of the person, but grace is never effected except in the will. This must take advantage of the divine light and the character.

Rosmini goes on to suggest that the two effects of character and grace might undergo various modifications between the time of the Baptism of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the reason being that the character is Christ united to the soul and he could only unite himself to the soul in the way he was at the time. The living Christ would unite himself as living; the dead Christ would unite himself to the soul as dead; the risen Christ as glorious. But in his glory Christ had two states, that in which he conversed with his disciples after the resurrection and that when he ascended into heaven and sent down upon them the Holy Spirit.

Rosmini explains this in more detail with reference to the letter of St Paul to the Romans. This long exegesis deserves to be quoted in full.

St Paul speaking of Baptism administered to the faithful after the apostles had received the Holy Spirit, attributes the effects of this sacrament to the various mysteries or states of Christ *'Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.'*<sup>7</sup> Here the effect of justification is attributed to the justice of Christ without as yet any mention being made of his death. The Apostle continues, *'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?'*<sup>8</sup> From this he draws the consequences, *'How can we who died to sin still live in it?'*<sup>9</sup>, thus attributing to the death of Christ the effect of our perseverance in his grace and of entire death to sin. Baptism, therefore, after the death of Christ manifested a greater power, adding force to man to conquer concupiscence, which St Paul tells us was crucified in Christ and such a force that man who duly corresponds with it, can live as one dead to sin, living a life that is wholly spiritual, according to the words of the apostle, *'you are not in the flesh, you are in the spirit.'*<sup>10</sup> As therefore justification came from the life of Christ, and from his death a firm resolve to sin no more; so from the resurrection the Apostle himself deduces the effect of a greater light given to the soul, which understands and begins to share in the joys of the life of glory; Baptism could produce this effect only after the resurrection, *'We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that*

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<sup>7</sup> Rom 5: 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 8: 9.

*as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*<sup>11</sup> He says 'death like his' and 'a resurrection like his', because the whole operation of Christ tends always to render his redeemed like to himself as their exemplar. Therefore it is not credible that he should impart to them what in himself was not fully completed. We must also observe that the exemplar is a representation or realisation of that to which others ought to conform themselves; it is a rule or image; an original picture, as it were, from which copies are to be taken. What Christ therefore expresses in himself as exemplar, is that which produces similar effects voluntarily in his saints; that state is signified and expressed in himself which then has to be produced and is produced in them. This is also the reason why the sacraments are signs and expressions of that which they produce. But that which they express and signify is effected only by the body of Christ, as the instrument of the divinity; and therefore it is required that the state of his body shall be adapted to produce these effects. This is the constant doctrine of St Paul: *'We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin.'*<sup>12</sup> These words express well the fact that from the death of Christ flows, as its proper effect' the full victory of man over his concupiscence. By this victory man no longer prizes his present body and its desires, but holds it as dead, and willingly abandons it to death; which is the same as saying that the proper effect of the death of Christ is detachment from all human things. The proper effect of the resurrection, on the contrary, is the union with and sensible perception of divine things. *'But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.'*<sup>13</sup> From the constancy therefore of the new life of Christ comes the constancy of the perception of divine things, *'We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has any dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.'*<sup>14</sup> To the Ascension of Christ belongs the Holy Spirit, whom Christ seated at the right hand of the Father, sends down upon the earth, *'It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, yes who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for*

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<sup>11</sup> Rom 6: 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 6–7

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 8

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 9–12. The effect of the resurrection of Christ terminates in the resurrection also of our body 'If', says St Paul, *'the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you'* (Rom 8: 2): this, then, is the second effect of Christ's resurrection.

*us*.<sup>15</sup> Christ prays and obtains from the Father the Holy Spirit and his gifts for humanity; and after the coming down of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, this same Holy Spirit is infused into us in holy Baptism.<sup>16</sup>

St Thomas says: ‘the very representation of himself in the human nature which he bears in heaven is a certain interceding for us, that God who has so exalted human nature in Christ will have mercy also on those for whom the Son of God assumed human nature.’<sup>17</sup>

### **The time of the institution of Baptism**

As we have seen, Rosmini believes that the Sacrament of Baptism was instituted by Christ at the time of his own Baptism by John. On the other hand Pope Leo the Great states that it was instituted only after the resurrection. Rosmini’s reverence for this opinion causes him to explain how his own opinion might be reconciled with Pope Leo’s. Rosmini believes that he (Leo) was considering the particular effect which began at Baptism solely after the resurrection of Christ and also the express institution of the form to be used in Baptism and that he did not consider the first institution of the Sacrament. Writing to the bishops of Sicily he says that Easter Sunday is the most fitting time for the administration of Baptism: ‘The very quality of the whole work teaches that this is the legitimate day for celebrating in general the grace (of Baptism) on which day the *virtue* of the office and the *species* of the action had their origin.’<sup>18</sup> In Rosmini’s interpretation he could be speaking of the particular power united with the Sacrament in the resurrection and also the species, the Trinitarian formula. But could not Baptism have first been administered in the name of Christ only? This opinion has not been condemned by the Church. Rosmini backs up his opinion with a long footnote and continues by saying that this would seem fitting as the Word had been communicated to people already but not the Holy Spirit as John says, ‘*for as yet there was no Spirit because Jesus was not yet glorified*’.<sup>19</sup> So it seems very probable that since we are not dealing with triform grace the Trinity could not have been named and that at that time the grace received would have been *verbiform* grace. It could be said that the Holy Spirit was not given immediately after the resurrection but only at Pentecost. Rosmini answers that this refers to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, ‘*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit*’<sup>20</sup> and ‘*and it filled the entire house where they were sitting*’.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, it is clear that the apostles did receive the Holy Spirit immediately after the resurrection

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<sup>15</sup> *Rom* 8: 34.

<sup>16</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art. VI, pp. 248–250.

<sup>17</sup> ST, III, LVII, art. VI.

<sup>18</sup> Leo the Great, *Epistolae*, ep. IV, cap. III ad Episcopos Siciliae.

<sup>19</sup> *Jn* 7: 39.

<sup>20</sup> *Acts* 2: 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

when Jesus breathed on them saying, ‘*receive the Holy Spirit*’;<sup>22</sup> and he said to them in the present tense, ‘*and see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised*’;<sup>23</sup> showing that he was able in his glorified state to send them the Holy Spirit but awaited his Ascension to the Father to send the fullness of the Spirit.

With regard to the time of the ascension, Luke states in his Gospel that Christ ascended on the eve of the resurrection, (*Lk* 24: 50–51) but in Acts he recounts an ascension 40 days later (*Acts* 1: 9–12). ‘For God the Ascension of Jesus after death is timeless but there is a sequence from the viewpoint of those whose lives he touched. For the Gospel the Ascension visibly terminates the activity of Jesus on earth; for the Acts it will prepare the apostles to be witnesses to him to the ends of the earth.’<sup>24</sup>

So they had at this moment received power to baptise all humanity but were enjoined to ‘*stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high*’.<sup>25</sup> In other words they were to wait the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when they would receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit and then they would exercise their office of baptising. ‘As St. Leo says, the apostles received after the resurrection the *form* of Baptism, which afterwards was used in the Church; and the *power* also of exercising it, being constituted from that moment the ordinary ministers of the sacrament; but they received the power and the order of baptising the world in order to use it only after the day of Pentecost’.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to remind ourselves again that Rosmini’s opinions are in keeping with the Fathers and schoolmen of the past. Both these favoured the institution of Baptism when Christ was baptized and that the water of the Jordan was sanctified by coming into contact with his divine flesh. St John Chrysostom, Theophylact and Tertullian believed that the disciples baptized with water only and not the Holy Spirit because he was not given until after the resurrection. St Leo’s opinion is invoked though he does mention in another part of the letter that Christ authorised Baptism when water flowed from his body at the crucifixion and therefore before the resurrection. All authorities agree that the solemn promulgation of the sacrament occurs in Matthew 28. ‘*And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,...*’<sup>27</sup> Christ, then, most probably instituted

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<sup>22</sup> *Jn* 20: 22.

<sup>23</sup> *Lk* 24: 49.

<sup>24</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Doubleday 1997, chapter 10, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 280–281.

<sup>25</sup> *Lk*, 24: 49.

<sup>26</sup> Leo the Great, *Epistolae*, IV, cap. III. *AS, ibid.*, art. VII, p. 253.

<sup>27</sup> *Mt* 28: 18–19.

Baptism before his passion as is evident from John chapters 3 and 4 and Christ conferred Baptism by the hands of his disciples before his passion. This was not John's Baptism as is evident from his own words *'John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know,... He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit"'*.<sup>28</sup> Rosmini uses his knowledge of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church in formulating his own thought on Baptism.

How about the person who was baptised but died before Christ? He could not be admitted to glory because Christ was still in his passable state. But his condition was not the same as one who had not been baptised, for he had received the character and the grace from the living Christ, and therefore a pledge of future glory. After the death of Christ this soul being freed from sin would be admitted to the beatific vision through the vision of the Word and of the soul of Christ which was already glorious, though his body had not yet ascended into heaven. The soul, however, was not yet in heaven but was where Christ was and its heavenly existence was an increase of greater glory and happiness. So the words of Christ to the good thief *'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise'*.<sup>29</sup> should be taken to mean that he would share in the beatific vision since being with Christ and seeing God would be paradise.

St Thomas says, 'Our Lord's expression is not to be understood of the earthly corporeal paradise, but of a spiritual one, in which all are said to be who enjoy the Divine glory. Accordingly, the thief descended locally into hell with Christ, because it was said to him: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise"; still as to reward he was in paradise, because he enjoyed Christ's Godhead just as the other saints did.'<sup>30</sup>

Baptism also acquired from Christ's risen body the power to act upon and resuscitate other bodies. The power of the spirit given to the soul is able to give life to inanimate matter. So St Paul says, *'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you'*.<sup>31</sup> The Spirit shows by external signs of glory who are the sons of God, *'For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God;...'*<sup>32</sup>

### **The sacrament of Baptism considered as sign**

Rosmini quotes Augustine's definition of sacrament, namely 'a sacrament is a sign of a sacred thing'.<sup>33</sup> This holy thing is the grace of God. It is a holy thing because by its power our soul is consecrated and united to God. He adds that this includes the

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<sup>28</sup> *Jn* 1: 26, 33.

<sup>29</sup> *Lk* 23: 43.

<sup>30</sup> ST, III, LII, art. IV, ad 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Rom* 8: 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. X, cap. V.

*character*, the source of grace. Grace being a spiritual thing itself cannot be represented so we must take its proximate cause and its effects. As far as the Eucharist is concerned, it signifies the body and blood of Christ under the form of food; this is the proximate cause and source of that grace contained in the sacrament and through means of that body under the species of bread and wine it contains the grace in its effect of spiritual nutrition and incorporation. The sacrament of Baptism signifies the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Christ is the proximate cause of the different degrees of grace conferred in Baptism; these represent the grace itself by means of the effects which it produces in us, conforming us to our exemplar Jesus Christ.

Rosmini quotes a passage from the Roman Catechism which sums this up clearly,

Besides this, these mystical signs instituted by God do not by the institution of our Lord signify one thing only, but many things at once. This is the case in all the sacraments, which not only declare our sanctity and justice but two other things as well that are chiefly united with sanctity, that is to say the passion of Christ our redeemer which is the cause of all our sanctity, and eternal life and heavenly beatitude, towards which our sanctity must be directed as its end; and since this can be seen in all the sacraments, the holy Doctors say that in each sacrament signifies three things. For either it brings to the memory a thing passed, or manifests a thing present, or foretells a thing in the future. We are not to suppose that these holy doctors teach this without proof from the Holy Scriptures. And what the Apostle says is true that all of us who have been baptised in Christ have been baptised into his death, clearly showing that Baptism may be called a sign, because it signifies and calls to mind the passion of Christ. As also when he says *'we were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.'* (Rom 6: 4) We have been buried with him in Baptism so that, as Christ rose from the dead to the glory of God the Father so we walk in newness of life. It is clear from these words that Baptism is a sign which points out that heavenly grace is infused into us, through the gift of which we are granted the power, of entering on a new life, of fulfilling all the works of piety and of charity with a joyful and alert mind. Finally he adds: *'For if we have been united with him in a death like his we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his'* because if we, like plants inserted in him, are similar in his death, we shall also be similar in his resurrection, from which it is clear that Baptism also clearly signifies eternal life which we have acquired by its means.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Catechismo Romano*, Part. II, De sacramentis in genere, n. 12, Turin, 1832.

We remind ourselves of the common definition of a sacrament, that it is, ‘an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is given to our souls’.<sup>35</sup>

### **The sacramental grace of Baptism**

This consists in the communication of the supernatural life in Christ which he possesses through the hypostatic union of his human and divine natures and obtained by Christ from his Father through his passion.

The baptised are incorporated into Christ in the words ordained by the Church and so share initially in the vision of God which Christ has. It is a substantial union and not merely an accidental one, as appears from the different similes which Christ uses to signify the union of himself with his disciples. Sometimes he represents himself as a vine and his disciples as the branches which receive their nourishment from it;<sup>36</sup> sometimes he is the head of the body of which his disciples are the members;<sup>37</sup> at other times he is the seed sown in the earth, from which the tree springs up which represents his Church.<sup>38</sup> All these similes are taken from substantial unions in nature. Christ says he is the life,<sup>39</sup> meaning that we cannot have life except the life which he has, namely, unless we are united so as to form one thing with him. It is one and the same life that he communicates to all just as there is one sole life which animates the whole body, the one sole life which assimilates the particles of food which are changed into the body and blood of a living person **(Ref. 2)**.

This substantial and vital union with Christ is the work of Baptism and without this there is no supernatural life. The character consists in this union and in order that the supernatural life be complete it must influence the will turning it to God. This happens when the will poses no obstacle to its free act to will the good. This, of course, can only happen in the adult and such opposition prevents the person having anything more than the power of the life but not the complete act.

The consequences of possessing the Baptismal character, then, are twofold:

1. the remission of the debt owed by man to God, namely that of original sin, and of actual sin committed before Baptism. This is what is called in Scripture the death of ‘the old Adam’. *For whoever has died is freed from sin.*<sup>40</sup>
2. the good inclination of the will proceeding from the supernatural light in the intellect in which the positive *sanctifying grace* properly consists. Scripture calls this the

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, n. 249, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> *Jn* 15: 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Col* 1: 18.

<sup>38</sup> *Jn* 12: 24.

<sup>39</sup> *Jn* 11: 25.

<sup>40</sup> *Rom* 6: 7.

resurrection of the new man. *'We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.'*<sup>41</sup>

Sanctifying, habitual, immanent grace in man is therefore the *sacramental* grace of Baptism. This is not the same as actual and transient graces because the character is the source of this grace and since the character always remains, so too the grace which flows from it is continual, providing there is no obstacle.

This Baptismal grace is *triniform*; because the impression of the Trinity which it stamps upon the soul is first a feeling or sense of God in Christ (an infinite subsistent *force*), second an intellectual *light* (subsistent knowledge) and third a *love* for good (a subsistent love) as explained in the chapter on grace.<sup>42</sup>

### **Explanation of 1 John 5: 7–8**

*'There are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree'*<sup>43</sup>

Rosmini wishes to comment on the above verses (a variant from the norm as given in modern versions of the Bible) and apply them to the sacrament of Baptism.

St John says, speaking of those born of God, 'for whatever is born of God conquers the world.'<sup>44</sup> We are born of God in Baptism and this takes place by means of faith which is infused in Baptism by means of that light by which we begin to perceive God and we adhere to him with our will. So John adds, 'And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith'.<sup>45</sup> Now Christ is the object of our faith so John adds, 'who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God'.<sup>46</sup>

Now how does Christ unite himself to us so that we feel him and how does he in this way become the object of our faith? The means, John says, are a) his blood by which he acquires from the Father the right and liberty to communicate to human beings the perception of God; b) the water, the matter through which supernatural life would pass to them; c) the Holy Spirit which is infused into the soul at the same time. Hence John says, *'This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood.'*<sup>47</sup> And it is the Spirit that testifies to the truth. That is, to Christ who is the truth. We believe this by our faith in Christ. John goes on to say 'not with the water only' because the water must receive its power from the blood of Christ, otherwise it would be like the water of John or the Baptisms of the Old Law.

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<sup>41</sup> *Rom* 6: 4.

<sup>42</sup> See chapter 3, pp. 39–41.

<sup>43</sup> 1 *Jn* 5: 7–8 (NRSV Variant see bible note).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



But Baptism infuses not only verbiform grace but triform grace because in Christ we know the Father who is the principle of Christ the Word, and we receive the Holy Spirit from Christ who proceeds from the Father through the Son.<sup>48</sup>

John distinguishes those who are not yet regenerated from those who have been regenerated through Baptism. He uses 'heaven' to indicate the latter and 'earth' to indicate the former. Hence as quoted above, '*There are three that testify in heaven, (the souls of the regenerated) the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth, (the souls of those who have not yet been regenerated) the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree.*'

'St. John concludes that '*He who believes in the son of God has the testimony in himself*', namely, he has the testimony within him of the Blessed Trinity<sup>49</sup> and explaining more fully the nature of this internal testimony he says that by such testimony he feels that God has given him eternal life (which begins in Baptism) and that this life is in his Son who says himself '*I am the life*' so that our supernatural life is nothing else but a participation of the divine life of Christ '*And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*'<sup>50</sup>

Rosmini concludes this section on Baptism by referring to Baptism of blood and Baptism of desire. He points out that these are not sacraments though they agree with it with regard to its effect, that is, to bring salvation. But they do not take effect during a person's life because, during his lifetime the person is not yet a martyr, and while the person lives there is always a possibility of reception of the sacrament of Baptism. So these two means of salvation do not impress the character and do not incorporate them permanently and habitually in Christ, though, of course, they may receive actual graces.

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<sup>48</sup> Or as we say in the Creed 'from the Father and the Son'.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Jn 5: 10.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Jn 5: 11. Cf. *AS, ibid.*, art. XI, p. 262.

<b>Ref. 1.</b>	<b>Water received its power to be used in Baptism from contact with Christ's body at his own Baptism</b>
Ambrose	'The Lord was baptised, not because he needed purification, but because he willed to purify the waters so that these being cleansed by the flesh of Christ who knew no sin, they might acquire the power of Baptism'. <sup>51</sup>
John Chrysostom	'Christ was baptised, that he might leave the sanctified waters to those baptised afterwards'. <sup>52</sup>

<b>Ref. 2.</b>	<b>Our substantial union with Christ under the similes of:</b>
Vine and branches <i>Jn</i> 15: 5.	'I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing'.
Head of the body <i>Col</i> 1: 18	'He is the head of the body the Church'.
The tree and the seed. <i>Jn</i> 12: 24	'Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit'.

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<sup>51</sup> Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*, lib. III, cap. III, vv. 21-22.

<sup>52</sup> John Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum*, hom. IV, n. 13. *AS*, *ibid.*, art. III, p. 244, footnote.

## Chapter 17

### The Sacrament of Confirmation

#### Preview

The effects of Baptism are brought to completion by the sacrament of Confirmation. This deepens the grace of Baptism and makes us strong adult Christians. Rosmini reiterates that in the sacrament of Baptism the Word acts directly in the essence of our souls, whereas in Confirmation the Holy Spirit acts on it by a reflective action enabling the soul to reflect on what it has already received in Baptism. Rosmini, as is his wont, confirms all this by tradition, launching into the witness of Scripture, St Thomas and the Fathers. The next section deals with the fact that the character of Baptism is the same character as that impressed by Confirmation. This is not too straightforward. At one time he says that the character is impressed both in Baptism and Confirmation and at another he states that the same character is perfected in Confirmation, or, perhaps better, that it is the same character with different powers in Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. The parts of the sacrament are the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the imposition of the hand with the anointing. A final question is whether the apostles received the sacrament of Confirmation. This was certainly not before the resurrection because Christ had not yet sent the Holy Spirit. We know, of course, that the Apostles were anointed mightily at Pentecost. As for Baptism, they were in direct contact with Christ prior to his resurrection and Christ had no need of matter and form, after all, he was THE sacrament.

The effectiveness of Baptism is limited by the will of Christ which is determined by the incorporation of human beings into him. Now we must distinguish the union of human beings with Christ and the effects which proceed from this union, just as we distinguish the seed from the plant or the embryo from the born child. So there is an essential effect of Baptism and many secondary effects which spring from this first effect. The essential effect pertains to a person's personality, thus creating *a new person*. The other effects sanctify the other parts of the person which constitute his/her *nature*. Thus different powers and aptitudes are acquired. This takes place by our actions and the action of God. As far as we are concerned it all depends on the use we make of our new supernatural life with God, whether we are more or less disposed to draw profit from it. Theologians teach that sacramental grace is given *ex opere operato* by the very fact of the gift of the sacrament irrespective of the person; but the intensity of the sacraments will vary according to the capacity and disposition of the subject and even more so according to the action of God in the individual soul. We saw that there are two effects of Baptism, a negative one, the remission of sin, and a

positive one, incorporation with Christ and a participation in his life. Now these two effects are brought to perfection through the sacrament of Confirmation which deepens the grace received in Baptism and makes us strong Christians and the anointing of the sick, which removes the remains of sin. Both these sacraments are effected by an action which is, as it were medicinal for human infirmity, and both sacraments affect the body as well as the soul. Confirmation instils courage in confessing the faith and the anointing of the sick can alleviate even physical disease. Oil therefore is a very fitting matter for this sacrament. St John Chrysostom points out that spiritual infancy consists in faith and adulthood consists in perfection in works of a holy life. Now faith is impressed with the light of the word and charity comes to us diffused by the Holy Spirit. Thus Confirmation makes us adults and perfect. *'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us'*.<sup>1</sup>

Rosmini recapitulates what he has said about the immediate communication of grace by the Word and by the Holy Spirit. The Word is perceived by his direct action on the soul; the Holy Spirit moves the reflective power of the soul and acts on it by a reflex action. He refers again to St John's Gospel. Christ said, *'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.'*<sup>2</sup> Christ attributes to the Spirit the recalling of things he has taught by means of the soul reflecting on them with a supernatural vision. The Word impressed itself on the souls of his disciples by means of his sensible presence and his words illuminated the soul supernaturally; in this way he communicated *verbiform* grace by which the soul immediately perceives the Word. This is indicated by Christ in the discourse with Philip.<sup>3</sup> Note that the person of the Word is not known unless the relationship between him and the Father who has generated him is known, because this relationship constitutes the distinction of the persons.

Philip had said to him, *'Lord, show us the Father'* and Jesus said to him, *'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father'*.

In these words he refers to the first means, namely the visible aspect which had the power of making known the Word, and, therefore, the Father, since one person is not known without the other. He refers to the second means, which was the power of his words, where he says, *'Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?'* Which comes to the same thing as *'Do you not know the Word and consequently the Father also?'* *'The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own'* which means *'besides my aspect, my words ought to make you perceive me as a divine person, and the Father in me.'* Then he adds a third means which were his works, *'then believe me because of the works themselves'*; one of these

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<sup>1</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad hebraeos*, cap. VI, hom. IX, n. 2. cf. Rom 5: 5.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 14: 25–26.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 14: 8ff.

works was the sacraments.<sup>4</sup> Now all this was before the Holy Spirit was personally given.

The soul had to reflect on what had been given, penetrating it and put it into practice (**Ref. 1**). This is the work of the Holy Spirit about which Jesus discourses in chapters 14 and 15 of St John's gospel. After speaking of the knowledge of himself and of the Father he adds that this knowledge must be put into action, consist in love, and in an observance of his precepts *'the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do... If you love me, you will keep my commandments.'* But how can those who believe in him do the works that he does? *'Because I am going to the Father'* in order to send you the Holy Spirit). *'And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever.'* The comforter: 1. will cause you to know the Word in a more lively manner and 2. will make this knowledge more operative. *'On that day (when you receive the Holy Spirit) you will know that I am in my Father'*. We have here the knowledge of the Word made on their souls through the impression of the Holy Spirit *'and you in me, and I in you.'* Here we have the reflection which the Holy Spirit causes in us by which we know that we are in the Word and the Word in us; *'They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me'*, (this refers to the practical observance of the commandments proceeding from the Holy Spirit): *'and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'* He says *'will reveal myself to them'* because it is he who sends the Holy Spirit that reveals him in greater fullness in proportion as his love is greater; and he says *'will be loved by the Father'* because it is the Father who sends the Holy Spirit by one and the same spiration, so he says that the *'the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf'*. The Holy Spirit will make the vision of the Word luminous, clear and effective in them, just as in the order of nature meditation and reflection add light and distinctness to our direct thoughts and make them operative.<sup>5</sup>

St Thomas says, 'For spiritual life has a certain conformity with the life of the body: just as other corporeal things have a certain likeness to things spiritual. Now a man attains perfection in the corporeal life in two ways: first, in regard to his own person; secondly, in regard to the whole community of the society in which he lives, for man is by nature a social animal. With regard to himself man is perfected in the life of the body, in two ways; first, directly per se, i.e. by acquiring some vital perfection; secondly, indirectly per accidens, i.e. by the removal of hindrances to life, such as ailments, or the like. Now the life of the body is perfected "directly," in three ways. First, by generation whereby a man begins to be and to live: and corresponding to this in the spiritual life there is Baptism, which is a spiritual

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Jn* 14: 8 ff.

<sup>5</sup> *AS*, lib. IV, II, cap. II, art. IV, pp. 266–267.

regeneration, according to *Titus* 3:5: “through the water of rebirth,” etc. Secondly, by growth whereby a man is brought to perfect size and strength: and corresponding to this in the spiritual life there is Confirmation, in which the Holy Ghost is given to strengthen us. Wherefore the disciples who were already baptized were bidden thus: “stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (*Lk* 24: 49).<sup>6</sup>

‘Man is in the state of spiritual infancy, when, although he has received the Word in the superior part of the soul; yet he still lacks the fullness of the Holy Spirit, which reveals and impresses still more the light of the Word within the soul itself and causes it to operate in all the other powers making man thereby robust and courageous in resisting the assaults of his enemies.’<sup>7</sup> So the principle of the action of Baptism is Christ, the Word, but the principle of the action of Confirmation is the Holy Spirit; the term of both these actions is always the Word.

### **This doctrine is shown in tradition**

St Thomas says, ‘Now it is evident that in the life of the body a certain special perfection consists in man's attaining to the perfect age, and being able to perform the perfect actions of a man: hence the Apostle says (*1 Cor* 13:11): “When I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.” And thence it is that besides the movement of generation whereby man receives life of the body, there is the movement of growth, whereby man is brought to the perfect age. So therefore does man receive spiritual life in Baptism, which is a spiritual regeneration: while in Confirmation man arrives at the perfect age, as it were, of the spiritual life.’<sup>8</sup>

This doctrinal teaching is backed up by tradition in the teachings of the Fathers and Holy Scripture.

In the letter to the Hebrews we read, ‘*For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened (Baptism), and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit...*’<sup>9</sup> The word ‘enlightened’ has been applied to Baptism down the ages. We see here a distinction between this and those who have experienced and shared in the gift of the Holy Spirit, namely Confirmation. The Acts of the Apostles distinguishes between being baptised and receiving the Holy Spirit, ‘*Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the*

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<sup>6</sup> ST, III, LXV, art. I.

<sup>7</sup> AS, *ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>8</sup> ST, III, LXXII, art. I.

<sup>9</sup> *Heb* 6: 4.

*Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, Rosmini says, the person of the Holy Spirit comes only in Confirmation whereas he comes with his gifts and effects in Baptism (**Ref. 2**). He goes on to mention several Fathers of the Church to confirm his teaching (**Ref. 3**).

The personal communication contains in itself necessarily all the gifts of the Holy Spirit implicitly. When therefore the Fathers wish to express the personal communication of the Spirit to the soul, they call it the fullness of the Spirit, and describe the seven gifts as representing this fullness which they also call the sevenfold grace, for example, Clement I and Didymus of Alexandria. St Ambrose attributes the seven gifts to the sacrament of Confirmation but says that these are the principal gifts of the Holy Spirit. Rhabanus Maurus is very explicit in his work *De Institutione Cleri*, distinguishing the personal communication of the Holy Spirit from that of his gifts. He distinguishes two anointings that are made with holy chrism, one by the priest immediately after Baptism, the other by the bishop in Confirmation (**Ref. 4**).

There is no personal communication that is not entire and full, so when the Fathers speak of the fullness of the Spirit they intend a personal communication, not just a communication of gifts alone.

Rosmini concludes this section by quoting a 10th century author who says, ‘The baptised is anointed with the unction of the holy chrism in order that by that unction the Spirit of the sevenfold grace may be granted with the Father and with the Son, and merits to be rendered the habitation not only of the Holy Spirit, but also of all the Holy Trinity.’<sup>11</sup> This confirms the triform nature of grace.

Rosmini points out that all this does not detract from Baptism. The latter gives us the fulness of grace as well as Confirmation. As we have seen both the Word and the Spirit teach us all things but the Spirit has the role of suggesting or bringing to mind what the Word has already taught us. The Word gives us direct knowledge whereas the Spirit causes us to reflect on it. Both act in us fully, since both communicate all things. The Word says ‘*I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father*’.<sup>12</sup> And of the Holy Spirit he also says, ‘*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth*’;<sup>13</sup> and the reason is ‘*for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears*’,<sup>14</sup> i.e. he will hear from the Word.

‘The special effects that we are accustomed to attribute to Confirmation, namely the fortitude of soul in the Christian, courage to confess Christ and to contend as a valiant soldier of the faith, proceed as natural consequences from this principle that the Holy

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<sup>10</sup> *Acts* 8: 14–17.

<sup>11</sup> Letter of Saturday in Pentecost. (Source unknown).

<sup>12</sup> *Jn* 15: 15.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 16: 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Spirit re-impresses in the soul the knowledge of the Word, revives faith and makes its charity to become operative.<sup>15</sup>

**The same character impressed in Baptism is also impressed in Confirmation though more deeply.**

The character impressed in Confirmation, considered in its essence, is simply an augmentation of the character of Baptism.

St Thomas says, 'Confirmation stands to Baptism as growth to generation. Now it is clear that no one can grow to a perfect age, unless he has first been born. In the same way he who has not been baptised cannot receive the sacrament of Confirmation.'<sup>16</sup> And 'this sacrament is given to confirm what it found there before.'<sup>17</sup>

The generic definition of the character, as we know, is that it consists in a permanent impression in the intellectual part of the soul. The characters of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders are essentially one but with different effects i.e. different powers. In Baptism there is the passive power of receiving the other sacraments, in Confirmation the active power of resisting temptations, of confessing Christ with boldness, and in the last one the power of exercising the plenitude of the priesthood of Christ. The Fathers say constantly when speaking of Baptism and Confirmation that the character is the sign of Christ and that it is the role of the Holy Spirit to impress the Word on the soul, e.g. St Ambrose, St Cyril of Jerusalem and St Cyril of Alexandria (**Ref. 5**). The earlier Fathers speaking of Baptism and Confirmation speak of them as being administered at the same time, one after the other, but only of one character and they appear to speak of Confirmation as giving completeness and wholeness to Baptism, e.g. Theodoret and other writers who speak of the character of Confirmation (**Ref. 6**). Rosmini explains that Baptism confers the character and it is perfected in Confirmation so that there are not two characters but only one according to the ancient Fathers. The latter took the smearing of blood on the door posts at the time of the exodus as symbolic of the character of both sacraments. Rosmini quotes St Gregory of Nazianzen who speaks of Baptism and Confirmation united with it and the character of the latter, not mentioning the character of Baptism because it is already contained in that of Confirmation.<sup>18</sup>

**The parts of the sacrament of Confirmation**

As regards the sacrament of Confirmation, ancient writers gave it different names which originated from the four parts of the sacrament. Thus they called it, prayer, or

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<sup>15</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. VIII, p. 279.

<sup>16</sup> ST, III, LXXII, art. VI.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, VII, ad 2. Cf. *AS, ibid.* art. IX, p. 280.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, Orat. XL in sanctum Baptisma, n. XV.



invocation, or imposition of hands, or seal or anointing. Rosmini surveys the ways these expressions are used; sometimes one or other is omitted or implied in another part, for instance prayer and imposition of hands. The application of chrism and the imposition of the hand are often seen to be the same thing. Augustine for instance says, 'what is imposition of hands if not the prayer over the person?'<sup>19</sup> Cyprian says, 'they receive the Holy Spirit through our prayer and the imposition of the hand.'<sup>20</sup> The *Acts of the Apostles* simply says, '*The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit...Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*'<sup>21</sup>, no mention of the anointing. 'For the Fathers themselves who in one place say that the Holy Spirit was given by imposition of hands, say in another place, that he was given by the anointing with chrism and sometimes they unite both things together; whence it is plain that both things belong to one and the same rite and that for them it is the same to express it by one or the other.'<sup>22</sup> This survey is very detailed with quotations from the Fathers and writers of the Church. Rosmini concludes that the imposition of the hand and the anointing are indivisible and '...it is seen clearly that this Rite is composed of four parts, first the words; second the imposition of hands; third the unction; fourth the sign of the cross.'<sup>23</sup>

Rosmini sees the form of the sacrament in the prayer or invocation; the chrism is the *remote* matter, the imposition and the sign of the cross is the *proximate* matter.<sup>24</sup>

He goes on to say that the three parts of Confirmation, namely, the unction, the sign of the cross and the imposition of hands symbolises according to Scripture and the Fathers the three effects of the sacrament.

St Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians mentions the three parts of the sacrament. He says, '*I had a mind to come to you before, that you might have a second grace.*'<sup>25</sup> Rosmini using the version of the bible of his time says that this second grace refers to the Sacrament of Confirmation, the first grace being that of Baptism. He says that God confirms them in Christ, who anoints them and seals them and gives the pledge of the spirit in their hearts. '*But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts....*'<sup>26</sup> So here there is an anointing, the seal and the pledge of the Spirit which is attributed by the Fathers to the imposition of hands.

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<sup>19</sup> Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib. III, cap. XVI.

<sup>20</sup> Cyprian, *Epistola LXXIII ad Jubaianum*, n. IX.

<sup>21</sup> *Acts* 8: 15, 17.

<sup>22</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art X, p. 288, note 151.

<sup>23</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>24</sup> The present Roman rite consists in the invocation of the Spirit when the bishop extends his hands over those who are to be confirmed. The essential rite follows in which the bishop anoints the person with chrism on the forehead saying '*Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.*' The sign of peace concludes the rite.

<sup>25</sup> *2 Cor* 1: 15 (Douai).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 21–22.

St. Ambrose attributes the effect of the anointing to the Father, that of the sign of the cross to the Son and the effect of the imposition of hands to the Holy Spirit, so he refers the three elements constituting the matter of this sacrament to the three persons of the most Holy Trinity who operate in this sacrament, which comprises, as has been said, the triform grace in the soul **(Rev. 7)**.

In some passages of scripture we read of God the Father anointing Christ his Son. *‘For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed...’*<sup>27</sup> *‘That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the Baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.’*<sup>28</sup> *‘You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.’*<sup>29</sup> The sign, then, is referred to Christ since it is in the form of a cross and its effect is fortitude. The cross conquers the devil and Christ is the power of the Father. Finally the pledge of the Spirit is charity and spiritual joy, the pledge of eternal happiness. The Spirit is the Spirit of promise. *‘In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.’*<sup>30</sup>

### **Whether the apostles received the sacrament of Confirmation**

St Thomas believes that Christ instituted the sacrament of Confirmation ‘not by conferring it but by promising it’.

‘Christ instituted it not by conferring but by promising it. According to the words of St. John (16:7) “If I do not go away the counsellor will not come to you, but if I go I will send him to you.”’<sup>31</sup> And he explains that this sacrament could not be conferred before the resurrection of Christ saying ‘and this is because in this sacrament the fullness of the Holy Spirit is given; it was not fitting that it should be given before the resurrection of Christ and his ascension into heaven according to the words of St. John (7: 39) “for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”’.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Acts* 4: 27.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 10: 38.

<sup>29</sup> *Heb* 1: 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Eph* 1: 13.

<sup>31</sup> ST, III, LXXII, art. I, ad 1.

<sup>32</sup> ST, III, LXXII, art. II, ad 1.

St Thomas said that the apostles did not receive this sacrament because, 'Christ, by the power which He exercises in the sacraments, bestowed on the apostles the reality of this sacrament, i.e. the fulness of the Holy Ghost, without the sacrament itself, because they had received 'the first fruits of the Spirit' (Romans 8:23).<sup>33</sup>

Whether the apostles received the sacrament of Baptism is debated. If they could not receive the sacrament of Confirmation, it is not impossible that they received the grace of the Word through their converse with him. Christ did not need the intermediate means of contact with him when he was actually in contact with his faithful followers.

It is true that Christ says positively that '*unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*' (Jn 3: 5) Yet it is certain that this sentence admits a reasonable interpretation in respect of material water, the necessity of which is not absolutely essential for all people. So true is this that by common consent all those are excepted who died the day before Pentecost and those also who should be saved by Baptism of desire or of blood. Now Christ gave that 'living water' immediately, of which he spoke to the woman of Samaria, as '*springing up to eternal life*' (Jn 4: 14) which was not a material water, although the material water was instituted as a symbol of the spiritual water. St. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit at the approach only of Jesus as yet in the womb of Mary; did he not receive Baptism before his birth?<sup>34</sup>

Moreover Jesus did not baptise but only his disciples.<sup>35</sup> Rosmini concludes by giving other examples in the Old and New Testament to support his assertion.<sup>36</sup>

If all theologians are agreed that the necessity of Baptism only began after Pentecost, it was not necessary for the apostles. Since they had received the Holy Spirit they had no need of Baptism.

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. XIII, p. 293.

<sup>35</sup> *Jn* 4: 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Jn* 14: 19; *Deut* 8: 3; *Mt* 4: 4; *Jn* 6: 69; *Jn* 15: 3; *Mt* 9: 2; *Lk* 5: 18; 7: 48; 19: 9.

Ref. 1.	The work of the Holy Spirit in our souls
Cyril of Alexandria	We first received the light of the Word in Baptism. The soul has to reflect on this and put it to practical use. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Cyril says, 'we are sealed with the spirit of redemption; and by sharing in the Holy Spirit, Christ was impressed and sealed in the hearts of all.' <sup>37</sup>

Ref. 2.	With the oil or holy chrism the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled
Dionysius the Areopagite	<p>'But further, the perfecting unction of the Muron (chrism) gives to him who has been initiated in the most sacred initiation of the Birth in God, the abiding of the supremely Divine Spirit; the sacred imagery of the symbols, portraying, as I think, the most Divine Spirit abundantly supplied by Him, Who, for our sakes, has been sanctified as man by the supremely Divine Spirit, in an unaltered condition of His essential Godhead.'</p> <p>'But the perfecting unction of the Muron (chrism) makes the man initiated of good odour, for the holy perfecting of the Divine birth unites those who have been perfected to the supremely Divine Spirit. Now the overshadowing which makes intelligibly of a good savour, and perfect, as being most unutterable, I leave to the mental consciousness of those who are deemed worthy of the sacred and deifying participation of the Holy Spirit within their mind.'<sup>38</sup></p>

Ref. 3.	Holy Spirit comes with his gifts in Baptism but in person only in Confirmation.
<p><b>St Cornelius</b> in a letter to Fabius of Antioch, speaking of Novatus, who, when sick, received only the sacrament of Baptism; 'How could he receive the Holy Spirit who had never received this sign of Confirmation?'<sup>39</sup></p> <p><b>The Council of Arles</b>, at the time of St Sylvester, forbids the re-Baptism of heretics, but they shall receive Confirmation 'that they might receive the Holy Spirit'.<sup>40</sup></p> <p><b>Pope Clement</b>, says that no one can be 'a perfect Christian' unless besides Baptism he has also received in Confirmation the sevenfold graces of the spirit.<sup>41</sup> Christian perfection is therefore attributed to the reception of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p><b>St Cyril of Jerusalem</b> deduces the name of Christian from the chrism and says that we cannot in a certain way say that one is a Christian unless he has received the Holy Spirit with the unction of the chrism.<sup>42</sup></p>	

<sup>37</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Isaiam*, lib. V, cap. LXVI, vv. 18–19.

<sup>38</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, Cap. IV, part III, §11 and cap. II, part III, §VIII.

<sup>39</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica*, lib. VI, cap. XLIII.

<sup>40</sup> Council of Arles, I, canon 8.

<sup>41</sup> Clement, *Epist* 4.

<sup>42</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *catechesis XXI. Mystagogica III*, V. A Greek writer, namely Jeremiah of Constantinople makes the same observation, that a Christian is so named from the chrism.

**St. Urban** in a Decretal Epistle says expressly that ‘what makes full Christians is the Holy Spirit which we receive after Baptism by the imposition of the hands of the bishops’.<sup>43</sup>

In the very ancient **Council of Eliberis** it is said that ‘the imposition of the hands of the bishop is necessary to the baptised in order that he may be perfect.’<sup>44</sup>

**St. Ambrose** says ‘the spiritual seal follows because after the font it remains for them still to become perfect, which takes place when the Holy Spirit is infused on the invocation of the priest.’<sup>45</sup>

‘In the work entitled the **Ecclesiastical Hierarchy** we read, for example, that the unction which is used in the sacrament of Confirmation is called “that which makes perfect”, which “unites to the divine Spirit the things which ought to be perfect”<sup>46</sup> “which completes the divine regeneration.”<sup>47</sup> We also read there that “the seal of that unction makes us partake of the most holy communion” which “most holy communion is that of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>48</sup> It says that “the coming of the Holy Spirit is most secret, and intelligible to those only who have deserved to perceive in their souls the holy and deific society of the same Holy Spirit.”<sup>49</sup> Again that “the grace is perfected by the most holy consummation of the unction,” and “the sign of this sacrament signifies that from him who was sanctified by the divine Spirit in the flesh that he assumed for us, gives the most Holy Spirit without substantial change from the divinity;”<sup>50</sup> these last words, we may observe, would not be necessary if the question were not of the communication of the very *person* of the Holy Spirit: but as the communication of the Spirit was the question it was necessary to observe as this acute writer does, that the Holy Spirit in being communicated to us suffers no change in his divine nature.’<sup>51</sup>

Finally Rosmini quotes **St. Cyprian**, who attributes to Confirmation both the conferring of the Holy Spirit and becoming a consummate and perfect Christian by the sign of the Lord.<sup>52</sup>

‘This passage deserves some attention and therefore I here cite it. “This chrism is a seal and sign of Christ and we who have received from it in the anointing the grace are called Christians, and belong to Christ our Lord. For he does not despise that we should be called by his name who are called adopted sons of God and Gods by his grace. And the priest who anoints the baptised says ‘seal of the Holy Spirit, Amen.’ Hence it is reasonable to join chrism to Baptism without any delay and at once to make the baptised to partake of that venerable communion.” (*In respons.* 1 cap 2) From these last words it appears that he attributes to the chrism the placing of man in communion with the Holy Spirit. It appears from the Greek form *signaculum doni Spiritus Sancti, Amen* that the Holy Spirit is properly speaking given in this sacrament; and from the whole of this passage it appears that he cannot be called a perfect Christian who has not received the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Confirmation.’ *AS*, lib. IV, parte II, cap. II, art. VI, note 93, pp. 271–2.

<sup>43</sup> Urban I, *De communi vita et oblatione fidelium*.

<sup>44</sup> Council of Eliberius, can. 38.

<sup>45</sup> Ambrose, *De sacramentis*, lib. III, cap. 2, n. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *De Ecclesiastica hierarchia*, cap II, pars III, § VIII.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, cap.II, pars I.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. II, pars II.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, cap.II, pars II.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, cap.IV, pars III, § XI.

<sup>51</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 272–273.

<sup>52</sup> Cyprian, *Epistola LXXIII ad Iubaianum*, n. IX.

<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>The personal communication of the Spirit and his fullness is represented by his seven gifts</b>
Clement I	‘...to be confirmed by the bishop, that is, to receive the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>53</sup>
Didymus	Shows in his work <i>De Spiritu Sancto</i> that the fullness of the gifts of God is the Holy Spirit himself. <sup>54</sup>
Ambrose	‘The seal follows of which you have heard today. For after the font of Baptism it still remains to attain perfection, which is gained when at the invocation of the priest the Holy Spirit is infused, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge and piety, of fear of the Holy Spirit, which are as it were the seven virtues of the Spirit. And certainly all the virtues belong to the Spirit, but these are the principal. For what are so principal as piety? as the knowledge of God? as fortitude? As the counsel of God? as the fear of the Lord? These are seven virtues which come to you when you are confirmed.’ <sup>55</sup>
Rhabanus Maurus	‘The baptised is signed with chrism by the priest on the summit of the head; by the bishop on the forehead, in order that by the first anointing, the descent of the Holy Ghost might be signified who comes to consecrate the habitation to God; in the second is set forth the coming into man of the sevenfold grace of the same Holy Spirit with all the plenitude of sanctity and knowledge and virtue. For the Holy Spirit himself (how would it be possible more clearly to express the person of the Holy Spirit) descends voluntarily from the Father after the bodies and souls have been purified and blessed, it descends there in order to sanctify and illuminate by its visit his own vessel (viz. the vessel made worthy of him).’ <sup>56</sup>
<b>Ref. 5.</b>	<b>The character is the sign of Christ, the Word, impressed on the soul by the Holy Spirit.</b>
Ambrose	‘You have therefore received the Holy Spirit into your heart. This you will see in the Cantic of Canticles, when Christ says to his Church ‘Set me as a seal upon your heart as a seal upon your arm.’( <i>Song</i> 8: 6) <sup>57</sup>
Cyril of Jerusalem	Calls the character ‘Christ’s chrism.’ <sup>58</sup>
Cyril of	‘We are signed by the Spirit of redemption, and Christ by the participation of the

<sup>53</sup> Clement I, *Epistola* IV.

<sup>54</sup> Didymus of Alexandria, *De Spiritu Sancto*, n. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, lib. III, cap. II, nn. 8–10.

<sup>56</sup> Rhabanus Maurus, *De Clericorum institutione*, lib I, cap. XXX.

<sup>57</sup> Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, lib. VI, cap. II, n. 6.

<sup>58</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* XXI, *Mystagoga* 3.

*The Sacrament of Confirmation*

Alexandria	Holy Spirit was impressed and formed in the hearts of all. <sup>59</sup>
<b>Ref. 6.</b>	<b>The earlier Fathers speak of one character only in Baptism and Confirmation</b>
Theodoret	‘Remember the mystery of Holy Baptism in which those who are initiated, after having renounced Satan and confessed God, being anointed with the chrism of the spiritual unction, as with a sign and certain mark known to the king, under that visible species of unction, receive the invisible grace of the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>60</sup>
A Greek writer 16 <sup>th</sup> c	‘We ought to anoint the baptised immediately with the sacred unction because this chrism is the seal and sign of Christ and when we have received the grace in the unction we are called by him Christians, and belong to Christ the Lord.’ ‘He here clearly speaks of the character which is signed with the sign of Christ, and places us under the dominion of Christ. It is yet clearer from what follows that he is speaking of the character and of that Confirmation.’ ‘The priest who anoints the baptised says: “Seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit Amen.” (This is the form of Confirmation among the Greeks). So that it is in accordance with reason to add the chrism to Baptism, and not to defer it for a season, but to make the baptised to partake at once of that venerable communion.’ <sup>61</sup>
<b>Ref. 7.</b>	<b>St Ambrose on the Effects of Confirmation</b>
	‘Everywhere there is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one operation, one sanctification, although some things seem to be special. In what way? It is God who hath anointed thee, the Lord who hath signed thee and placed in thy heart the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Isaiam*, lib. VI, cap. LXVI, vv. 18–19.

<sup>60</sup> Theodoret, *Explanatio in Canticum canticorum*, lib. I, cap. I, v. 2.

‘It might perhaps appear that Theodoret is not here speaking of Confirmation, but of the unction of chrism which is made by the priest immediately after Baptism. But this same unction which according to the present discipline is used may be a remains of the ancient Confirmation which was given immediately after Baptism and which was divided from it at a later period. If in the 5th Century this division had already come in I haven’t heard of it. Besides this I observe that Theodoret attributes to this unction, the impression of the sign and royal mark, and I do not see how this could be attributed to the unction of the priest after Baptism, which does not impress a character on the soul.’ *AS, ibid.*, art IX, note, p. 281.

<sup>61</sup> Jeremiah II Tranos, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Censura orientalis ecclesiae*, Dilinguae 1582, cap III. *AS, ibid.*, pp. 281–282.

<sup>62</sup> Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, lib. VI, cap. II, nn. 5–6.

## Chapter 18

### The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (1)

#### Preview

Rosmini's explains his theory that transubstantiation takes place in a way similar to nutrition. Just as we communicate our life to the food we eat and assimilate so Jesus communicates his own life to the bread and wine so that they become his body and blood. He next explains what happens when we receive the sacred species in the Eucharist. Our vital principle replaces that of Christ which now ceases to vivify the consecrated bread and wine that we receive. The presence of Christ within us does not last just for an instant but for the whole time until we have assimilated the substance of the species. Rosmini also explains this philosophically. It is important to note that we are united to that portion of Christ's body and blood which correspond to the transubstantiated species we receive. We are not identified with the whole body and blood of Christ but only a part of the whole Christ though we enjoy a sublime and real union with him. In other words it is the whole nature of Christ's body that we receive, not all its quantity, but this is not lacking in virtue of concomitance.<sup>1</sup> The effects of receiving the body and blood of Christ are then explained. They can be shortly summarised as: a) drawing us away from evil and steering us towards good; b) a diminution of concupiscence; c) a healing of the wounds of sin; d) remission of temporal punishment; e) union with one another. This section is followed by an explanation of the relationship of the soul with the Eucharistic Christ in the next life. When the soul is separated from the body it is not left alone, merely existing in a zombie-like state, but it enjoys life which comes to it from the humanity of the Eucharistic Christ. *'I am the resurrection and the life'*. This leads to Rosmini's novel theory that those who have not received the Eucharist in this life will receive it at the point of death. No one will be left out of this union which ensures their after-life. The next section of this important chapter deals with the testimony of the Fathers on transubstantiation and reception of the Eucharist, and the chapter concludes with a series of proposed difficulties which might be raised against Rosmini's theory of transubstantiation and his answers to them.

#### Rosmini's teaching on transubstantiation and its effects

Rosmini introduces this sacrament by explaining his theory of transubstantiation, or rather, as he calls it, transmutation. It takes place by the same sort of process as the

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<sup>1</sup> This means that where the living body of Christ is there must also be his blood, soul and divinity and where the living blood of Christ is there also must be his body, soul and divinity.



food we take is converted into our bodily substance. In nutrition particles of food are assimilated and absorbed into the body so as to share its life. They become animate and sensitive. Rosmini believes that in a similar manner Jesus Christ communicates his own life to the particles of bread and wine so that they become his body and blood.

In his *Antropologia in servizio della scienza morale* Rosmini speaks at length about how natural nutrition occurs. It is one of the effects of many forces which act in animate bodies such as human beings.

He says:

One of the effects of the brute forces continually acting within the animal body is the living body's constant loss of particles which, when ceasing to share in the life of the whole, no longer form part of the same organism. This deleterious effect, which needs to be overcome and corrected by forces of conservation, could, if uncontrolled, lead to continued diminution and final destruction of the united animate matter. Nature has, however, established a way of entry into the animal body for other particles which compensate for the losses. These particles, continually introduced and inserted into the body are "animalised", that is, they become new matter for the feeling of the animal. "Nutrition" is the means by which the particles come to receive the life common to the whole body. In the more perfect animals the whole digestive system is ordered towards nutrition.<sup>2</sup>

In this communication of life particles foreign to the animal become 'felt' and also 'feeling' because they can transmit the feeling that animates them. They become living in so far as they share in the entire life of the organism which has assimilated them.

### **Our reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.**

We must next examine what happens when we receive the body and blood of Christ normally during our celebration of the Eucharist. In what precisely does our communion consist? Certainly not by receiving the consecrated host into our mouth, this is simply physical contact with the living body of Christ; and not even in the contact between the host and our digestive system. It occurs when the body and blood of Christ becomes 'us' because assimilated by our vital principle. In other words communion is a matter of the soul and not the body. For us this occurs in an instant when our vital principle assimilates the consecrated bread making it our own body and replacing the vital principle of Christ which now ceases to vivify the consecrated bread with its own life. Having said this, it is necessary to point out that the effects of the Eucharist are not restricted to this moment of communion. Christ already acts on us through his contact with us. "The presence and action of Christ on us in the Eucharist is not for one instant but for the whole time in which the Eucharistic species remains in us and that is so long as the consecrated host remains the

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<sup>2</sup> *AM*, lib. II, cap. XV, art. III, n. 334, p. 208 [Durham, p. 187].

consecrated host. And the consecrated host remains such in us not just for an instant, but until our organism has assimilated its substance. Meanwhile the Eucharist produces its effects, both on the soul and on the body of the one who receives it.<sup>3</sup>

It might be helpful to understand this process in philosophical terms. The vital instinct to which we have referred is the force with which I tend to preserve and increase my bodily life. This instinct is proper to the sensitive soul and for our purposes can be taken as the same as the term 'sentient principle'. Rosmini says, 'The body and blood of Christ into which the bread and wine is converted is the term of the sentient principle of Christ. Now, this flesh and this blood, in the way that they exist in the Eucharist, can become the term also of the sentient principle of the person who receives them.'<sup>4</sup>

Here are Rosmini's own words,

In what manner these effects occur is something hidden; nevertheless we do not believe the following theory to be opposed to Catholic teaching which alone is true. The flesh and blood of Christ, into which the substance of the bread and wine are changed is the term of the sentient principle of Christ. Now this flesh and this blood in the way that they exist in the Eucharist can become also the term of the sentient principle of the person who receives them. The substance of the bread and wine have ceased entirely to be the substance of bread and wine and have become the true flesh and the true blood of Christ when Christ makes it the term of his sentient principle and so enlivens it with his life after the manner that occurs in nutrition. Here the bread which we eat and the wine which we drink in its nutritive part when assimilated into our flesh and our blood, is truly transubstantiated and is no longer as it was at first, bread and wine, but is really our flesh and our blood, because it has become the term of our sensitive principle. Understanding transubstantiation in this way we can more easily perceive and determine what the Eucharistic Body of Christ is. Because although Christ has only one body and now a glorious one, yet when transubstantiation occurs one can understand how there is united and incorporated into the glorious Body some part which is both indivisible and equally glorious. And this added part is the transubstantiated substance of the bread and wine which forms one thing only with the glorious body of Christ, just as a portion of our flesh and blood forms one thing only with our body. And it can be understood what it is that becomes the common term of the sentient principle of man who receives the Eucharistic food in the grace of God.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Remo Bessero Belti, *The Teaching of Antonio Rosmini, on the Eucharist*, pp. 13–14.

<sup>4</sup> A.R., *IVG*, lib. II, lezione LXXXVII, p. 326.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

This instant is the true communion between us and Christ in the Eucharist. This communion is a prelude and foretaste of the soul for the soul of eternal life which consists in the loving knowledge of God and the fulfilment of all that the soul yearns for with its feeling, understanding and will.

Christ tells us, '*those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me and I in them*'.<sup>6</sup> Rosmini speaks at length about this abiding in Christ in the *Commentary on the Introduction of the Gospel according to John*. In the unity which occurs between the body of Christ and the person who receives it there is no identification of Christ with the person because if there were, the identification would necessitate that the two sentient principles (that of Christ and that of the person who received him in the Eucharist) had a totally identical corporeal term. But this is not the case because the sentient principle of the communicant has not the *whole* body of Christ in common with Christ's sentient principle but only that part which corresponds to the substance of the transubstantiated bread and wine. In other words in the Eucharist we are not identified with Christ, even if we are united intimately with him because we remain in *us* and *Christ* remains in Christ. Rosmini says,

The unity of the one who receives the body of Christ with Christ is wholly and completely sublime. Since, although Christ is not identified with the person, nevertheless a portion of the sensitive life of Christ is identified, in a certain way with a portion of the life of the person who receives Christ, because these two lives have a portion of their corporeal term identical. Christ and the recipient feel as a portion of their body the same Eucharistic body<sup>7</sup>... And as love has several degrees, but the greatest is that through which the lovers are substantially united in the strictest way which nature grants them, and both rejoice in this union as if with an undivided feeling; so it is clear that the Eucharistic union of the faithful with Christ, being a substantial and real one even to the point of having partly the same term of life, is the greatest union which we can conceive according to human nature and the state of our present life. Therefore, just as this sacrament is the greatest pledge of Christ's love to human beings, so it contains the most intimate act of love between the just person and Christ. This love is not purely ideal and spiritual, but real, substantial, supernatural and a living corporeal one',<sup>8</sup> that is, a love which is also 'life', and not for the soul alone but also for the body. So great are the effects on the human being that they extend to its whole being, both body and soul.

### **The effects of eucharistic communion**

Later, Rosmini refers to baptised persons receiving the Eucharist in a state of grace. Such persons are already united to Christ through faith.

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<sup>6</sup> *Jn* 6: 56.

<sup>7</sup> *IVG, ibid.*, lezione LXXXVIII, pp. 329–330.

<sup>8</sup> *IVG, ibid.*, pp. 330–331.

When they receive the Eucharist, they receive the living humanity of Christ and therefore the Word Incarnate is completed in them.<sup>9</sup> This Word Incarnate sends the Holy Spirit into man, not just as light, the immediate action of the Word, but also by means of his most holy body, as of light and feeling and bodily joy. ...Therefore the Holy Spirit is sent for our sanctification by the whole Christ, always being sent by the Word...Moreover the feeling and sensitive instinct of Christ gives the Holy Spirit to the feeling and animal instinct of man and both draws him away from evil and steers him towards good, and the flesh and blood of Christ communicate the Holy Spirit to the flesh and blood of recipients making them chaste, so that all the parts of Christ act on all their parts.<sup>10</sup>

In this passage of Rosmini just quoted, we say that the Holy Spirit issues from the Word to the vital instinct of man 'leading him away from evil and steering him towards good'. Thus, another effect of the Eucharist on the body of the recipient is a diminution of concupiscence, that is, the disordered tendency to evil, which still remains in the body of those who have been baptised.

And just as bodily food remedies the deficiencies and the wear and tear of the body, in the same way the Eucharistic food heals the wounds which sin causes to the soul and strengthens the soul in its resistance to sin. The Eucharist remits even temporal punishment which we incur as a result of sin. If nothing else, it remits it indirectly, in so far as the Eucharist increases our fervour of charity and this can diminish or take away temporal punishment altogether.

Moreover, Rosmini notes that the Eucharistic bread is not simply a bond of union of the faithful with Christ. It is, indeed, also that of the faithful among themselves. And he explains: 'with the sacrament of faith, that is, Baptism, people begin to be members of the mystical body of Christ, but with the Eucharist they are united much more with the body of Christ because a portion of this body, undivided from the whole, becomes a part of them as if it were a portion of their own body and so there is a fuller continuation of them with Christ... All the faithful, therefore, through the Eucharist belong to the body of Christ and form one sole mystical, yet real, body with him. Therefore they are likewise closely united among themselves, as members of one sole body, which, though distinct, are not divided.'<sup>11</sup>

### **The relationship between the soul and the Eucharist in the next life**

Rosmini has his own particular theory regarding the relationship between the departed soul and the Eucharistic Christ. He makes the point that the Eucharistic

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<sup>9</sup> We say that the reception of the Eucharist completes in us the Word Incarnate because the Word is already present in the soul of the baptized, but it is present as subsistent Truth, not as living Reality.

<sup>10</sup> *IVG, ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>11</sup> *IVG, ibid.*, lezione XC, pp. 336, 338.

being allows souls to live in the next life even when they are separated from their bodies. In the work above mentioned Rosmini poses two questions:

1. What would the state be like of the soul separated from the body and left entirely on its own? In that state which it has by nature without anything or any exterior action being added to it?
2. What do we understand by the resurrection, the work of Jesus Christ and particularly the just who rise?

The answer to the first question is that the human soul deprived of the body with nothing being added from without, has no action done in it by any agent outside it. Separated from the body, on its own, it chiefly has no longer any sensation, or phantasm, nor can it perform any sensitive act for which it requires the body. Consequently it can no longer reason, nor think of real things nor think of abstractions which always need some sensible sign to be thought. Only the immovable intuition of indeterminate being remains, and the habits, contracted in the preceding life which give it an individual character. These habits never pass into act because there is nothing to draw them into it. So the soul without any real term, would have no feeling in as much as this is defined as the real form of being; and therefore it would have no life, except the simple intellectual act of intuition which could not properly be called life. Thus the soul would exist but not live. In this state it would not be possible for it to reflect on itself, nor have any consciousness; its condition would be like a state of perpetual darkness and sleep, whence the underworlds and dark places of the poets and their death and eternal sleep.<sup>12</sup>

In St John's Gospel Jesus says, '*Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life*'<sup>13</sup> and '*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you*'.<sup>14</sup> Rosmini sees this eternal life, as referring to the continuation of life after death because a life that ceased at death would not be eternal. So the action which the body has on the soul will cease at death as body and soul are separated. This will be substituted by the vital influence coming to the soul from the humanity of Christ to which it is sacramentally united. This action would be substituted by the sacred body of Christ on which the soul is nourished in the Eucharist. He tells us that he gives himself to men under the form of food: that this food is his flesh and that this flesh, in the form of bread and drink, gives life: and that if we do not feed on this bread and drink we will not have life in us; and that the bread which he gives is his flesh for the life of the world.

There is, therefore, a flesh which Christ gives up to death; but this same flesh, destined for death, will be the bread of eternal life, that is, it will have a type of life which can never fail, and 'this will give life to human

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, lezione, LXIX, pp. 265–266.

<sup>13</sup> *Jn* 6: 54.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

beings even when they have lost their natural life, the life of the world. I will give up my flesh to death, then, but at the same time I will give another life because this flesh will always remain a living bread, a bread which gives life.' This bread, then, must give life also to those who are dead as regards their natural life coming from Adam. This means that there is an action, an effect of the Eucharist beyond our natural life so that our souls even in their separated state live with that life which the flesh of Christ gives under the form of the bread of life in a way completely hidden and mysterious... The Eucharistic being of Christ, then, who lives under the form of bread and wine, acts beyond this present life and gives to the separated soul, as to the soul united with its body, a mysterious life in Christ which can never fail, because, of its nature, it is eternal.<sup>15</sup>

Now if the person who does not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood has no life in himself and yet whoever dies with baptism of water or blood or desire is certain to obtain eternal life, we must say that this eating of the flesh and blood of Christ which he does not receive in the present life will be given to him in the next, at the point of death, and in this way he will have life in himself.<sup>16</sup>

'We must understand clearly these last words which follow perfectly consistently in the teaching of Rosmini. He does not mean that the feeding on the body and blood of Christ which they would have at the point of death is the eating of the body and blood of Christ under the consecrated species as occurs when we receive the Eucharist; but simply as a vital influence which would come to the soul from the humanity of Christ who acts on it; an influence — as we have already seen — which would supply for the action which the body made on the soul. It is like what happened when Christ on earth performed bodily cures; it was sufficient for his most sacred humanity to come into contact with the suffering body of the sick person.'<sup>17</sup>

This unique contribution by Rosmini is certainly worth pondering as also his great reverence for the Eucharist and for the Scriptures on which his theory is based.

We now return to the *Antropologia soprannaturale* as we pursue Rosmini's treatment of the Eucharist.

We read in St Luke's Gospel that at the last supper, he said to them, '*I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*'<sup>18</sup> The kingdom of God consists in the glorification of Christ. '*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*'<sup>19</sup> He would not eat the Pasch again till his resurrection in which it would be perfectly fulfilled. The Paschal Lamb who would be slain and glorified would communicate the fullness of life to those who would eat

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<sup>15</sup> *IVG*, lezione LXXIII, p. 282, 283.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, lezione LXXIV, p. 285.

<sup>17</sup> Remo Bessero Belti, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> *Lk* 22: 15–16.

<sup>19</sup> *Mt* 28: 18.

this food, the salvation and living food of his followers. Then he said, '*Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes*'.<sup>20</sup> This is reinforced by the texts of Matthew and Mark. '*I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*'.<sup>21</sup> '*Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God*'.<sup>22</sup> These words refer to the Eucharist which the apostles would celebrate after the resurrection of Christ. The wine Jesus speaks of was not a spiritual wine but the real wine which he held in his hands. He says therefore that in the kingdom of his Father, namely after his resurrection, he would drink of wine, but not of every kind of wine but of that which he then held in the chalice and which was consecrated wine; and moreover he says 'I will drink it with you.' He adds that "it will be a new wine" to indicate that the wine consecrated after the resurrection was no longer a passable blood which might be shed; but an impassable blood, immortal or rather a new wine of new potency with inextinguishable life.<sup>23</sup>

### **Testimony of the Fathers**

Rosmini begins with an explanation and quotation from Gregory of Nyssa and follows this by quoting from Cyril of Alexandria, Dionysius the Areopagite, John Damascene, Theophylact, and other ecclesiastical writers (**Ref. 1**).

Gregory of Nyssa says that our body is maintained by means of food such as bread and wine which are converted into our body and that Christ, too, who became flesh was also nourished by bread and wine which became one thing with his divine body hence the bread which is sanctified by the Word of God is transmuted into the body of the Word of God.

Rosmini says that Cyril of Alexandria says the same thing stating that God changes the bread into his own body communicating to it the vital power of his own body. At least this seems to be his meaning. It is true that there is only a vague resemblance here between nutrition and consecration. Rosmini does not quote Cyril accurately.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Elias, archbishop of Crete expresses this conversion in a similar way but without using any simile in the same way as it is expressed by Cyril of Alexandria. He says 'God abasing himself to our infirmity infuses into the things offered on the altar a vivifying virtue and transfers them to the operation of his flesh'.<sup>24</sup> that is, gives these things the act or nature of his own flesh, which precisely takes place when particles of food are assimilated and become the nature of his flesh.

Alcuin says, 'This body, this blood is gathered not in ears of corn but in the sacraments, and by the consecration is not indeed born but is made for us mystically;

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<sup>20</sup> *Lk* 22: 17–18.

<sup>21</sup> *Mt* 26: 29.

<sup>22</sup> *Mk* 14: 25.

<sup>23</sup> *AS*, lib. IV, II, cap. III, art. I, p. 298.

<sup>24</sup> Elias Cretensis Metropoli, *Commentarii in Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni orations*, orat I.

and certainly that bread and that wine is in itself irrational, but the priest prays that being rationally treated and consecrated to the omnipotent God it may become rational passing into the body of his Son.<sup>25</sup> This writer understood that the bread was assimilated into Christ's body and thus was identified with him.

Rosmini goes on to quote Catholic theologians in support, Simonates of Gaza, John Bromiardus, John Gerson, and Raymond Sebundius.<sup>26</sup>

Rosmini is at pains to emphasize in opposition to Durandus that the whole of the matter of bread is converted into the flesh of Christ, only then can one say that the accidents of bread remain but not the substance. He cites Gregory of Nyssa and Theophylact in support of this opinion (**Ref. 2**).<sup>27</sup>

### **Apparent difficulties to Rosmini's theory**

Rosmini foresees certain difficulties being raised against his theory of transubstantiation.

*The first difficulty is that nutrition would not seem to be in keeping with Christ's glorified state.*

It is obvious that the kind of nutrition that takes place in us would not take place in a glorified body. But whatever is consistent with our nature may have a mode of existence in the state of those enjoying the vision of God, though we do not know how this takes place. Human nature does not change its essence by being glorified but it is ennobled and acquires new qualities. But the manner of nutrition in a glorified body would not be subject to any of our imperfections.

For example nutrition in us supplies for those particles which continually separate from our body and by repairing this waste by movements connected with the act of nutrition maintains the activity, calorific and life of the body. All this belongs to our present imperfect state, and nutrition considered in relation to these effects necessary for the support of our present life can have no place in bodies that are impassable and immortal. But all this does not enter into the essence of nutrition in the sense in which I understand the word.

The essence of nutrition according to our meaning solely consists first in the assimilation to a living body of non-living matter, and second in the communicating of life to this matter in the act itself by which it assimilates it and brings it into its bodily organism, so that it becomes with it one sole and identical body.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Alcuin, *Liber de divinis officiis*, cap. XL, De celebratione Missae et ejus significatione. Gaudentius of Brescia says the same thing as Alcuin, saying that Christ, or rather the Word, passes into the bread, that is, invests it with his power. Cf. Gaudentius of Brescia, *Tractatus vel sermons*, tract. II, De Exodi lectione secundus.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *AS*, *ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>27</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art. III, p. 307.

<sup>28</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art. IV, pp. 308–9.



To communicate its own life to extraneous matter belongs to the ennoblement and not imperfection of a body. For a body to communicate its life to another body it is not necessary that 1. it lose any part of its substance as it does with us, 2. that it should require the life which it imparts to other bodies for its own life; 3. that it should suffer the successive permutations by which nutrition takes place in us. These would be excluded from a glorified body but it is not unfitting that it should instantaneously give life to other bodies and assimilate them ennobling them in the process. We have an example in Scripture of the glorified Christ eating and drinking with his disciples after his resurrection. *‘While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.’*<sup>29</sup> Christ ate in front of his disciples to prove to them that he was alive and was not an apparition. Arguments against true nutrition fly in the face of the context. St Thomas suggests that the food Christ ate was resolved ‘into the surrounding matter’ but then he adds that this taking of food was ‘a true eating’ because Christ had a body that was of such a nature that the food could be converted into his body. This is a theological opinion only.

‘Although after the resurrection food was not converted into the substance of Christ’s body, but resolved into pre-existing matter; nevertheless Christ had a body of such a true nature that food could be changed into it; hence it was a true eating.’<sup>30</sup>

If the food was not converted into his own body why did he make a show of eating? Christ did not have to eat. Was he misleading his disciples? St Peter on the occasion of the baptism of Cornelius said, *‘We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.’*<sup>31</sup> There are no presuppositions attached to this testimony. Such episodes show that Christ’s humanity was similar to ours and proves his divinity by verification of prophecy. It confirmed what he said at the last supper that he would not eat or drink until after the kingdom of God had come, namely after his resurrection. Thus they had received into themselves the glorified Christ.

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<sup>29</sup> *Lk* 24: 36–43.

<sup>30</sup> ST, I, II, art. III, ad 5.

<sup>31</sup> *Acts* 10: 39–41.

It might be argued that the glorified body of Christ could not be augmented or diminished by eating, therefore this fact militates against the above theory. But, as Rosmini points out, we are dealing with Christ's glorified body. It is certain that the smallest particle of his glorified body is never lost. However, he sees no repugnance in accepting that nutrition takes place and that,

Therefore it seems to me that it appertains to the excellence and sublime power of the body of the risen Christ to assimilate to himself whatever he wills and that he is able to communicate his life to all that he chooses, and to receive increase, and to give out what he has received to all according to his good pleasure; without there being in these actions and mutations or suffering or any loss of vitality, of dignity, or beatitude. I believe moreover that as all his other actions, so this also tends in a special way to that fullness of joy in which his beatitude consists.<sup>32</sup>

*The Second Difficulty is that the body of Christ in the Eucharist would not be the same as that which suffered on the cross.*

When Christ said '*the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh*' and '*this is my body which is for you*'<sup>33</sup> it was the body which died on the cross. Now according to Rosmini's theory the flesh into which the bread was changed would not seem to be the same as that which suffered on the cross.

But this is only an apparent difficulty. '*The bread which I will give*', and '*this is my body which is for you*' refer to the future. They refer to the bloody sacrifice which he was about to make. If we take them as referring to the priest at the altar they express a future time which can only refer to the unbloody sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ. It is certain that the Eucharistic body and blood are identical with the body and blood of Christ which suffered on the cross and that which was born of the Virgin Mary.

Now what is it that makes the body of Christ identical throughout the events of his life, death and resurrection? Obviously it does not depend on the measurable body of Christ because this grew from babyhood to adulthood. It is constituted rather by the life or fundamental feeling. In the human being there is sense or feeling that always remains one and identical and which we call the EGO. I was the person who was born, was an infant and who grew into an adult. This person is incommunicable and immutable. This feeling is both intellective and sensitive and the feeling or life from which this identity springs is wholly indifferent with regard to the number of particles which it animates. If then the animal principle is unified by means of the intellective and personal principle, the identity of the intellective principle becomes the basis also of bodily identity, so that the identity of the person constitutes the identity of the body informed by that person.

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<sup>32</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. V, pp. 312–313.

<sup>33</sup> *Jn* 6: 51 and 1 *Cor* 11: 24.

In the case of Jesus Christ the human intellective principle does not constitute the person, but it is subordinate to the person of the Word which rules the whole of what constitutes the God-Man; so that the ultimate principle of bodily identity in Jesus Christ is found in his divinity<sup>34</sup> which is always identical and to which that body belongs. Rosmini quotes St Thomas and Cyril of Alexandria (**Ref. 3**).

St Thomas says, 'In Christ's Passion, of which this is the memorial, the other parts of the body were not separated from one another, as the blood was, but the body remained entire, according to Ex. 12: 46; "You shall not break a bone thereof." And therefore in this sacrament the blood is consecrated apart from the body, but no other part is consecrated separately from the rest.'<sup>35</sup>

The identity of particles which form the body have their identity from the spirit which informs them and they have no existence apart from it. This goes for new particles which receive their identity from the spirit and are absorbed into the living body so that there is one body and one identity. Clearly the body of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist is identical with the body of Christ who died on the cross. They partake of one and the same life in the person of the divine Word. Thus the body which is in the Eucharist is the true body of the Word as St Cyril of Alexandria and Isidore of Pelusium say (**Ref. 5**). Tertullian refers to the very ancient rite of administering the Holy Eucharist where the sacred minister said 'receive the body of Christ', or 'it is the true and proper body of Christ'; and, of course we say 'the body of Christ' and 'the blood of Christ' in our present (2010) Eucharistic liturgy.<sup>36</sup> This clearly indicates that the person of the Word is the foundation of the identity of the body.

*The Third difficulty, the greater part of the body of Christ would be in the sacrament by concomitance and not in force of the sacrament.*

It is not a question of distinguishing the particles of bread and wine converted into the body and blood of Christ from the remainder of his body. They form one thing with his body and receive their identity from his divine person. 'This is my body'.

Alcuin says. ' "The divinity of the Word of God is one and fills the whole world; even so although in many places at many different times that body is consecrated, yet are there not many bodies of Christ, nor many chalices of his blood, but one only body of Christ and one only blood with that which he took in the womb of the virgin and which he gave to his apostles." So far this is only a similitude, but he continues "for the divinity of the Word fills it wherever it is, and unites it and makes it so that as the divinity is one, so is it conjoined with the body of Christ and His body is truly one. Hence it is necessary to observe whether men take more or less, all alike take the body of Christ in its entirety, all in general and each in particular." So he is saying: First that

<sup>34</sup> Rosmini analyses forms of bodily identity in a note see **Ref 4**.

<sup>35</sup> ST, III, LXXVI, art. II, ad 2.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, cap. XXV; Ambrose, *De Mysteriis* cap. IX; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* XXIII, *Mystagogica* V. XXI.

the Word unites to himself the body of the Eucharist, second that from the conjunction of the body with the same Word or with the same person, there follows the indivisible unity and identity of the body of Christ.<sup>37</sup>

One cannot say that the whole body of Christ is not found in the Eucharistic sacrament in virtue of the consecration but by concomitance only. How could the body of Christ receive as it were by way of nutrition the particles of bread and wine if it were not present in its totality and did not receive those particles into itself? In the Eucharistic bread there is present the whole body of Christ in virtue of the sacrament, and not only by concomitance. We say that the body of Christ is sacramentally present. It is not necessary that the bread and wine be changed into the *whole* body and blood of Christ but simply into the body and blood of Christ by their being united with the body and blood of Christ.

The Council of Trent defined the same as follows, ‘“under both species and under every part of each species the whole entire Christ is contained”<sup>38</sup> and speaking of transubstantiation it does not define that the bread and wine and every particle of the bread and wine are converted into the WHOLE of the body and blood of Christ, but only that “by the consecration of the bread and wine there is made a conversion of the WHOLE substance of the bread into the substance of the body and of the WHOLE substance of the wine into the substance of his blood;”<sup>39</sup> so that it is of faith that the WHOLE substance of the bread and wine is changed; but it is not of faith that it is converted into the WHOLE of the body and into the WHOLE of the blood of Christ; although it is so united as to be made one thing with the whole body and blood of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

We can conclude then:

The most Holy Sacrament contains the whole body and the whole blood of Christ.

That it is there by the words spoken.

The whole substance of bread and wine are converted.

It is not of faith that it is converted into all the parts of the body and blood of Christ, but it is united so as to become one with the whole of the body and the whole of the blood.

This opinion is confirmed by theological teaching that under the Eucharistic species through consecration, the whole Christ is present, in respect of substance but not as regards dimensions. Common sense tells us that this must be so.

St Thomas says:

‘By the power of the sacrament, there is under the species of this sacrament that into which the pre-existing substance of the bread and wine is changed, as
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<sup>37</sup> Alcuin, *Liber de divinis officiis*, cap. XL, De celebratione Missae et ejus significatione. *AS*, *ibid.*, art. VIII, p. 320. Alcuin of York became the teacher of Charlemagne.

<sup>38</sup> *Conc. Trid.*, sess. XIII, c. III.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, c. IV.

<sup>40</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, art. VIII, p. 321.

expressed by the words of the form, which are effective in this as in the other sacraments, for instance, by the words: “This is My body,” or, “This is My blood.” But from natural concomitance there is also in this sacrament that which is really united with that thing wherein the aforesaid conversion is terminated. For if any two things be really united, then wherever the one is really, there must the other also be, since things really united together are only distinguished by an operation of the mind.<sup>41</sup>

And he also says,

‘In the sacrament there is the *substance* (*substantia*) of the body of Christ, in virtue of the sacrament, and the *dimensive quantity* (*quantitas dimensiva*) in virtue of concomitance. Hence the body of Christ is in this sacrament in that mode in which the substance is under the dimensions; not however after that mode in which a dimensive quantity of any body is under the dimensive quantity of place.’<sup>42</sup>

When St Thomas speaks of ‘that which is present in virtue of the sacrament’ he means that into which ‘the pre-existing substance of the bread and wine is converted’.<sup>43</sup> In this sense the whole dimensions of the body of Christ are not present. But if he means all that must be there as a result of the words spoken, we may easily understand that the whole body of Christ, in *quantity* is present, not because the substance of bread is converted into the whole dimensive quantity of Christ but because the entire body of Christ with its natural dimensions acts necessarily in order to convert into itself the bread and wine, changing these into his own substance and communicating to them his own life. The bread and wine are converted into the substance of the body and blood of Christ; but not into the whole quantity of them. The whole quantity of them is necessarily present in order that this conversion should be realised, that is, to say the whole body, for the transubstantiation of the bread and the whole blood for the transubstantiation of the wine. The body however would be present by *concomitance* in the consecration of the wine, as well as the soul and the divinity; and so also the divinity, the soul and the blood in the consecration of the bread.

St Thomas says, ‘After the consecration of the bread into the body of Christ, or of the wine into His blood, the accidents of both remain. From which it is evident that the dimensions of the bread or wine are not changed into the dimensions of the body of Christ, but substance into substance. And so the substance of Christ’s body or blood is under this sacrament by the power of the sacrament, but not the dimensions of Christ’s body or blood. Hence it is clear that the body of Christ is in

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<sup>41</sup> ST, III, LXXVI, art. I.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, art. III.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, art. I.

this sacrament “by way of substance,” and not by way of quantity. But the proper totality of substance is contained indifferently in a small or large quantity; as the whole nature of air in a great or small amount of air, and the whole nature of a man in a big or small individual. Wherefore, after the consecration, the whole substance of Christ’s body and blood is contained in this sacrament, just as the whole substance of the bread and wine was contained there before the consecration.’<sup>44</sup>

Now it is evident that the whole nature of a substance is under every part of the dimensions under which it is contained; just as the entire nature of air is under every part of air, and the entire nature of bread under every part of bread; and this indifferently, whether the dimensions be actually divided (as when the air is divided or the bread cut), or whether they be actually undivided, but potentially divisible. And therefore it is manifest that the entire Christ is under every part of the species of the bread, even while the host remains entire, and not merely when it is broken as some say, giving the example of an image which appears in a mirror, which appears as one in the unbroken mirror, whereas when the mirror is broken, there is an image in each part of the broken mirror: for the comparison is not perfect, because the multiplying of such images results in the broken mirror on account of the various reflections in the various parts of the mirror; but here there is only one consecration, whereby Christ’s body is in this sacrament.’<sup>45</sup>

So every breath we breathe is air but not all the air there is though it has the whole nature of air. In the same way every piece of bread we eat has the nature of bread but only a tiny amount of the whole quantity that exists. In the same way in the tiny amount of the sacred species we take there is not the length and breadth of the body and blood of Christ, but it has the substance of the body Christ whose dimensions exceed those of the host but the latter are insensibly present by a real concomitance. Every particle contains the substance of Christ’s body.

The Fathers and liturgies use the marriage feast at Cana in explaining the miracle of transubstantiation. The water which became wine did not become a pre-existent amount of wine, much less all the wine in the universe. The nature of water ceased and that of wine took its place, but not all the wine in the world took its place but wine which did not exist before. In the same way the substance of bread and wine is converted into the substance of the body of Christ but we cannot say that it is converted into the pre-existing particles that composed the body of Christ. It is an identical body not identical particles to which the words of consecration refer.

*The fourth difficulty, there would be a common subject in the bread and the body of Christ.*

The subject of bread and wine does not remain unchanged in transubstantiation. The whole substance, matter and form, of the bread and wine are changed into the

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<sup>44</sup> ST, III, LXXVI, art. I, ad. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, art. III.

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matter and form of the body and blood of Christ therefore so is the subject. The whole substance is changed, the subject, therefore is changed and transmuted.

Ref. 1.	Gregory of Nyssa's explanation of transubstantiation	
	Our Nourishment	Application to the Eucharist
	1. Our body is maintained by food adapted to it. 2. Such food is bread and wine. 3. The bread and wine is the body in potency.	1. The Word became a true human body. 2. This body was subject to the laws governing human bodies and was nourished on bread and wine. 3. This bread and wine became one thing with the body of Christ. 4. 'I think I am right in believing that the bread sanctified by the Word of God is now transmuted into the body of the Word of God.'
<p>Gregory goes on to say that it is not surprising that what happened when the Word was on earth should now be continued in the present day. 'We rightly believe that in our day the bread which is consecrated by the Word of God is changed into the body of God the Word. For it was once bread but has now been consecrated by the inhabitation of the Word who dwelt in his flesh as in a tabernacle. Just as bread was transformed into that Body by divine power, a similar result takes place now. Then the grace of the Word used to make the Body holy, the substance of which came from bread, so now the bread as the Apostle says "for it is sanctified by God's word and prayer" (<i>Tim</i> 4: 5) for the food and drink does not become the body of the Word through the process of eating and drinking but it is at once changed into the body by means of the Word, as the Word himself said "This is my body" (<i>Mt.</i> 26: 26).'<sup>46</sup></p>		
Quotations from other Fathers		
Cyril of Alexandria	'In order that the flesh and blood on our altars may not cause any sense of horror, God condescends to our infirmity, INFUSING THE VIRTUE OF LIFE into the oblations and converting them into the truth of his own proper flesh.' <sup>47</sup>	
Dionysius the Areopagite	'For the most sacred chants and readings of the Oracles teach them a discipline of a virtuous life, and previous to this, the complete purification from destructive evil; and the most Divine, and common, and peaceful distribution of one and the same, both Bread and Cup, enjoins upon them a Godly fellowship in character, as having a fellowship in food, and recalls to their memory the most Divine Supper, and arch-symbol of the rites performed, agreeably with which the Founder of the symbols Himself excludes, most justly, him who had supped with Him on the holy things, not piously and in a manner suitable to his character; teaching at once, clearly and Divinely, that the approach to Divine mysteries with a sincere mind confers, on those who draw nigh, the participation in a gift according to their own character.' <sup>48</sup>	
John	'It is not out of place to say, that in the same way as bread through being	

<sup>46</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica magna*, cap. XXXVII.

<sup>47</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistola ad Calosyrium*.

<sup>48</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, cap. III, pars III, § 1.



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Damascene	eaten and wine through being drunk is naturally transmuted into the body and blood of the consumer, so that they do not become any other body but that which existed before; so the bread was prepared in the paten and the wine and water also by the invocation and coming of the Holy Spirit is converted, but in a way more sublime and transcending the forces and conditions of nature, into the body and the blood of Christ, so that they are no longer two bodies but one and the same body. <sup>49</sup>
Theophylact	‘Let no one be troubled at hearing that we must believe the bread to be flesh. For even in the days when our Lord in his mortal flesh received the nutriment of bread, that bread which he ate was changed into his body, and was assimilated to his most holy flesh and according to the laws of human nature, contributed to his growth and sustenance; so also at present the bread is changed into the flesh of the Lord.’ <sup>50</sup>
<b>Ref. 2.</b>	<b>The whole of the matter of bread is converted into the flesh of Christ</b>
Gregory of Nyssa	Just as in the case of other men, our Saviour's nourishment (bread and wine) was His Body; but these, nourishment and Body, were in Him changed into the Body of God by the Word indwelling. So now repeatedly the bread and wine, sanctified by the Word (the sacred Benediction), is at the same time changed into the Body of that Word; and this Flesh is disseminated among all the Faithful. <sup>51</sup>
<b>Ref. 3.</b>	<b>The Body of Christ in the Eucharist is the same as that which suffered on the Cross.</b>
Cyril of Alexandria:	‘Life by nature is that which was generated from the living Father; but he not only vivifies his own body. For this is joined ineffably to the Son of God from whom all things are vivified. Hence it is called his body and he is one with it. That is to say, after the incarnation it is one, and remains one without any division except that the Word of God the Father and the temple assumed from the Virgin are not the same in regard of nature.’ <sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. IV, cap. XIII.

<sup>50</sup> Theophylact, *De Eucharistica*, quaestio III, a. II.

<sup>51</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica magna*, cap. XXXVII.

<sup>52</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannis Evangelium*, lib. IV, cap. II. 50: 4, c. 4. *AS*, lib. IV, parte II, cap. III, art. VII, p. 318, (note).

Ref. 4.	Bodily Identity
	<p>We must carefully distinguish the following identities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The identity of the living body with itself.</i> This consists in the identity of the vital principle which animates it, and of the fundamental feeling (<i>Nuovo saggio</i>, Sec. 5, p. 5, c. 9, art. 12).</li> <li>2. <i>The identity of the living body with the dead body.</i> If the dead body has suffered any disorganisation it may be said that the dead body has no longer its entire unity, and therefore no longer a perfect identity with the living body. But if the dead body has suffered no disorganisation, as was the case with the body of Christ, the identity of the body consists in the identity of the organisation continuously preserved without interruption. The dead body of Christ had also another and a greater foundation of its identity, in the divinity which was always united to it and had never abandoned it and which by informing that body gave it a perfect unity and identity with the living body.</li> <li>3. <i>The identity of the dead body with itself,</i> consists in the perseverance of the identity of its forms and in the identity of each of its members.</li> <li>4. <i>The identity of the elementary particles of which the body is composed,</i> consists in the individual identity of each particle.</li> <li>5. <i>The identity of place occupied by the elementary particles</i> is distinct from all the preceding ones. The identity therefore of a living or dead body is one thing, the identity of the elements of which a body is composed is another'.<sup>53</sup></li> </ol>
Ref. 5.	The Eucharist is the true body of the Word
Cyril of Alexandria	We have not taken that flesh as common flesh; but as flesh truly life-giving and "proper to the Word Himself" and soon after, he calls it 'flesh truly proper to Him who for our sakes is made and called the Son of man.' <sup>54</sup>
Isidore of Pelusium	The Eucharist is 'the proper body of the incarnate Word'. <sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *AS, ibid.* art. VII, p. 318 (note).

<sup>54</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistola ad Nestorium*.

<sup>55</sup> Isidore of Pelusium, lib. I, *Epistola*, CIV [probably CIX].

## Chapter 19

### The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist (2)

#### Preview

This is a difficult chapter in Rosmini's thought but his exposition of the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is very interesting. He firstly examines the opinion of those who do not go along with his theory and lists seven difficulties. In particular he mentions Saint Robert Bellarmine's teaching on the subject. He cites St Thomas Aquinas and the Fathers in support of his view. In passing, Rosmini mentions the action of the Blessed Trinity and the Holy Spirit in transubstantiation. Under the sixth difficulty Rosmini reveals his astonishing knowledge of the Fathers and he sees his teaching confirmed by similitudes used by them to explain transubstantiation. Quotations are given at the end of the Chapter. Finally Rosmini explains philosophically how Christ's body and blood are present in the Eucharist. This is a 'substantial' presence and his theory is supported by St Thomas. After all to imagine that the body of Christ is present in the same way as we are, that is, locally, as the theologians say, would raise a lot of difficulties. This part does not make for easy reading and so I have placed it together with the relevant philosophy in an Appendix.

#### **Rosmini examines difficulties arising from the opinions of those opposed to his doctrine.**

Rosmini brings up an opinion which is contrary to his own, namely, that not only in the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ the same as that of Christ during his life and now in his glorified state but also that there is *identity of the particles* considered materially which formed and form the body of Christ. This kind of identity is very different from Rosmini's explanation of identity.<sup>1</sup> This latter opinion can be expressed more specifically.

Firstly, the bread and wine are converted into those particles of the body and blood of Christ which before consecration existed in the glorified body of Christ.

Secondly, these particles are identical with those which the body of Christ possessed at his birth, at every moment of his life, in his death and burial.

We must, therefore distinguish carefully the identity of the body of Christ and the identity of the particles of which his body was composed at one or the other time in his life, death and resurrection.

Now the body of Christ could not always have had the same number of particles during his life. His growth during life was the same as any other human being whose

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<sup>1</sup> See previous chapter pp. 253-4.

body is in a continual state of flux involving a destruction and renewal of cells, some being gained depending on circumstances. When Christ suffered and died he would have lost many cells, particles etc, because of the lack of body fluids, bleeding etc. The dead body of Christ would have had less particles in it than his living body had before his sufferings and death. Since the resurrected and glorified body of Christ would have been perfect it follows that it would have possessed more particles than his dead body. Just as the identity of our body is the same throughout life, so with Christ. We can conclude that the particles which composed Christ's body were not identical during the vicissitudes of his life and death and in his glorious resurrection, yet this body remained identically the same.

With regard to the body of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, this body is identical with the body of Christ which was born of the Virgin Mary, grew to maturity, died and rose again, but it is not composed of the same identical particles as those of which that same body was and is composed.

If the number of particles in the Eucharistic Christ is the same as that during his bodily life on earth, at which moment are we going to number them? When Jesus instituted the holy Eucharist at the Last Supper he said 'this is my body', 'this is my blood', not 'these are the identical particles of which my body is composed'. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is renewed continually from the rising of the sun to its setting. The body of Christ present in the Eucharistic species continues to be identical with the body of Christ before and after glorification but the number of the particles can in no way remain the same, as explained above.

Now after the consecration has the bread and wine been converted into the same identical particles which are in the glorified body of Christ before the consecration?

This opinion was not held by the Fathers of the Church but appears to have appeared in the writings of the scholastics and it raises some serious theological difficulties.

*The first difficulty is that the bread and wine would be annihilated.*

Rosmini's opponents state that the body and blood of Christ after the consecration would have the same number of particles as the body of Christ had before the consecration. But this would lead to the annihilation of the bread and wine and its replacement with the body and blood of Christ.

Annihilation means 'the entire cessation of the real being of the thing'; nothing remains, no mode of being at all. Rosmini goes into this in great detail in explaining the true meaning of annihilation. I shall simply summarise some important points which show why he does not accept this proposition.

God does not destroy anything that he has created as Scripture says: '*For you love all that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made*'.<sup>2</sup> He mentions his utmost respect for Saint Robert Bellarmine but he believes he that did not understand the true

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<sup>2</sup> *Wis* 11: 24.

meaning of annihilation. A passage in the book of Ecclesiastes affirms the duration of beings, ‘*I know that whatever God does endures for ever*’.<sup>3</sup>

Rosmini quotes St Thomas who shows that God never annihilates anything. This would mean to take away its being so that nothing remains at all.

‘To reduce anything to nothing does not belong to the manifestation of grace, since the divine power and goodness are rather shown in the preservation of things in being. So that we may say absolutely that not any thing is reduced to nothing.’<sup>4</sup>

Now if the bread and wine absolutely ceased to exist by being annihilated this would not show the goodness of God. In Rosmini’s system, however, although the substance is transmuted and the substance of the bread and wine are no longer there but rather the substance of the body and blood of Christ, no created thing has perished but has only been immensely ennobled.

*The second difficulty is that the true and proper concept of transubstantiation would be lacking.*

Again, the annihilation theory appears to rest on two actions, first the annihilation of the bread and wine and then bringing on the altar of the body and blood of Christ. But the latter can have nothing to do with the former which has ceased to exist on this theory. This is not the true meaning of transubstantiation.

The annihilation theory supposes that there are two absolutely distinct subjects, distinct also as to the being they receive, two entirely distinct and successive effects, one negative and the other positive, namely, the destruction of the bread and the other positive, the introduction of the body. On this theory there cannot be one subject. ‘On the contrary, if we admit with St. Thomas that there is *being* in common between the bread and the body of Christ although the subject, namely bread is changed and the subject becomes the flesh of Christ, the identity of the root of these two subjects that are changed, namely being, enables the action to be one and most simple.’<sup>5</sup>

St Thomas says, ‘Such a change, however, can be made by the power of an infinite agent, which has control over all being, because the nature of being is COMMON to both forms and to both matters; and whatever there is of being in the one, the author of being can change into whatever there is of being in the other, WITHDRAWING THAT WHEREBY IT WAS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE OTHER.’<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Ecccl* 3: 14.

<sup>4</sup> ST, I, CIV, art. IV. *AS*, lib. IV, II, cap. III, art. XVII, p. 336.

<sup>5</sup> *AS*, lib. IV, II, cap. III, art. XVIII, p. 339.

<sup>6</sup> ST, III, LXXV, art. IV, ad 3. ‘Although, then, we cannot say that there is a single subject of transubstantiation, yet it can be said, and we must say according to St. Thomas, that there is something common in the two subjects and also something proper and that God converts one into the other by withdrawing that whereby it was distinguished from the other, which cannot be reasoned in the system expounded by Bellarmine.’ *AS*, *ibid.*, footnote.

Bellarmino thinks that it is sufficient for a true conversion and transubstantiation that there should be a connection between the cessation of one thing and the succession of another through the same force through which the other ceased. But there is not one force but two forces, one annihilating and the other bringing in the body and blood of Christ.

St Thomas says, 'No mode can be conceived by which the true body of Christ begins to exist in this sacrament except by the conversion of the substance of the bread into it, but this mode of conversion is in fact taken away if we admit either the *annihilation* of the substance of the bread, or its dissolution into the previous matter from which it was composed.'<sup>7</sup>

St Thomas was aware that if the matter which had been bread existed in no place at all then this would lead to admitting annihilation. He states this as an objection.

'It would appear that the substance of the bread after the consecration of this sacrament is annihilated and resolved into the previous matter of which it was formed; because that which is corporeal must exist in some place. But the substance of the bread which is a corporeal entity does not remain in this sacrament, nor can we assign any place in which it exists. Therefore it is annihilated or resolved into previous matter.'<sup>8</sup>

And he answers the objection as follows,

'The substance of the bread and of the wine after consecration, neither remains under the species of this sacrament, nor in any other place. Nevertheless it does not follow that it is annihilated: because it is converted into the body of Christ. As it does not follow that if the air out of which the fire is generated is not in this place or that, it must therefore have been annihilated.'<sup>9</sup>

This agrees with Rosmini's theory.

*The third difficulty: transubstantiation would not be instantaneous.*

It is certain teaching that transubstantiation is instantaneous. Not that this could not happen in the system of Bellarmine. In a succession of accidents, as one ceases another takes its place at the same instant. Rosmini gives an example of making an impression in clay with one's finger. At the very instant one makes the impression the smooth surface gives way to a hollow, thus changing the appearance. This is because

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<sup>7</sup> ST, III, LXXV, art. III.

<sup>8</sup> ST, III, LXXV, art. III, ad 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

we are dealing with *modes* of being; the being itself of clay is not transformed. But when we are dealing with existence this is totally different. The cessation of existence is not identical with the substitution of another existence which is totally independent of the first. In the case of Rosmini's opponents there must be at least three perfectly distinct instants: a) the one in which the original existence ceases; b) the one in which the bread has ceased and the body of Christ has not yet arrived; c) that in which the body of Christ has entered. The bread has entirely to cease otherwise there would be present both the bread and the body of the Lord which would be heresy. At best one could leave out (b) the instant in which neither existence was present, however it is impossible to reduce the change to one instant. But on Rosmini's system transubstantiation takes place in an instant, the whole being of bread perishes, the subject of bread ceases entirely, but the common being, as St Thomas calls it, remains.

*The fourth difficulty is that annihilation is repugnant to the sacrament of love.*

We have already seen that this is repugnant to the love and wisdom of God. That this should happen in the sacrament of love without any necessity whatever is an utterly arbitrary and incongruous supposition.

St Thomas says, '...no way can be assigned whereby Christ's true body can begin to be in this sacrament, except by the change of the substance of bread into it, which change is excluded the moment we admit either annihilation of the substance of the bread, or dissolution into the original matter. Likewise no cause can be assigned for such dissolution or annihilation, since the effect of the sacrament is signified by the form: "This is My body." Hence it is clear that the aforesaid opinion is false.'<sup>10</sup>

*The fifth difficulty: The system of opponents makes the statement of the Fathers which says, 'Christ begins to be in the sacrament not through any change in himself but through the change of bread into him', have no sense.*

This means that the bread is assumed by the body of Christ not the body of Christ assumed by the bread. Bellarmine talks about a *deperditive* change but as we have seen no change or conversion of the bread can take place in his theory but only its destruction or annihilation. If 'deperditive change' means this total annihilation of the bread as regards common being itself, this new existence of Christ does not belong to the change of the bread. We cannot understand the commencement of Christ's existence in the sacrament. One action follows in succession to the other and there is no connection between them. It must be God that places Christ in the sacrament by a another action. There is no true notion of transubstantiation. Since the bread has been annihilated it can no longer be changed into anything. He certainly believes that the bread ceases to exist and that the body of Christ is introduced beneath the accidents in conversion or transubstantiation. But his explanation of how this occurs is at fault.

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<sup>10</sup> ST, III, LXXV, art. 3.

*The sixth difficulty is that in the system of opponents a false sense is given to the term transubstantiation and other expressions which the Fathers use.*

Rosmini firstly sums up what his opponents hold:

1. That God causes not only the entire cessation of the bread as a *substance*, which we also say, but also as an *existence*, since he withdraws his preservation from the entity itself.
2. That the bread being thus destroyed and the accidents only preserved, God brings beneath the accidents the body of Christ which is in heaven, without however any change of place.
3. That the destruction of the bread is effected by God with the intention and for the end of substituting into its place the body of Christ.
4. That by reason of this intention and unique end of God which God has, there is no incongruity in this destruction of the bread and succession of the body of Christ being called the *conversion* or transubstantiation of the body of Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Rosmini has denied that the bread is converted or transubstantiated according to the above theory of succession and he now proceeds to draw quotations from the Fathers which oppose this theory of annihilation and succession. St Gaudentius of Brescia supports Rosmini's own system. There is no annihilation here. The bread has been transmuted; Christ invests the bread with his divine life, takes it into himself and truly changes it into his own body and blood. Ambrose also supports the fact that the bread is truly changed into the body of Christ, thus entirely ceasing to be bread and other Fathers use the similar expressions (**Ref. 1**).

### **Rosmini considers passages from the Fathers**

Rosmini then considers passages in the Fathers which describe the action of the Word of God in the transubstantiation of the bread and wine. They never mention destruction, but describe transubstantiation in a positive manner. He mentions St Cyril of Alexandria, Elias, Archbishop of Crete and others who describe transubstantiation as a communication of Christ's life. Gregory of Nyssa, John Damascene, Theophylact and others express this act as a kind of supernatural nutrition.<sup>12</sup>

Rosmini refers to Odo of Cambrai and quotes John Chrysostom (**Ref. 2**) and asks how the gifts of bread and wine can be invested with the power and the very life of Christ if they have been utterly destroyed before Christ comes in their place? The words 'the bread is sanctified' is not just mentioned once or twice by accident, as it were, for with John Chrysostom it is used universally, as also in the liturgies and all the Fathers. He goes on to quote St Fulbert, Bishop of Chartres in a letter to Adeodatus, Paul the Deacon in his life of St Gregory the Great, St John Damascene and

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<sup>11</sup> *AS, ibid.* art. XXIV, p. 352.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.



Theophylact **(Ref. 3)**. These phrases used in particular show that in Catholic tradition transubstantiation entailed sublimating the bread and wine, transfusing it and converting it into the body and blood of Christ, certainly not destroying its existence.

St Thomas says, ‘God “espoused his divinity,” i.e. his divine power, to the bread and wine, not that these may remain in this sacrament, but in order that he may make from them his body and blood’.<sup>13</sup>

Just as in generation the spirit informs the matter with life so also in nutrition our spirit informs the particles of food which we eat communicating itself to them and making them into our own body. Now since Christ is a divine person the incarnation and the consecration of bread and wine should be attributed to the Spirit of God, just as natural generation and nutrition take place through the spirit of man. Hence the consecration of the bread and wine is often described by the Fathers of the Church in the same way as the incarnation and compared to it<sup>14</sup> **(Ref. 4)**.

Rosmini cites other authorities namely St Augustine, the liturgies, and John Damascene **(Ref. 5)**.

### **The work of the Trinity in transubstantiation**

The work of transubstantiation is attributed to the Holy Spirit but also belongs to the Father, ‘*it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven*’<sup>15</sup>, as well as the Son, ‘*I am the living bread that came down from heaven*’.<sup>16</sup> The Son gives himself as the sign of his love and the Holy Spirit is the lovingness of the Son, so we call the Eucharist the sacrament of Christ’s love for us. In the invocation of the Spirit we pray that he will transmute the bread and wine and do this for our benefit. Rosmini quotes the words from Eucharistic Prayer I, ‘Let it become for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ, your only Son our Lord’.<sup>17</sup> Transubstantiation is also effected through the humanity of Christ. Jesus said, ‘*Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you*’.<sup>18</sup> So Christ not only as God but also as the Son of Man gives himself to be our food. Harking back to the theory which sees the bread annihilated, if this took place only in order that Christ might take its place we

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<sup>13</sup> ST, III, LXXV, art. II, ad 1.

<sup>14</sup> AS, *ibid.*, art. XXVII, pp. 358–359.

<sup>15</sup> Jn 6: 32.

<sup>16</sup> Jn *ibid.* 51.

<sup>17</sup> See also (2010) Eucharistic Prayer II, ‘Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they become for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ’. In Eucharistic Prayer III we read, ‘We ask you to make them holy by the power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ’. And in Eucharistic Prayer IV, ‘Father, may this Holy Spirit sanctify these offerings. Let them become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ...’

<sup>18</sup> Jn 6: 27.

should see in this action only a divine work in which Christ's humanity would be passive; but if we accept that the bread and wine are converted into the body and blood of Christ, his glorified body would have an active part and also his soul united to that body and the divine nature.

From all that has been said, it is clear that if the Father concurs in the production of the most holy Eucharist, by generating the Word and sending him into the world; if the Son concurs by making himself man and giving to us this food; if the Father and the Word concur by sending the Holy Spirit; it is nevertheless the Incarnate Word who through the operation of His Spirit took human flesh, and in doing so revealed himself to man as *loveable*; in like manner, he made himself our food by the operation of his Holy Spirit, because it is in this food that he communicated the revelation of the highest degree of his loveableness that is presented by the light of faith. But it is this loveableness of the incarnate Word which uses as its instrument the sacred humanity itself so that Christ could say: '*For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink*'.<sup>19</sup>

However, this fact that transubstantiation is described above as the work of the sacred humanity invested by the Holy Spirit<sup>20</sup> and united hypostatically to the Word and moved by the Word with that omnipotence which is common to him with the Father from whom he proceeds, does not prevent the holy Eucharist from being in its effects the Spirit of Christ manifesting and communicating itself in various degrees; and it was only after the ascension of Christ into heaven and the solemn descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, that he communicated himself to them in his highest, or as we have called it, his personal form.<sup>21</sup>

### **The invocation of the Spirit and the words of Christ**

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is invoked in asking that the bread and wine be transmuted and especially in the eastern liturgies. But this led to an erroneous view that transubstantiation took place by the invocation of the Spirit and not by the words of Christ. This error was renounced by the Greeks at the Council of Florence in 1439. The instantaneous conversion of the bread and wine by the words of consecration does not exclude the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing for this to happen. The words of our Eucharistic Prayers appears to confirm this. The Holy Spirit, spirated by the Word, anoints the humanity of Christ which is used in effecting the transmutation of the elements of bread and wine. Christ hypostatically united with a human nature fills his humanity with his own Spirit adapting it to himself and in the same way he

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<sup>19</sup> *Jn* 6: 55.

<sup>20</sup> '*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me...*' *Lk* 4: 18.

<sup>21</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. XXVIII, p. 366.

communicates the Spirit which dwells in his humanity to the substance of bread which he assimilates to his body hypostatically united to his divine substance.

The invocation of the Holy Spirit is not therefore necessary in order to effect the consecration of the bread and wine because this is effected in virtue only of the words of consecration which have the force of bringing in the Spirit of Christ by which this miracle comes to pass. Nevertheless the invocation of the Holy Spirit is used in all the liturgies; and is most appropriate and adapted also to explain the mode in which this grand and mysterious work of transubstantiation is effected.<sup>22</sup>

### **Similitudes used by the Fathers to explain the mode of transubstantiation**

Rosmini again mentions the Fathers who use similitudes to explain the mode of transubstantiation which support the conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ without the prior destruction of the elements. To say that these similes are imperfect would be contrary to the mind of the Fathers who would certainly have known if this were the case, and could hardly have supported a total annihilation of being in the thing changed. It will suffice simply to list these similitudes which are self-explanatory.

1. As already said, the Fathers compare the consecration of the bread and wine with the incarnation of Christ in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. John Chrysostom, Ambrose and Eucharis, Bishop of Lyons speak of it in this way (**Ref. 6**).

According to this similitude there is nothing that is destroyed. Only that substance of the body of our Lady which was predestined to be the flesh of Christ was truly transmuted into his body: so that there remained not a particle of it which belonged to the Virgin Mother but it had become the true flesh of Jesus Christ. This was effected by the action of the Holy Spirit, just as the Fathers say of the consecration of the Eucharist. The Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of the Word, brings with him the Word, since their nature is indivisible; and the Word informs the soul and the body in the instant of the virginal conception.

2. St. Remigius of Amiens<sup>23</sup> not only compares the consecration of the bread and of the wine to that union of the Word with human flesh which takes place in the incarnation, but also to the transformation of our bodies from being mortal to being immortal (**Ref. 7**). There is no destruction here but only the elevation of a nature to a higher nature.

3. Ancient writers supplement the similitude of the incarnation by that of the formation of the first man. The author here is an Armenian bishop of the 12<sup>th</sup> century named Dionysius Bar-Salibi of the Jacobite Rite in his *Commentary on the liturgy of St. James*, in which he speaks in this way of the sacrament of the Eucharist (**Ref. 8**).

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<sup>22</sup> AS, *ibid.*, art. XXIX, p. 368.

<sup>23</sup> Probably Remigius of Auxerre.

Now considering that this similitude is taken from the earth from which God composed the body of Adam, we have here a matter that is transformed indeed but not destroyed, yet it was converted by the breath of God, wholly into the flesh and bones of Adam.

4. St. John Chrysostom, wishing to explain in the best manner he could think of, how Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is multiplied throughout the world, uses the comparison of the multiplication of the human race. This similitude is most appropriate because the propagation of the human race takes place through a certain communication of life and not by any true destruction or cessation of any being (**Ref. 9**).

5. St. Gaudentius uses the similitude of the production of the corn from the earth: water and air which are utilised by the seeds are never annihilated; but cease to be what they were, in order to become corn (**Ref. 10**).

6. St. Irenaeus, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, had used similitudes of the tree which bears its fruit, the fountains from which spring water and wheat which matures in the earth. Now these are examples of transformations by transmutation without annihilation (**Ref. 11**).

7. Another simile used by the ancient writers in explaining the work of the conversion of the bread and of the wine is that of wood which is ignited and becomes wholly on fire. Hildegard of Bingen who wrote in the 12<sup>th</sup> century is an example (**Ref. 12**). Hildegard therefore agrees with Rosmini that the Word and the soul and the body of Christ through means of the Holy Spirit who is the divine fire envelopes as it were every particle of the bread and of the wine as the flame does with a block of wood, and by thus enveloping, appropriates them, unites and conjoins them so as to make of them an indivisible part of the one body of Christ. By this ineffable operation they cease to be any longer the substance of bread and of wine.

8. Finally we frequently meet in the Fathers comparisons between the conversion of the bread and of the wine, and other conversions which are related in Scripture as miraculous facts: such as in the New Testament the change of the water into wine at the marriage of Cana, as we see for instance in the Gallican Missal and in Cyril of Jerusalem; and in the Old Testament the rod of Moses changed into a serpent as we can see in the writings of Cyril of Alexandria and Ambrose (**Ref. 13**).

All this shows that the Fathers did not believe that any absolute and essential difference between the change of the bread and wine and these other changes existed.<sup>24</sup>

*The seventh difficulty is that transubstantiation is impossible in the opposing system.*

As we have seen, the opponents of Rosmini's theory posit the destruction of the being of the bread and wine (even if they do not call it annihilation), so the bread and wine cannot be transmuted into the body and blood of Christ for there remains nothing to transmute.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. *AS*, *ibid.*, art. XXX, pp. 370–376.

Their system is also impossible from the point of view of the body of Christ. A subsistent individual means that it can never be mixed up or identified with another. One subsistent individual can never become another subsistent individual since its being is incommunicable. It can only lay down its incommunicability by being annihilated. The other subsistent individual cannot receive another subsistent individual into itself. The only way it can suffer a change in its individuality is by being annihilated since there is no middle term between being and non-being. To imagine the conversion of one subsistent individual into another would not be a true concept of conversion but a composite concept a) of the cessation of the first individual and b) of the conservation of the second without it having received anything from the first one.

Bellarmino tries to find a way round this argumentation by positing what he calls a *conservative* conversion, i.e. he speaks of two equal bodies one of which interpenetrates the other and is wholly converted into the other. The term of the body into which the other is converted remains the same. Since two bodies cannot exist in the same place, if God destroys one in order to preserve the other, we should say that it had been converted into the other because it would have ceased to be. But, Rosmini says, this is not a true conversion. It would be an illusion, just an appearance. Bellarmine also calls his theory of conversion an *adductive* one because he is concerned with the conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ who is in heaven. The body of Christ does not abandon its place in heaven but by this adductive conversion the body is now also under the species of bread by union with its substance. Now, he says, through the conversion of the bread into the body of Christ, Christ is also under the species of bread. Thus the object is preserved in both places without being changed, and is also adduced in other places. But simply stating that it is now in another place is not the same as to receive into itself another body converted or changed into itself. So if conservative conversion is not a true conversion neither is adductive conversion.

Moreover Rosmini holds that the change would be an accidental one and not a substantial one, for the only change is that besides being in heaven Christ would also have an additional place under the species of bread and wine: this is an accidental change. As has been shown his conversion is simply a succession, the body of Christ succeeds the bread, it is simply a relationship. There is no transmutation of substance. Note the term 'accidental' here means the relation that a being acquires.

Now Bellarmine himself admits that the change which takes place in respect of the body of Christ, is the acquisition of a new relation. For when he puts the question as to what change takes place in the body of Christ he replies: "Since by the conversion of the bread the body of Christ is posited in the sacred host, this action is received into the body of the Lord, not in as much as it is conversion but in as much as it is adduction (NON QUIDEM UT CONVERSIO, SED UT ADDUCTIO EST), besides which the body of the Lord acquires through this conversion a

new and real relation of presence to the *species* of the bread and to the altar.”

We must compare this passage with another quoted above, where it is denied that the body of Christ which is in heaven changes either its substance, its accidents, or its place. If then no change takes place, either in respect of the substance or of the accidents; the whole change must be reduced to the *new relation* acquired which I think may be considered as an accidental change only because it does not regard the substance.<sup>25</sup>

Bellarmino knew that the individuality of one thing cannot pass into the individuality of another, he therefore called the conversion an adductive one. His explanation of transubstantiation was unsatisfactory because he proposed the annihilation of one substance without its true conversion into the other. In describing conservative conversion he proposed they interpenetrated involving the destruction of one and the conservation of the other. But even if there was penetration and that one of the bodies was not destroyed this still would not be a true conversion so long as the two bodies occupied the same space. For this to be true the individuality of one must have passed into the other, but this is absurd as even the concept of individuality necessarily supposes the opposite.

Rosmini lays out three conditions for a true conversion, that is, the thing converted becomes identical with that into which it is converted. They are:

1. That the thing converted loses its own proper identity, and therefore ceases to be what it was before, and also ceases altogether to exist, meaning by this that it can no longer be said of it after the conversion ‘it is’ for the word ‘it’ expresses the thing that was before, but exists now no longer.
2. That the thing into which it has been converted does not lose its identity, but remains precisely what it was before.
3. Therefore the two things, after the conversion of one of them into the other, are no longer two but one only; and are not a mixture of the two; but the second only, in its identity which it had before the conversion; in which the proper being of the first has been lost through its being converted into the second.<sup>26</sup>

Now for one thing to be transmuted into the other by losing its proper nature and assuming that of the other it is necessary that both things suffer a change. The first must suffer the alteration which must take place when it is transmuted into the other. The other suffers the change which occurs when it receives the other nature. Bellarmine’s theory does not satisfy these three conditions. One object is not converted into the other and the other suffers no change and remains exactly identical as it was before the so-called conversion.

Now can the body into which the other is converted retain its identity?; certainly not by juxtaposition which would leave two beings. It is not possible for it to retain its own identity unless it is a complex unity resulting from many parts unified by a single

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<sup>25</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. XXXII, pp. 380–381.

<sup>26</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. XXXIV, pp. 383–4.

principle. In this case it is evident that the parts may increase or diminish without destroying the identity of the whole. This happens with us in our growth as we said earlier. A child grows into an adult, but still retains his or her individuality, there is not a growth in substance, philosophically speaking, nor individuality. Rosmini's opponents lay down that the body of Christ cannot add to itself a single particle, identifying identity with the number of particles. But if according to this system we suppose a true conversion we would be faced with the absurd proposition that  $1 + 1 = 1$ .

Ref. 1.	Gaudentius and Ambrose do not hold with annihilation
Gaudentius of Brescia	‘Do not hold as an earthly thing that which has been made heavenly by him who has passed into it and makes it his body and blood’. <sup>27</sup>
Ambrose	‘When we make the consecration of the bread and we make the body of Christ’. <sup>28</sup>
John Chrysostom	‘The bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ’. <sup>29</sup>

Ref. 2.	The Fathers speak on transubstantiation confirming Rosmini’s theory
Elias of Crete	Agrees with the teaching of Rosmini.
Cyprian	‘The divine essence <i>infuses</i> himself ineffably in the visible sacrament’. <sup>30</sup>
Irenaeus	Says much the same thing. ‘When, therefore, the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God, and the Eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made’. <sup>31</sup>
Odo bishop of Cambrai	‘The bread and the wine are invested by a spiritual force by which they are transmuted’. <sup>32</sup>
John Chrysostom	‘He who sanctifies and transmutes these gifts is Christ himself’. <sup>33</sup>

Ref. 3.	The Fathers speak of the mode of the conversion of the bread and wine.
Fulbert	‘We may not doubt that the earthly matter in the spiritual sacraments transcending the nature and the value of its proper genus is changed into the substance of Christ by means of a power equal to that by which all things were caused by his fiat to subsist in an instant from nothing; when he himself says “this is my body” and a little later “this is my blood”. If you believe that God can do all things, it follows that you will believe this also, and not stop to examine curiously by human reasonings whether he who was able to create all things out of nothing was able to do this much more — to change these

<sup>27</sup> Gaudentius of Brescia, *Tractatus vel sermones*, tract. II, De Exodi lectione secundus.

<sup>28</sup> Ambrose, *De Sacramentis*, lib. IV, cap. IV, n. 14.

<sup>29</sup> John Chrysostom, *De Proditione Judae*, hom. 1, n. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Cyprian, *De coena Domini* (Falsely attributed to Cyprian).

<sup>31</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, lib. V. cap. II, n. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Odo bishop of Cambrai, *Expositio in canonem Missae*, prima distinctio.

<sup>33</sup> John Chrysostom, *In Mattheum*, homil. LXXXIII, n. 5.



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	things into the dignity of a higher nature and to transfuse them into the substance of his body. <sup>34</sup>
Gregory the Great	Christ converts the bread and wine, 'By means of its sanctification'. <sup>35</sup>
John Damascene	Says that it comes about 'by the invocation and the coming of the Holy Spirit'. <sup>36</sup>
Theophylact	Theophylact says it occurs 'by the blessing and accession of the Holy Spirit'. <sup>37</sup>

<b>Ref. 4.</b>	<b>The Fathers compare the consecration of the body and blood of the Lord with his Incarnation</b>
Justin	'For we do not take these things as common bread and common wine but in the manner in which Jesus Christ our Saviour made flesh by the Word of God, had flesh and blood for the cause of our salvation; so also we have been taught that the food which is blessed by means of the prayers which contain his own words and which nourishes our flesh and blood by assimilation is both the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.' <sup>38</sup>
Ambrose	'It is manifest that the Virgin generated supernaturally, and this body which we form comes from the Virgin. Why will you here seek the order of nature in the body of Christ, whereas the same Lord Jesus was produced from the Virgin supernaturally'. <sup>39</sup>
Bede	'For if what takes place here is impossible elsewhere it is not to be surprised at, since the body of Christ itself was conceived in an ineffable manner and the whole incarnation proceeded in an admirable manner'. <sup>40</sup>
Euthimius (11 c)	'Just as he supernaturally deified, so to speak, the flesh which he assumed; so does he transmute ineffably these things into his own life-giving body, and into his own precious blood, and into the grace which they contain.' <sup>41</sup>

<b>Ref. 5.</b>	<b>Further References to the Fathers and to the Liturgy</b>
Augustine	'...yet is not sanctified to become so great a sacrament, except by the spirit of God working invisibly'. <sup>42</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Fulbert, *Epistola V, ad Adeodatum*.

<sup>35</sup> Paul the Deacon, *S. Gregorii Magni vita*, n. 23.

<sup>36</sup> John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. IV, cap. XIII.

<sup>37</sup> Theophylact, *Enarratio in Evangelium Joannis*, cap. VI, vv 48–52.

<sup>38</sup> Justin, *Apologia prima pro christianis*, n. 66.

<sup>39</sup> Ambrose, *De Mysteriis*, cap. IX, n. 53.

<sup>40</sup> Bede, *In librum Boethii de Trinitate scholia*.

<sup>41</sup> Euthimius, *Commentarius in Matthaeum*, cap. XXVI, v. 28.

*Our Light and Our Salvation*

Cyril of Jerusalem	'because that which the Holy Spirit has TOUCHED, will be wholly sanctified and transmuted'. <sup>43</sup>
The Liturgy of St John Chrysostom	'In the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom referring to the consecration, the deacon says. 'Bless, O Lord' and the priest blessing the chalice with both hands says 'changing by thy Holy Spirit'. <sup>44</sup>
Liturgia Alemanica	In the Mass of the fifth Sunday after Epiphany there is a prayer in which it is asked that we may 'offer up that immolation which is the admirable and ineffable grace of a divine sacrament which is offered by many, and by the INFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT is made one sole body of Christ'. <sup>45</sup>
John Damascene	<p>'If the same God, the Word, willed to become man, and formed for himself flesh without the aid of human seed from the most pure and immaculate blood of the ever Virgin Mary; who can ever raise a difficulty at his being able to form his body from bread and his blood from wine mingled with water.'</p> <p>'It was said of old the earth produced the green herb and so even at the present the rain falling upon it, it puts forth its offspring impelled and invigorated by the divine command.<sup>46</sup> God said "this is my body, this is my blood: This do in commemoration of me;" and by his omnipotent command this also takes place "until he comes again" (for this expression is used) and the rain which produced this harvest was the overshadowing force of the Holy Spirit.'</p> <p>'Firstly St. John Damascene attributes the change of the bread and of the wine to the Holy Spirit as to the life-giving power and this does not destroy the bread; but converts it something similar to that which is effected by the "rain which falls upon the seed which the grain springs up and thus destroying the seed bringing it to a perfect state of mature development and to its natural condition of fruitfulness".'</p> <p>'He continues speaking of this work of the Holy Spirit. "Therefore, since whatever God does he performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit so in like manner at the present time the operation of the Holy Spirit does what is supernatural and we cannot know and understand it except by faith alone. How this is done the holy Virgin declared '<i>since I am a virgin.</i>' The archangel Gabriel answered: '<i>the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you.</i>' Do you then seek to know how the bread is made the body of Christ and the wine and water into his blood? I will answer you in a like manner: "The Holy Spirit shall come down and shall do those things which exceed the faculty of human speech and human</p>

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*. III, cap. IV. n. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis XXIII, Mystagoga V*, n. VII.

<sup>44</sup> *AS*, lib. IV, II, cap. III, art. XXVII, p. 361.

<sup>45</sup> Liturgy.

<sup>46</sup> *Gen* I: 11.

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	<p>intelligence.”</p> <p>‘A little further on the Saint adds: “using the usage and custom of men in eating bread and drinking wine mingled with water, God unites with these things his divinity and makes them his body and his blood, in order that we may rise to things supernatural through those which are congruous to our nature.”</p> <p>And a little further on, “the body which was born of the Holy Virgin is truly united to the divinity, not because that body being assumed came down from heaven, but because the bread and the wine is changed into the body and the blood of God. But if you ask how this is done let it be enough for you to hear that this is done by the Holy Spirit, in the same way that the Lord formed by the Holy Spirit for himself and in himself a flesh from the holy mother of God”.<sup>47</sup></p> <p>‘So to conclude, this saint did not see any destruction to take place in the bread so as to annihilate it but the power of the Spirit entered it and converted it into the body of Christ in the way that the Fathers conceived transubstantiation to take place.<sup>48</sup></p>
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<b>Ref. 6.</b>	<b>The simile of the consecration of the bread and wine with the Incarnation</b>
John Chrysostom	‘For if we approach with faith without doubt we shall behold him as he lies in the manger. For this table stands for the manger. Here also we lay the body of the Lord not indeed wrapped in swaddling clothes as of old but clothed around on all sides by the Holy Spirit’. <sup>49</sup>
Ambrose	‘But why make use of arguments? Let us use the examples He gives, and by the example of the Incarnation prove the truth of the mystery. Did the course of nature proceed as usual when the Lord Jesus was born of Mary? If we look to the usual course, a woman ordinarily conceives after connection with a man. And this body which we make is that which was born of the Virgin. Why do you seek the order of nature in the Body of Christ, seeing that the Lord Jesus Himself was born of a Virgin, not according to nature?’ <sup>50</sup>

<b>Ref. 7.</b>	<b>Simile includes our bodies being transformed from mortality to immortality.</b>
Remigius	‘In Christian truth we call (the body and the blood) bread and wine not because after the consecration they retain within themselves the nature of bread and of wine, except as regards the appearance, the taste and odour. For he who was able to unite personally and ineffably to his Word the flesh assumed in the womb of the Virgin, and he who is able also to cause our

<sup>47</sup> John Damascene, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, lib. IV, cap. XIII.

<sup>48</sup> *AS, ibid.*, pp. 561–563.

<sup>49</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia de beato Philogonio*, n. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Ambrose, *De Mysteriorum*, cap. XI, n. 53.

	mortal bodies to become immortal by the power of his command is able also to transfer the matter of the bread and of the wine into the nature of his body and his blood. <sup>51</sup>
<b>Ref. 8.</b>	<b>Simile includes the creation of Adam</b>
Dyonisius Bar-Salibi	<p>‘But perhaps someone may object: how can this be done? To whom we reply: it is very possible to be done. Because that same right hand which in the beginning taking of the dust of the earth transmuted it and made it the body of Adam, himself changes this bread and makes it the body of the Word, which is formed from the Virgin and from the Holy Spirit.’</p> <p>‘The Holy Spirit who descending into the womb of the Virgin made that flesh which was hers into the body and blood of the Word of God, descends in alike manner and makes the bread and wine placed here the body and blood of the Word of God, which he took from Mary the Virgin, by means of the priest who exercises his priestly office and celebrates the liturgy.’<sup>52</sup></p>
<b>Ref. 9.</b>	<b>Simile includes multiplication of the human race</b>
John Chrysostom	<p>‘The words are pronounced by the mouth of the priest and by the virtue and grace of God the consecration is effected and as that voice which said “Increase and multiply and fill the earth” was said but once but has its effect in all time, nature operating the fact of generation, so also that voice spoke once only but confirms the sacrifice on all the altars of the Church to this day and it will do this same even to the end of the world.’<sup>53</sup></p>
<b>Ref. 10.</b>	<b>Simile of the Production of Corn</b>
Gaudentius	<p>‘Wherefore that same Creator and Lord of nature who produces the bread from the earth, once more since he can do so and has promised to do it forms from bread, his own body; and he who from water made wine, makes from wine his own blood’.<sup>54</sup></p>
<b>Ref. 11.</b>	<b>Similes drawn from trees, fountains and corn</b>
Irenaeus	<p>‘But how will it be clear to them that the bread over which thanksgiving has been pronounced is the body of his Lord and the chalice his blood: if they do not confess that he is the Son of him who made the world, namely his Word, through whom the tree bears fruit, the fountains of water flow, the earth produces fruit, the blade and then the ear and then the full corn in the ear?’<sup>55</sup></p>

<sup>51</sup> Remigius, of Amiens (see p. 269, note), *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Psalmus XXI in fine.

<sup>52</sup> Dyonisius Bar-Salibi, cf. *Expos. Missae, seu Commentarius in liturgiam S. Iacobi* cap. 12 and 13, apud ASSEMANUM, *Bibl. Orient.* Tom. 2 pp. 189-190.

<sup>53</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilia de proditiōe Judae*, hom. I, n. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Gaudentius, *Tractatus vel sermones*, tract. II, De Exodi lectione secundus.

<sup>55</sup> Irenaeus, *Adver. haereses*, lib. IV, cap. XXIV, n. 4.

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Ref. 12.	Drawn from Fire
Hildegard	'By the same virtue of the most high God is the oblation of the bread and of the wine mingled with water changed by the word of the priest transubstantially into the flesh and blood of our Saviour, which he took from Mary; in the same way as that by which the wood by the heat of the fire is changed into burning coals'. <sup>56</sup>
Ref. 13.	Drawn from Scripture
Gothic-Gallican Missal	'The faithful are invited to pray: 'that he who changed water into wine might now change the oblation of our wine into his blood'. <sup>57</sup>
Cyril of Jerusalem	'He once changed water into wine is it incredible that he will change wine into blood'? <sup>58</sup>
Cyril of Alexandria	'But if you persist O Jew, saying "How" I too will imitate your ignorance and say, "How did you come out of Egypt? How was the rod of Moses changed into a serpent? How did the hand come like a leper's and was restored again as it is written? How did the water become blood? How did you pass through the sea as if on dry ground? How, by means of a tree was the bitter water of Mara changed into sweet? How was the water supplied to you by the breasts of the rocks? How was the manna brought to you? How did the Jordan stand again in its place? How did the impregnable wall of Jericho fall shattered through a shout?" Will that "how" ever be wanting? You will be found out, being astounded at many mighty works, and by saying "how" disbelieving all Divine Scripture, and you will overthrow all the words of the Holy Prophets, and above all the holy writings of your Moses. It is far more fitting that, believing in Christ and assenting unhesitatingly to his words, you should be zealous to learn the mode of his blessing, and not be inconsiderate saying "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?...".' <sup>59</sup>
Ambrose	'Let us prove that this is not what nature made, but what the blessing consecrated, and that the power of blessing is greater than that of nature, because by blessing nature itself is changed. Moses was holding a rod, he cast it down and it became a serpent. Again, he took hold of the tail of the serpent and it returned to the nature of a rod. You see that by virtue of the prophetic office there were two changes, of the nature both of the serpent and of the rod. The streams of Egypt were running with a pure flow of water; all of a sudden from the veins of the sources blood began to burst forth, and none could drink of the river. Again, at the prophet's

<sup>56</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Epistola XLVII*, ad praelatos moguntinenses.

<sup>57</sup> *Missale Gothicum*, XI Missa in diem sanctum Epiphaniae, praefatio.

<sup>58</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis XXII*, *Mystagogica IV*, n. II.

<sup>59</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, lib. IV, cap. II. Ambrose De Mysteriis, cap. IX, nn. 50–3.

	<p>prayer the blood ceased, and the nature of water returned. The people of the Hebrews were shut in on every side, hemmed in on the one hand by the Egyptians, on the other by the sea; Moses lifted up his rod, the water divided and hardened like walls, and a way for the feet appeared between the waves. Jordan being turned back, returned, contrary to nature, to the source of its stream. Is it not clear that the nature of the waves of the sea and of the river stream was changed? The people of the fathers thirsted, Moses touched the rock, and water flowed out of the rock. Did not grace work a result contrary to nature, so that the rock poured forth water, which by nature it did not contain? Marsh was a most bitter stream, so that the thirsting people could not drink. Moses cast wood into the water, and the water lost its bitterness, which grace of a sudden tempered...We observe, then, that grace has more power than nature, and yet so far we have only spoken of the grace of a prophet's blessing. But if the blessing of man had such power as to change nature, what are we to say of that divine consecration where the very words of the Lord and Saviour operate? For that sacrament which you receive is made what it is by the word of Christ. But if the word of Elijah had such power as to bring down fire from heaven, shall not the word of Christ have power to change the nature of the elements? You read concerning the making of the whole world: "For he spoke and they were made, he commanded and they were created."<sup>60</sup> Shall not the word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing that which was not, be able to change things which already are into what they were not? For it is not less to give a new nature to things than to change them.</p> <p>But why make use of arguments? Let us use the examples He gives, and by the example of the Incarnation prove the truth of the mystery. Did the course of nature proceed as usual when the Lord Jesus was born of Mary? If we look to the usual course, a woman ordinarily conceives after intercourse with a man. And this Body which we make is that which was born of the Virgin.<sup>61</sup></p>
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<sup>60</sup> *Ps* 148: 5 (Douai).

<sup>61</sup> Ambrose, *De Mysteriis*, cap. IX, nn. 50–53.

## Afterword

With the end of the last chapter we come to the conclusion of Rosmini's treatment of God's creation of man, his fall from grace and restoration to it through the indwelling of the three persons through our redemption by Jesus Christ. Rosmini's treatment of the Sacrament of the Eucharist was not completed and presumably he would have revised this and dealt with the other four sacraments. In fact he wrote a moral philosophy book on marriage entitled *Del Matrimonio*. As explained in the Introduction, two other major parts were intended but did not see the light of day. However I hope that this book gives the reader some insight into Rosmini's exhaustive treatment of the topics he did deal with and — who knows? — inspire someone to translate the full work.

## Appendix 1

### A Review of External Signs in the Old Covenant

Rosmini first deals with the period prior to the patriarchs, that is, prior to Abraham. We are looking at the time after the fall.

1. **The cherubim with the flaming sword which guarded the tree of life**<sup>1</sup> and which, as Rosmini sees it, was renewed in Ezekiel who beheld the flaming cherubim entering and exiting from the east gate of the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> ‘The LORD said to me: *“This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut”*’.<sup>3</sup> Both of these types represent the gate of heaven shut because of man’s sin. But Ezekiel was taken through by God, borne by the Cherubim. The emblem of fire indicating the inaccessibility of God is familiar to us in the Bible e.g. the burning bush and Mount Sinai. These two types foreshadowed a third type, shut to all but God, the womb of the blessed Virgin in the New Covenant, which the previous types prefigured according to the Fathers and interpreters, as God alone entered it and God alone came from it, the Word made flesh.

2. **Abel** was a type of the Messiah.

3. **The sons of God and the sons of men** making evident that the principle of moral good and evil could not be reconciled.<sup>4</sup> The creature could not approach the Creator unless the Creator first drew near to him, but paradise is closed to him. Secondly God ‘dwells in unapproachable light’.<sup>5</sup>

4. **The Distinction between clean and unclean animals** signifies the distinction between the good and evil people. Then it signified the fact that the Hebrews were the chosen people, the unclean signifying the Gentiles. This is seen in Peter’s vision at Joppa where he refuses to eat unclean animals which God commanded him to eat signifying that the Gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles. ‘*About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. Then he heard a voice saying, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.” The voice said to him again, a second time, “What*

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<sup>1</sup> ‘He drove out the man; and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.’ (*Gen* 3: 24).

<sup>2</sup> *Ezek* 43: 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 44: 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Gen* 6: 1–4.

<sup>5</sup> 1 *Tim* 6: 16.



*God has made clean, you must not call profane*”.<sup>6</sup> In the New Testament we have a similar distinction in the symbols of sheep and goats, good and bad fish, wheat and cockle.

Rosmini discusses at length the fact that animals were taken as emblems for men. Firstly, in his primitive state in which the animal part predominated, man did not know himself sufficiently to abstract the intelligent part of his nature. He made use of it but did not reflect upon it. For this reason he imagined that the same things took place in brutes, though some, from time to time, realised that animals had no intelligence.

God used animals as signs of how people should treat one another. After Noah and his family came out of the ark God forbade them to eat flesh with blood in it. *‘Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life. Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.*’<sup>7</sup> Beasts were treated as though they were culpable. In the book of Exodus, for instance, God struck not only the first-born of man but also of beasts.<sup>8</sup> In the book of Jonah the beasts too were ordered to fast and wear sack cloth!<sup>9</sup> God set before man animal life as the symbol of the soul for it was easier for man to grasp blood as the life-giving principle and thus use it as the root of the soul, as we see in the quotation above *‘Whoever sheds the blood of a human...’*. Noah and his family were not allowed to eat flesh with the blood in it because the blood of the beast is emblematic of the blood of man, who alone is made in the image and likeness of God.

Permission given to Noah to kill animals is also seen as emblematic of the wars against idolatrous nations. Rosmini quotes Psalm 149 to this effect, *‘Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron, to execute on them the judgement decreed. This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the LORD!’*<sup>10</sup> John Eton, in his book *The Psalms*, says that such martial language echoes the tradition of the Holy War. The real combatant is the Lord who is fighting against evil and the Hebrews were fighting his war and doing his will.<sup>11</sup> Rosmini, too, points out that this is God’s vengeance and that the Hebrews are his agents. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary points out in regard to the Holy War against Midian in chapter 3 of the Book of Numbers, that our modern distress at the genocide can be partly assuaged by the fact that the event did not really happen, however the fact that such an event could even be contemplated means that we need to try to interpret this in a

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 10: 9–15.

<sup>7</sup> Gen 9: 3–6.

<sup>8</sup> Ex 12.

<sup>9</sup> Jon 3: 6–8.

<sup>10</sup> Ps 149: 6–9.

<sup>11</sup> John Eaton, *The Psalms*, Continuum London, 2005, p. 483.

contemporary theological sense.<sup>12</sup> This sign shows us that we have no right to our own life except through God, and that death was the lot of the wicked so it seems that Noah was given the right to execute murderers, *‘Whoever sheds the blood of a human by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind’*.<sup>13</sup>

5. **Giants are emblems of human pride and impotence.** Rosmini believes they were emblems of the wicked. The Book of Genesis speaks of the Nephilim. They were the mighty men of old; men of renown. *‘The Nephilim were on the earth in those days — and also afterwards — when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown’*.<sup>14</sup> The Anakim were the most famous giants of Palestine. They dwelt near Hebron. *‘There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them’*.<sup>15</sup>

6. **The family of Noah in the ark** is a type of the Church of Jesus Christ saved by the wood of the Cross. All the circumstances surrounding the flood are emblematical. **The raven** signifies evil and **the dove** signifies good.

7. **The Covenant which God made with mankind after the flood was a type of the New Covenant, between God and the new people redeemed by Christ.** *‘And when the LORD smelt the pleasing odour, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done... I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth”*.<sup>16</sup> The only everlasting Covenant is that of Jesus Christ. In fact Jesus himself compares his future coming with the times of Noah. *‘But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man’*<sup>17</sup> **(Ref. 1)**. The rainbow therefore is an appropriate symbol for the Son of Man who will come with the clouds, that is, the angels.<sup>18</sup> The type of the New Covenant was often renewed with the chosen people, e.g. the

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Ed. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., Geoffrey Chapman 1997. *Numbers*, Conrad E. L’Heureux, 59, p. 92. 3: 13; also in *Josh*.

<sup>13</sup> *Gen* 9: 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Gen* 6: 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Num* 13:33. Other mentions are in *2 Sam* 21: 16, 18; *1 Chron* 20: 4, 6, 8; *Deut* 2: 10.

<sup>16</sup> *Gen* 8:21; 9:11–13.

<sup>17</sup> *Mt* 24: 36–39. So also John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesim*, hom. XXI–XXIII; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. XVI, cap. II; *Contra Faustum Mainichaeum*, lib. XII, cap. XXIII, XXIV; Cyprian, *Epistola LXIII ad Caecilium*, n. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Mt* 26: 64.

covenant with God renewed by Joshua after the Israelites had entered the promised land.<sup>19</sup> and the Covenant renewed by Nehemiah.<sup>20</sup>

8. **Tower of Babylon.** This was a type of the works of wicked people in which pride brought about their own downfall.<sup>21</sup>

The whole history of the Hebrew nation is a series of figures and signs by which God formed and educated them, *‘These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the end of the ages have come’*.<sup>22</sup> God chose Abraham whose wife Sarah bore Isaac. This family was made a nation at Mount Sinai when God gave the people a law and made a solemn covenant with them. God said, *‘but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.’*<sup>23</sup> This God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was to be adored by this nation. *‘God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”. He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, I AM has sent me to you.” God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you”: This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations.’*<sup>24</sup> When he led their descendants out of Egypt he called himself the God of the Hebrews, *‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us;...’*<sup>25</sup> Rosmini points to the period from the death of Jacob until the liberation from Egypt as a link connecting the domestic society with the national society. The signs God gave were commensurate with the different state in which their reflective faculty and especially the faculty of abstraction developed.

### **Chief Emblems given to the Chosen People<sup>26</sup>**

#### **Signs given to Abraham before the birth of Isaac**

1. **Leaving Home:** The abandonment of his house and country symbolised the spiritual distaste for earthly things; this is a necessary condition for supernatural virtue. *‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you...’*<sup>27</sup> Abraham was thus led to choose between a great abstraction, on the one hand either to place his faith in God, in his word and power and on the other whatever was pleasing to him, his home, his habits,

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<sup>19</sup> *Josh* 30 1 ff; 24: 1ff.

<sup>20</sup> *Neh* 8 and 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Gen* 11.

<sup>22</sup> 1 *Cor* 10: 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Ex* 19: 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 15.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 18. The Messiah would be king of all humanity. ‘For God is the king of all the earth’ *Ps* 47: 7.

<sup>26</sup> We have already seen in chapter 12 that signs were given by God to the chosen people in order to educate them, and that Rosmini explains the periods during which these signs were given.

<sup>27</sup> *Gen* 12: 1–2.

parents and friends. In order to make this choice the development of the faculty of abstraction was necessary.

2. **The Promised Seed.** The offspring promised to Abraham was a symbol of the Messiah who would fully satisfy human nature.

3. **The Promised Land.** When Abraham came into the land of Canaan, God appeared and promised to give his offspring that land which is a symbol of the Church of Christ and heaven. It is interesting that when Abraham separated from Lot God renewed his promise, this time to him. He thus speaks of the land symbolically. *'The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northwards and southwards and eastwards and westwards; for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring for ever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you".'*<sup>28</sup>

4. **Melchisedech** and his sacrifice of bread and wine is a symbol of the Messiah as explained in the letter to the Hebrews.<sup>29</sup>

5. **The first covenant with Abram.** A long time passed after the promise to Abraham until the first covenant in order to test his faith. Also he had to learn to conceive a purely spiritual happiness rather than placing it in earthly things. Abraham says, *"O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." The Lord then brought him outside and told him to look at the stars which symbolised his many descendants. And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.*<sup>30</sup> This covenant was sealed by sacrifice and God made known to him that his offspring would be pilgrims for 400 years before they possessed the promised land.<sup>31</sup> By these signs God taught Abraham that material happiness was not everything.

6. **The Everlasting Covenant and Circumcision.** The everlasting covenant came after a further fifteen years which tried Abraham's faith still further. *'I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.'*<sup>32</sup> This was an eternal promise which implied the immortality of the soul, that the Messiah would be descended from Isaac but that he would bless Ishmael also. God said, *'No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you'*

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<sup>28</sup> Gen 13: 14–17.

<sup>29</sup> Heb 7.

<sup>30</sup> Gen 15: 3, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 15: 7–14.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 17: 7.

at this season next year.”<sup>33</sup> On Abraham’s part a high moral perfection was required. Circumcision was a sign of his breaking with the evil of the flesh proceeding from original sin.

**7. Symbols of the Most Holy Trinity.** The mysterious visitation of the three men by the oaks of Mamre is seen by the Fathers of the Church as a symbol of the Trinity. Abraham addressed them in the singular. *‘He said, “My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on — since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said...” They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son”... The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh”.’*<sup>34</sup>

### **Signs given to the chosen people in their state as a domestic society**

**1. Hagar and Sarah.** Hagar was the slave and Sarah was the free woman. The former represents the synagogue and the latter the Church. St Paul gives this interpretation in his letter to the Galatians. *‘Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother.’*<sup>35</sup>

The Church also finds the same type in Jacob’s two wives, Leah and Rachel; Justin and Jerome say that Leah represents the synagogue and Rachel, the Church (**Ref. 2.**). Rosmini also mentions the twin children of Tamar, namely, Perez and Zerah. The one who put his arm out first and yet was born later, Zerah, is a sign of the synagogue, the one who was born first, Perez is a symbol of the Church.<sup>36</sup>

**2. The Sacrifice of Isaac.** This was a symbol for the Sacrifice of Christ. The Letter to the Hebrews says, *‘By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, “It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named after you.” He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead — and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.’*<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Gen* 17: 19–21.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 18:3–5; 9–10; 13–15.

<sup>35</sup> *Gal* 4: 21–26.

<sup>36</sup> *Gen* 38: 27–30.

<sup>37</sup> *Heb* 11: 17–19.

3. **The oath with hand on thigh.** There are only two places in Scripture where this was used — by Abraham and Jacob. Augustine, Jerome and the other Fathers explain this mysterious ritual as a symbol for Christ who would come from the loins of the patriarchs and that they swore by him<sup>38</sup> (**Ref. 3**).

4. **Jacob and Esau.** Jacob was the preferred son, *‘and not all of Abraham’s children are his true descendants; but “It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named after you.” This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants... Nor is that all; something similar happened to Rebecca when she had conceived children by one husband, our ancestor Isaac. Even before they had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God’s purpose of election might continue, not by works but by his call) she was told, “The elder shall serve the younger.” As it is written, “I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau”’.*<sup>39</sup> Rosmini sees the former as, ‘a man of simple habits [who] represents the just in the Gospel who by meekness and humility triumphs over the ferocity of man: and therefore he is the type of Jesus Christ principally. The skins of the goat with which he was covered in order to obtain the paternal blessing represent according to St. Augustine the sins of mankind with which Christ appeared to be charged.’<sup>40</sup>

5. **Jacob’s Ladder.** A beautiful sign of the Mediator who was to descend from Jacob. The angels may represent the holy souls, who through Christ, ascend to heaven, and the graces which these ministers bring to humanity.

6. **Jacob’s wrestling with the angel.** Jacob is a sign of Christ who prevailed on his Father with regard to sinful humanity and ‘disarmed his justice by suffering death in his humanity symbolised by Jacob’s thigh.’<sup>41</sup>

7. **Joseph sold into Egypt.** Symbolises Jesus Christ according to the Fathers and commentators.

8. **The slavery in Egypt and liberation.** The slavery of the Jews in Egypt is symbolic of the slavery of the human race under the devil. Their deliverer, Moses, is a symbol of Jesus Christ. The Reed Sea typifies the waters of baptism as St Paul tells us. *‘I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.’*<sup>42</sup>

### **Symbols given to the Hebrews in their state of national and civil society**

1. **The wanderings in the desert.** These journeys after passing through the Reed Sea typify humanity liberated from sin by Christ through baptism and travelling towards heaven through this life which is full of dangers and temptations.

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<sup>38</sup> Gen 24: 2–3; 47: 29 and 31.

<sup>39</sup> Rom 9: 7–8; 10–13.

<sup>40</sup> Augustine, *Lib. Contra. Mendacacium*, cap. X. *AS*, lib. IV, I, cap. VI, art. VIII, p. 93.

<sup>41</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> 1 Cor 10: 1–4.

**2. The moral law.** God was king of his people and therefore the form of government was a theocracy. The Lord promulgates the moral, judicial and ceremonial law; in all these there are emblematic precepts.<sup>43</sup>

a) **The Sabbath on which servile work was forbidden.** *'You came down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and you made known your holy sabbath to them and gave them commandments and statutes and a law through your servant Moses.'*<sup>44</sup> The sabbath represented the liberty and the peace which God's children will enjoy in eternal rest. Just as God created the world and rested on the seventh day, so the just who have laboured in pursuing virtue will find their repose in becoming like God.

b) **The law commanded to be carried on the arm and the forehead** symbolised that it should direct the people's thoughts and actions. The writing of it on the doors symbolised that the Israelites were not ashamed of it. *'Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates'*.<sup>45</sup>

c) **Animals.** There were many directions concerning their use of animals. Not to boil the kid in its mother's milk;<sup>46</sup> Not to take chickens while they were still in the nest; not to kill sheep that were in lamb; not to muzzle the ox which was treading out the corn;<sup>47</sup> not to mutilate animals.<sup>48</sup> These precepts taught them to respect their natural affections and to cultivate humaneness, gentleness, gratitude and reasonableness.

d) **Clothing and Farming.** Not to wear a woven woollen or flax garment; not to sow a vineyard with two different kinds of seeds.<sup>49</sup> This is to teach plain dealing and simplicity that was to characterise their way of life.

e) **Ploughing.** It was forbidden to plough with an ox and ass yoked together.<sup>50</sup> St Paul explains this emblem to the Corinthians, *'Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness?'*<sup>51</sup> The ass was an unclean animal and represented unbelievers. Saint Augustine and Saint Basil give similar explanations, the wise and the foolish should not be united in the Lord's vineyard. In other words, the sacred and profane must not be mixed.

f) **Men and women** are not to wear each other's clothes.<sup>52</sup> This is a symbol because the sacred writer adds that it is an abomination before the Lord and means that it is not simply using clothing. (Apparently this refers to Canaanite cultic prostitution.)

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<sup>43</sup> *Deut* 6: 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Neb* 9: 13–14.

<sup>45</sup> *Deut* 6: 8–9.

<sup>46</sup> *Ex* 23: 19; 34: 26; *Deut* 14: 21.

<sup>47</sup> *Deut* 22:6; 25: 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Lev* 22: 24.

<sup>49</sup> *Deut* 22:9.

<sup>50</sup> *Deut* 22: 10.

<sup>51</sup> *2 Cor* 6: 14.

<sup>52</sup> *Deut* 22: 5.

g) **Animals** of a different genus are forbidden to mate; this was to show emblematically and condemn all sins against nature.<sup>53</sup>

St. Thomas says, ‘Consequently the Lord, in order to inculcate pity to the Jewish people, who were prone to cruelty, wished them to practice pity even with regard to dumb animals, and forbade them to do certain things savouring of cruelty to animals. Hence He prohibited them to “boil a kid in the milk of its dam”; and “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain”;<sup>54</sup> and to slay “the dam with her young.” It may, nevertheless, be also said that these prohibitions were made in hatred of idolatry. For the Egyptians held it to be wicked to allow the ox to eat of the grain while threshing the corn. Moreover certain sorcerers were wont to ensnare the mother bird with her young during incubation, and to employ them for the purpose of securing fruitfulness and good luck in bringing up children: also because it was held to be a good omen to find the mother sitting on her young. As to the mingling of animals of divers species, the literal reason may have been threefold. The first was to show detestation for the idolatry of the Egyptians, who employed various mixtures in worshipping the planets, which produce various effects, and on various kinds of things according to their various conjunctions. The second reason was in condemnation of unnatural sins. The third reason was the entire removal of all occasions of concupiscence. Because animals of different species do not easily breed, unless this be brought about by man; and movements of lust are aroused by seeing such things. Wherefore in the Jewish traditions we find it prescribed as stated by Rabbi Moses that men shall turn away their eyes from such sights.’<sup>55</sup>

The Fathers state that all the principles of the Mosaic Law signify the justice of Christ, to which they also disposed people. St Thomas says:

‘If justice be taken in the last two ways, it is evident that it was conferred by the precepts of the Law; in so far, that is, as they disposed men to the justifying grace of Christ, which they also signified, because as Augustine says (*Contra Faust.* xxii, 24), “even the life of that people foretold and foreshadowed Christ”.’<sup>56</sup>

**3. The Ceremonial Law.** St Paul teaches that the ceremonial law was emblematical. ‘*Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*’<sup>57</sup> And in the Letter to the Hebrews we read, ‘... *there are priests who offer gifts*

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<sup>53</sup> *Lev* 19: 19.

<sup>54</sup> *Deut* 25: 4.

<sup>55</sup> ST, I II, CII, art. VI, ad 8. Also Theodoret, *Quaestiones in Leviticum*, cap. XIX, XXVII.

<sup>56</sup> ST, I II, C, art. XII.

<sup>57</sup> *Col* 2: 16–17.



*according to the law. They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one; for Moses, when he was about to erect the tent, was warned, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain".*<sup>58</sup> So these emblems were given as an instruction to Moses.

Rosmini concludes this section by saying that he is aware that some writers of his day are averse to finding emblems or figures in the Scriptures but that past history justifies this, 'My object is only to set forth the doctrine of the Catholic Church and I believe it to be an undeniable fact that in all ages, but especially in the more ancient times, the Fathers and writers of the Church have unanimously recognised that the Old Testament Scriptures are full of these *instructive emblematical signs* of which we have been speaking.'<sup>59</sup> He gives two long quotations from St Thomas to support his view.

"As the body is ordered by God through the soul, so the external worship is ordered in relation to the internal worship.[ ] Hence the external acts of man are applied to the divine worship according to the different mode in which the intellect and the object of the worshipper of God is rightly united to him. Now in the state of the blessed in heaven the intellect sees the divine truth as it is in itself; and hence the exterior worship above does not consist in any figure, but only in that praise of God which proceeds from the inward knowledge and affection as Isaiah says; 'joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song'.(Isa. 51: 3) But in the state of this present life we cannot contemplate the divine truth as it is in itself, but as St. Dionysius says, the ray of divine truth must shine upon us under certain sensible figures, but differently according to the different states of human cognition."<sup>60</sup>

'So St Thomas is saying that we need to consider the intellectual state of humanity at different periods to see what sort of instruction would best fit it at that particular time. Because it must also be commensurate with their intellectual development, especially the faculty of abstraction.

St Thomas continues, "During the period of the Old Law the divine truth was neither manifested in itself nor was the way shown to man by which he might arrive at it; according to the Apostle (*Heb 9: 8*) and therefore it was necessary that the exterior worship of the ancient law should be not merely figurative of the truth that was to be revealed in the heavenly country but also of Christ who is the way that leads to the heavenly manifestation. On the contrary in the state under the New Law this way was already revealed. Hence it needs no longer to be foreshadowed as future but only commemorated as a thing that had taken place or was actually present; yet that truth of glory that was not yet unveiled had to be foreshown in figure. It was with this distinction in view that existed between the Old and New

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<sup>58</sup> *Heb* 8: 4–5.

<sup>59</sup> *AS, ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>60</sup> Dionysius the Aeropagite, *De coelesti hierarchis* cap. I, § 2.

<sup>61</sup> ST, I II, CI, art. II. *AS*, vol. II, lib. IV, I, cap. VI, art. VIII, pp. 96–97.

Law that St. Paul distinguishes in Hebrews saying (11: 1) that 'the Law of Moses was the shadow of the good things to come and not the image of them'. For a shadow is something less than an image, the latter belongs to the New Law, the shadow to the Old".<sup>61</sup>

St Thomas divided the ceremonial law into two parts, *instructive emblematic signs* and *sacraments*. The object of ceremonies was not just instruction and consecration of the people, they were also formulas so that God's people might worship rightly, but we prescind from the latter for the time being. Instructive emblematic signs are of three kinds 1) sacrifice; 2) sacred things, such as sacred vessels, and vestments and 3) observances. The first deals with worship, the second deals with the instruments and means which served for worship and life and the third deals with the lives of men and women and conversation.

### Sacrifices

Our present life is similar to our eternal life. For the same things believed in this life by faith and which form our holiness are seen in the next in their essence and form our glory. So what is emblematical of a holy life must be emblematical of the life of glory. The model of each life is Christ in whom is the perfection of the two lives. So according to the Fathers these two things are expressed by ancient emblems. If there is a likeness to one there must be a likeness to the other.

Animals immolated to God are an emblem of human beings who in both lives should be dedicated to God by a complete and perpetual sacrifice, representing the sacrifice of Jesus our eternal high priest.

Under the Old Law there were the holocaust, the sacrifice for sins, and the peace sacrifice. The whole sacrifice was burned in the holocaust signifying that whole man and all that belonged to him were subject to the dominion of God and were offered up to him. In the sacrifice for sin one part was burned and the other was for the use of the priest. This signified that the expiation of sin was the work of God through the ministry of the priest. In the peace sacrifice which was either offered in thanksgiving or to obtain new benefits, one part was burnt in honour of God, another was for the use of the priests and a third for that of the offerers. This signified that the salvation of human beings proceeded from God through the priests and the co-operation of human beings themselves in the work of salvation.

The first-born had all to be offered to the Lord in token of his dominion as their Creator and the avenger of sins. Unclean beasts had to be immolated at a fixed price, the clean beasts had to be sacrificed without ransom, signifying that God is only pleased with the sacrifice of clean things. The human first born had to be ransomed at the same price as an ass, five shekels. This signified the uncleanness that humans had incurred through original sin and the necessity of a just one who might be an acceptable sacrifice, and such, of course was Jesus Christ.

### **Sacred Things**

All the appurtenances of the ceremonial functions of the chosen people were figurative ones.

a) **The tabernacle** was the temple in miniature representing the Church or the body of human beings in relation with God. In the letter to the Hebrews we read, '*a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up*'; so the ancient tabernacle was a figure of the true heavenly one which is wholly spiritual. Therefore he continues, '*For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices*'.<sup>62</sup>

And therefore it is necessary for this priest (Christ) also to have something to offer. Now if he offered something on earth, an earthly thing, he would not be a priest, for there were priests who offered earthly things and these served as an exemplar and type of heavenly things. Christ was that priest who offered a heavenly gift, a spiritual sacrifice whereas the descendants of Aaron offered only earthly gifts which were symbols of a spiritual sacrifice. The entrance of the High Priest only once a year into the sanctuary is seen by the author to the Hebrews as a type of Christ entering heaven once and for all through the sacrifice of his death.<sup>63</sup> There is only one sacrifice, his death; only one high priest living in heaven. It must also be observed that the eucharistic sacrifice is more truly heavenly than earthly, because the victim is there hidden from earthly sight and remains always in heaven; so that in the Eucharist even the priest and the victim are both truly in heaven; and we may truly say that in this great rite heaven and earth are in communion....the ancient rite is now done away with because now the entrance of the sanctuary is open for all to enter. '*But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.*'<sup>64</sup> Therefore, my friends,... we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)...<sup>65</sup>

### **b) The Holy Mountains**

These were Mount Sion and Mount Moriah. The latter was where Abraham took his son Isaac to sacrifice him and was stopped by the angel. It is also the place mentioned in the Book of Chronicles where Solomon built his temple.<sup>66</sup> Mount Sion on which was built the palace of King David, a figure of Christ, represented justice on which the Church is founded. Rosmini quotes several passages from Scripture to confirm this, among which it is said of Jerusalem that its foundations rest on the Holy Mountain,

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<sup>62</sup> Heb 8: 2–3.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, v. 3 ff.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 11–12.

<sup>65</sup> Heb 10: 19–20. Cf. *AS, ibid.*, lib. IV, I, cap. VI, art. VIII, pp. 99–100 and footnotes.

<sup>66</sup> Gen 22. 2; 2 Chr 3: 1.

*'the Lord loves the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob'*.<sup>67</sup> And Isaiah says, *'In righteousness you shall be established'*.<sup>68</sup> Finally a clear simile from the book of Psalms, *'Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains'*.<sup>69</sup> The immovable firmness of the house of God is attributed to this justice and Christ speaks of his Church against which hell cannot prevail, being founded on rock.

**c) The King**

The king of the people of God was the emblem of the true king of the elect people., Jesus Christ. In Deuteronomy, the king seated on his throne, was bidden to have the law transcribed for him by the priests of the tribe of Levi.<sup>70</sup> The kings of Judah each sabbatical year read the law to the people at the entrance to the temple as was done by Josiah.<sup>71</sup>

**d) Mount Moriah**

One of the two holy mountains. There were two of them just as the principles of the law and justice are two, namely reason and revelation, nature and grace, ideal justice and real justice: and as the objects of justice are two, namely God and human beings, hence two precepts of charity. In Scripture the idea of justice is linked to the temple, *'holy is thy temple, wonderful in justice'*.<sup>72</sup>

**e) Ideal and Real Justice**

Ideal justice belongs to the realm of ideas. It gives us principles of justice; we need its light to know our duties. Real justice belongs to the realm of real things and activity and the force by which we act according to the light. The two mountains, Mount Sion on which stood the palace of the king who communicated the law to the people, and Mount Moriah on which stood the temple of God who communicated grace by which the will is moved, are emblems of these two modes of justice. Within the temple and the tabernacle we have the same emblems repeated in the holy things and the Holy of Holies. In the Holy Place there was the candlestick, a symbol of the light which illumines our understanding and belongs to knowledge and there was the bread of proposition symbolising the life and force which strengthens the will and belongs to grace. In the Holy of Holies there were the tables of the law or knowledge in the ideal order, and the Mannah or food of life belonging to the real order. It might be thought that Rosmini's thought is too speculative, but he says that it is part of the ordinary Christian tradition and quotes Thomas à Kempis to demonstrate this.

'For two things do I feel to be exceedingly necessary to me in this life, without which this miserable life would be intolerable to me; being detained in the prison of this body, I confess that I need two things, even food and light. Thou hast therefore

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<sup>67</sup> Ps 87: 2.

<sup>68</sup> Isa 54: 14.

<sup>69</sup> Ps 36: 6 quoted by Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, lib. 1, cap I, n. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Deut 17: 18.

<sup>71</sup> 2 Kings 23: 2.

<sup>72</sup> Ps 64: 5-6 (Douai).

given to me who am so weak, Thy sacred Body and Blood, for the refreshing of my soul and body, and hast set Thy Word for a lantern to my feet. Without these two I could not properly live; for the Word of God is the light of my soul, and Thy Sacrament the bread of life. These may also be called the two tables, placed on this side and on that, in the treasury of Thy holy Church. One table is that of the Sacred Altar, bearing the holy bread, that is the precious Body and Blood of Christ; the other is the table of the Divine Law, containing holy doctrine, teaching the true faith, and leading steadfastly onwards even to that which is within the veil, where the Holy of Holies is.<sup>73</sup>

f) **Jerusalem**

This was the emblem of the Church of Christ, in the midst of which dwelt their king.

g) **The Promised Land**

The abundance of all these things which the elect enjoy in paradise, a land of milk and honey a phrase which is not exaggerated if applied to heaven.

h) **The length of life**

A long life promised to the observers of the law was symbolic of immortality '*so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long*'.<sup>74</sup>

i) **The Feasts of the Jews**

The seven feasts were as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> **The Sabbath**, in memory of creation, a symbol of the life of detachment from earthly things; 2<sup>nd</sup> **The Feast of the New Moon**, in memory of the preservation and divine government of the universe, and representing the Church of Jesus Christ and Mary who holds the first place in the Church; 3<sup>rd</sup> **The Feast of the Pasch** in memory of the liberation of the children of Israel from Egypt. It symbolises the 'lamb' who takes away the sins of the world; 4<sup>th</sup> **The Feast of Pentecost** celebrated fifty days after the Pasch in memory of the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, and signifying the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles on that day; 5<sup>th</sup> **The Feast of Trumpets**, on the first day of the seventh month in memory of the deliverance of Isaac, when Abraham found a ram caught in a thicket and this signified the preaching of the Apostles; 6<sup>th</sup> **The Feast of Expiation** on the tenth day of the seventh month, to which the Feast of Trumpets was the invitation, in memory of God being appeased by the prayer of Moses when the people of Israel had adored the golden calf; and it represented the amendment of sins of the Christian people; 7<sup>th</sup> **The Feast of Tabernacles**, in memory of the protection of God over his people in the desert, the octave day of which was the Feast of the

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, lib. IV, cap. XI, n. 4, Gutenberg text.

<sup>74</sup> *Deut* 6: 2.

Collection when what the people had to offer for the maintenance of public worship was set apart, in memory of that union of peace and the abundance enjoyed by the people of God in the Promised Land which they had entered after their journeying in the desert. These two feasts represent the pilgrimage of the faithful through the desert of this world; and their happy union in heaven.<sup>75</sup>

### Observances

#### a) Unclean animals

These represented the Gentiles and the variety their various vices. Eating in Scripture is the emblem of intimate union, of the acquiring of one's very nature and in which human happiness reposes. The Jews were therefore forbidden to share this domestic observance with the Gentiles and to accept their nature or customs. Legal defilement was a figure of spiritual defilement and its penalty was excommunication from those who were pure and undefiled.

#### b) The fruits of the first three years were unclean

As a sign of original sin; the abandonment of these first fruits was called 'circumcision' because this recalled original sin just as did these fruits of the first three years. After this time they presented the fourth year's fruits to the Lord and thus purified the tree. *'When you come into the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall regard their fruit as forbidden; for three years it shall be forbidden to you; it must not be eaten. In the fourth year all their fruit shall be set apart for rejoicing in the LORD. But in the fifth year you may eat of their fruit, that their yield may be increased for you: I am the LORD your God.'*<sup>76</sup>

#### c) The fringes of the corners of the cloak

The blue ribbons that hung from them were symbolic of the purity of their eyes, which should not be seduced by impurity so they might contemplate heavenly things. *'The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the Israelites, and tell them to make fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations and to put a blue cord on the fringe at each corner. You have the fringe so that, when you see it, you will remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and not follow the lust of your own heart and your own eyes.'*<sup>77</sup>

#### d) In Deuteronomy: Binding of the written law.

It is commanded *'Bind them [the written law] as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on your doorposts of your house and on your gates.'*<sup>78</sup> This was symbolic. The hand signified action, the eyes<sup>79</sup> the law which was to be meditated on by the mind and fulfilled in deed.

#### e) Exterior cleanliness.

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<sup>75</sup> AS, *ibid.*, pp. 103–104.

<sup>76</sup> Lev 19: 23–25.

<sup>77</sup> Num 15: 37–39.

<sup>78</sup> Deut 6: 8–9.

<sup>79</sup> 'And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes.' Deut 6: 8 (Douai).

There were many laws regarding the exterior cleanliness of the body signifying the interior purity of their souls.

**f) Judicial and Political Laws**

Whereas the ceremonial laws were instituted directly and principally for the sake of their figurative meaning, some are figurative in their consequences.

St Thomas says, 'But some precepts are figurative, not primarily and in themselves, but consequently. In this way the judicial precepts of the Old Law are figurative. For they were not instituted for the purpose of being figurative, but in order that they might regulate the state of that people according to justice and equity. Nevertheless they did foreshadow something consequently: since the entire state of that people, who were directed by these precepts, was figurative, according to 1 Cor 10: 11: "All things happened to them in figure".'<sup>80</sup>

**g) The blood of the Victims in the Covenant of Mount Sinai**

On descending from Mount Sinai Moses erected twelve altars. Among other rites was the sprinkling of the blood of the victims on the people and on the book of the Covenant. This signified the double effect of the blood of Christ for the salvation of the people and to give power to the word of God in the letter of the law by means of the Holy Spirit.

**h) The Breaking of the Tables of the Law**

'The first Tables of the Law were broken by Moses and represent the Old Law which was abolished and renovated by Christ.'<sup>81</sup>

**i) The Bronze Serpent and other symbols in the Desert**

The bronze serpent was a notable symbol of Christ. The wood that made the bitter waters sweet, the rock struck by the rod of Moses, the Mannah, all symbolised the Messiah and the facts of his life.

**j) The Great Men of the Hebrews**

All the great men were figures of Christ e.g. Moses, Joshua, Samson, David, Solomon and the prophets.

**Abstract and Negative Ideas**

**Abstract Ideas**

There are two types of cognitions which are not sensible ones, namely abstract ideas and negative ideas. We have dealt with both these types of ideas earlier. In the natural order we can have only a negative idea of God since we cannot see God in this life. Even in the supernatural order of things, though we have a real perception of God, this is not accompanied by a sensible cognition for: '*You cannot see my face; for no one shall*

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<sup>80</sup> ST, I II, CIV, art. II.

<sup>81</sup> AS, *ibid.*, p. 105.

*see me and live*.<sup>82</sup> Therefore there is a need for symbols in order that they make some forcible impression. They require sensible representations which have a certain resemblance, analogy or relation with the objects themselves. This can be illustrated by taking the abstract idea of *justice*. Primitive man was like an infant. His first impressions were sensible things and his first perceptions were of sensible things. He had not yet formed abstract ideas. Temporal, sensible goods and evils were all he knew. God first linked happiness with virtue and temporal good and vice with temporal misery. The practice of virtue would thus be rewarded and the practice of evil would be penalised. Virtue and justice were, therefore, seen as desirable things whereas vice was seen as something to be avoided. Human beings, therefore began to reflect on the nature of virtue and vice. "This then was the first step and it was a step of great importance since it taught man three things: 1<sup>st</sup> that justice was worth at the least as much as all the goods of this earth of which it was the parent; 2<sup>nd</sup> that this justice although it did not come under the senses nevertheless deserved great attention and must have concealed within it something mysterious and sublime; 3<sup>rd</sup> that the divine nature had the most jealous affection for this *justice* since he had made the distribution of all good things dependent on it."<sup>83</sup> The human mind could now arrive at the pure concept of justice. By making the connection between moral good and evil and temporal good and evil it had, as it were, made justice sensible just as we see (to use a simile) the soul which is wholly spiritual by means of the body which it animates. God now had to enable human beings to separate the concept of justice from other concepts. This he did by dividing earthly goods from justice so that justice could be contemplated on its own in the abstract. The whole time of the Old Covenant was chiefly spent on stage one. It was left to the New Covenant to perfect stage two. In the Old Testament it is *temporal* goods which are promised to the just and *heavenly* rewards to the just in the New Testament. We see how Job was presented with this quandary. In his eyes he had done no wrong to deserve the catastrophes which befell him. His friends were convinced that he had done evil. Tobias, too, suffered though he was of exemplary life. But both holy men were eventually rewarded. Tobias had his sight restored 'And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning...' <sup>84</sup> Again, Abraham was ordered to leave the land he loved and go to a far off country. He and Sarah had to wait for old age before they had children. Thus they learned to esteem justice for its own sake. When Abraham was called on to sacrifice his son Isaac, he had to choose between justice and love of his son.

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<sup>82</sup> Ex 33: 20.

<sup>83</sup> AS, *ibid*, art. IX, p. 107.

<sup>84</sup> Job 42: 10–12.



The natural love which man has for temporal riches and dominion was great. God promised all this to the patriarchs, he promised them the land of Canaan, a vast and real possession, if they should be faithful and obedient to him. This was the first operation by which God led men to fix their whole attention on justice. Besides this he caused them to spend all their lives in pilgrimage through strange countries, without possessing a foot of land of their own, content with a word, God's promise, which was to be fulfilled long after their own death four hundred years from the call of Abraham (Gen 15: 13). This was God's second operation by which he held them detached from temporal goods and led them to reflect on true riches and on the fear of God only, the life of justice, trust in the word of the Lord: all abstract and negative ideas.<sup>85</sup>

### Negative Ideas

Natural symbols which were used to form abstract ideas are not equally adaptable for forming negative ideas. Negative ideas on the other hand have no matter.<sup>86</sup> So natural symbols could not lead human thought to form accurate ideas of the divinity. Symbols would have led people to suppose that God resembled natural things. In order to show that God was the principle of all things, that his nature could not be conceived by the human mind, God forbade the chosen people to use any images of him. "The Egyptians worship many animals and images of monstrous form; the Jews have purely mental conceptions of Deity, as one in essence. They call those profane who make representations of God in human shape out of perishable materials. They believe that Being to be supreme and eternal, neither capable of representation, nor of decay. They therefore do not allow any images to stand in their cities, much less in their temples."<sup>87</sup>

God is incomprehensible and this is the most that we can know of him. '*It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see...*'<sup>88</sup> Therefore no symbols were employed to represent God. Indeed in late pre-Christian times the name Yahweh was not used out of reverence and Adonai (Lord) was substituted.

Examples of Names Given to God	
Hagar during her flight saw an angel.	'You are El-Roi; for she said "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?"' Gen 16: 13.
Jacob after wrestling with the angel.	'So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face and yet my life

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<sup>85</sup> AS, *ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>86</sup> See Chapter 1 on negative cognitions.

<sup>87</sup> Tacitus, *Histories*, Lib. V, cap. V, 8. Translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, eBooks@Adelaide 2004.

<sup>88</sup> 1 Tim 6: 16. Cf. Isa. 45: 15.

# Appendix 1

	is preserved”.’ <i>Gen</i> 32: 30.
He is called the ‘God of Sinai’ in <i>Ps</i> 68: 8.	‘the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain at the presence of God, the God of Sinai’.

God could, therefore be known only by his effects. The whole universe indicates this first cause. But the human mind was used to seeing this and so God provided new extraordinary signs, that is miracles. So he called himself the ‘God of Bethel’ because of the vision that Jacob had had there.<sup>89</sup> He called himself the God who led the chosen people out of Egypt. *‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.’*<sup>90</sup>

From these extraordinary events man came to realise that God was present in the ordinary events of life. Another means that God used to impress on humanity the negative ideas of God for which there were no representation in nature, was the multiplication of symbols. These were not be used to express the divine nature, because representations of the divine nature itself were forbidden. *‘Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. ... Since you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure — the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven.’*<sup>91</sup> God therefore communicated through a strange combination of various figures which have no existence in nature.

The reason of this strange combination of various figures which have no existence in nature appears to me to be this. God, even when in human flesh, is still a Being so exalted and so far removed from any fitting similitude that can be found in other things that it is not possible to come close to symbolising his manifold and lofty excellence other than by taking as a symbol of it, something not found in nature but some imaginary or artificial entity which unites in itself the members and properties of various other beings. The significance of such a solemn symbol is that the thing represented exceeds the confines of all beings that exist in nature, uniting in one the separate qualities and virtues of many and various natures.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup> *Gen* 31: 13.

<sup>90</sup> *Ex* 20: 2–3.

<sup>91</sup> *Deut* 4: 12, 15–19.

<sup>92</sup> *AS, ibid.*, art. XII, p. 114.

## Awe-Inspiring Symbols

### The Chariot of God

This symbol is used frequently in Sacred Scripture. It represents the providence by which God guides all creation, a triumphant providence in triumphing over his enemies. It is a chariot of war carrying the glory of the Lord *'Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendour all round. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD'*.<sup>93</sup> The providence of the world is carried out by Jesus Christ as Isaiah says, *'through him the will of the Lord shall prosper'*.<sup>94</sup> Jesus Christ is the charioteer. When Elisha saw Elijah carried up into heaven he said, *'Father, Father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen'*.<sup>95</sup> This chariot of the Lord was attended by millions of angels. *'With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place'*.<sup>96</sup> It was a chariot of fire with horses of fire, *'As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven'*.<sup>97</sup> God thus gives light and immortality to his saints and burns up any wicked who are unfortunate enough to deserve eternal punishment. The chariot is drawn by cherubim. Rosmini suggests that the first vision of this chariot was seen by Adam when cherubim were posted at the gate of Eden.

Admitting, as I do, that the Cherubim, guardians of Eden and of the Tree of Life, were only a grand symbolic vision, which was seen by Adam, like that of the prophet Ezekiel and of many others in Holy Scripture, puts an end to many questions raised by interpreters and to which they do not find it easy to reply, e.g. why Eden was guarded by only one gate on the East and not the other sides, how long this impediment to enter Eden was to continue and so on. If we hold that this was only an instructive symbol it is easy to answer that this appearance at the Eastern part was symbolic and that it continued so long as the vision continued which impressed the beholder with terror of that place and made him shrink from entering it. So also the vision of Jacob of the ladder in his dream impressed him with a sacred horror of that place and caused him to exclaim *'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven'*.<sup>98</sup>

Only those who have received from God the divine character can resist the flames and pass through them unscathed. St Ambrose maintained that this fire was the fire of purgatory through which the just can pass unharmed.<sup>99</sup> Even the idolatrous nations held that human beings could not see God and live. On Mount Sinai Moses alone had

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<sup>93</sup> *Ez* 1: 28.

<sup>94</sup> *Isa* 53: 10.

<sup>95</sup> *2 Kings* 2: 12.

<sup>96</sup> *Ps* 68: 17.

<sup>97</sup> *2 Kings* 2: 11.

<sup>98</sup> *Gen* 28: 17.

<sup>99</sup> Ambrose, *Expositio in Psalmum CXVIII*, sermo III.

a vision of this divine chariot, *‘And he said: The Lord came from Sinai, and from Seir he rose up to us: he hath appeared from Mount Pharan, and with him thousands of saints. In his right hand a fiery law’*.<sup>100</sup> In the Psalms we are expressly told that Moses saw the chariot of God, *‘With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place’*.<sup>101</sup> The Ark of the Covenant was symbolic of the fiery chariot and the throne of glory in which God sat and which Moses was ordered to make according to the pattern he saw on the Mount.<sup>102</sup> The Incarnation and Ascension of our Lord are symbolised by the chariot. The Word of God descended and showed himself on earth; he ascended into heaven triumphant, seated on the same chariot, followed by the captives he had taken. *‘With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place. You ascended the high mount leading captives in your train and receiving gifts from people, even from those who rebel against the LORD God’s abiding there.’*<sup>103</sup> *‘But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it is said, “When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.” (When it says, “He ascended”, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)’*<sup>104</sup> He comes to the aid of his chosen ones, stands at their head and leads them like a shepherd. When David was freed from his enemy and the hands of Saul he sang a hymn to the Lord, which is Psalm XVIII. *‘In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears’*. Then he explains how the Lord came to deliver him *‘Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the heavens trembled and quaked, because he was angry. Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens, and came down; thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub, and flew; he was seen upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness around him a canopy, thick clouds, a gathering of water. Out of the brightness before him coals of fire flamed forth. The LORD thundered from heaven; the Most High uttered his voice. He sent out arrows, and scattered them—lightning, and routed them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were laid bare at the rebuke of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. He reached from on high, he took me, he drew me out of mighty waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me.’*<sup>105</sup> The deliverance of David was a figure of the deliverance of Christ. St Paul refers to this Psalm in his letter to the Romans,<sup>106</sup> showing that this was universally admitted in that day. Habbakuk also uses the same figure as he celebrates the deliverance of the people of Israel from the Babylonians.<sup>107</sup> Psalm 80 begins, *‘Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned*

<sup>100</sup> Deut 33: 2 (Douai).

<sup>101</sup> Ps 68: 17.

<sup>102</sup> Ex : 25: 40.

<sup>103</sup> Ps 68: 17–18.

<sup>104</sup> Eph 4: 7–10.

<sup>105</sup> 2 Sam 22: 7–18.

<sup>106</sup> Rom 15: 9.

<sup>107</sup> Hab 3.

*upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!*<sup>108</sup>

But the vision of the moving throne is more explicit, says Rosmini, in the vision of Ezekiel and he makes a detailed exegesis of this. Here is a summary: ‘Six years before the destruction of Jerusalem, God showed himself on the point of departing from the temple that had been profaned and from the Holy City, no longer holy, in which he had dwelt and which he now gave over as a prey to its enemies, the minister of his wrath. This war chariot of the almighty came from Babylon not now leading his own people but the armies of the Chaldeans who were to make an example of the unfaithful Jerusalem.’<sup>109</sup> God thus punishes his unfaithful people. He is the providential ruler who governs all things in the universe.

This vision has three parts, in the higher part there is the firmament, a symbol of God’s immoveableness. ‘*And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form.*’<sup>110</sup> The man was the driver of the chariot, Jesus Christ, true God who was to become man. In the midst were the cherubim, symbols of the heavenly spirits and the blessed of the Church triumphant. In the Book of Revelation, which draws heavily on the prophecy of Ezekiel, the canticle of the four living creatures is the same as that of the twenty four ancients ‘*When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.”*’<sup>111</sup> ‘They bear the insignia of the Son of God who is their Lord and charioteer and therefore have the general form of man, because it was human nature that God willed to raise above the Angels through its union with the person of the Word’.<sup>112</sup>

The lowest part of the vision was that of the wheels which touched the earth. ‘*As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth besides the living creatures, one for each of the four of them.*’<sup>113</sup> ‘This symbolises the world of moveable and exterior things in which what is formal is that which constitutes the Church militant in this life, and with which God and Christ together communicate with the blessed by means of the angelic spirits and the souls which have arrived, as it were, at the angelic state being “*like the angels of God*”<sup>114</sup> which are the mediate causes by which God and Christ act upon the earth.’<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ps 80: 1–2.

<sup>109</sup> AS *ibid.*, pp. 118–119.

<sup>110</sup> Ezek 1: 26.

<sup>111</sup> Rev 5: 9–10.

<sup>112</sup> AS, *ibid.*, pp. 119–120.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 15.

<sup>114</sup> Mt 22: 30.

<sup>115</sup> AS, *ibid.*, p. 120.

## Enigmatic Symbols

Language recalls ideas and ideas recall images. Images provide us with signs. This can happen in various ways.

Words may signify:
1. a sensible object which exists in nature
2. a future event
3. a sacred ceremony
4. a ceremonial action
5. a vision that is past

These words are not themselves images but they signify images or symbols of abstract or negative ideas. But also they can compose a kind of vision in our imagination. They can reawaken sensible images which they can combine in various ways. This happens in the case of allegories and parables. These provide us with two sources of symbolic language because words can either announce a real or representative thing or arouse in our spirit images collated in various ways so that the insensible object is indicated. Rosmini takes the word 'earth'. This can mean simply 'earth', or it may stand as a symbol or sign of something else, then it is a symbol.

When language expresses an object which is itself taken as a sign of some other object it is termed symbolical. This object is normally used as a sign of many objects. Rosmini takes as an example the river Euphrates overflowing and threatening ruin to the cities along its banks. This might signify an imminent conquerer. So if I take the word Euphrates and say that it is threatening destruction it would symbolise the impending invasion. But it could equally refer to the people who live alongside it and we could say that the Euphrates exults with joy, meaning that the inhabitants living along it exult with joy. Because the symbol is indeterminate this has somehow got to be removed so that symbolic language can be interpreted with certainty. Primitive symbolic language is often obscure, not absolutely but relatively and this obscurity is called enigmatical.

Now how can we be sure of the signification of the symbol? The obscurity of primitive enigmatical language is not absolute: it does not arise from the language itself but from the knowledge and ability of the interpreter. There is always some way of reaching full and certain understanding.

1. *When united with the symbol we have the explanation of the words used.* For instance we have the parable of the eagles in Ezekiel chapter 17. They were symbols of the two kings, of Babylon and Jerusalem. The prophet himself explains this.<sup>116</sup>

2. *When we combine other words with the symbolic language which show that this is symbolic and what it is intended to signify.* For instance Hosea speaks of a vineyard in which the vines and fig trees should be uprooted 'I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees.'<sup>117</sup> But in the words which follow the prophet says that this vineyard 'shall respond as in the days of her

<sup>116</sup> *Ezek* 17: 11 ff.

<sup>117</sup> *Hos* 2: 12.

youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.<sup>118</sup> Thus showing that the vineyard is a sign and symbol of God's people.

3. *Sometimes the argument is made clear and determined by the circumstances of the people and of those whom he addresses.* If the speaker is known as one sent by heaven to threaten the crimes of the people with vengeance this helps us to understand the language of the prophet, or at least excludes other possible interpretations. When Isaiah threatens 'On that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the sources of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thorn bushes, and on all the pastures,'<sup>119</sup> it is easy to realise that fly and the bee refer to the King of Egypt and the King of Babylon because Judaea lay between these two powerful monarchies.

4. *The uncertainty might be removed by our knowing some historical circumstances not indicated by the speaker,* e.g. that the dove was the insignia of Babylon. So we know in Psalm 68 that the dove mentioned there stands for Babylon. 'The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee! The women at home divide the spoil, though they stay among the sheepfolds—the wings of a dove covered with silver, its pinions with green gold'.<sup>120</sup>

5. *The symbol may be made clear by means of an agreement.* Sometimes a metaphor comes into common use so much so that it takes the place of a proper noun; the symbol is clear and certain by common agreement. This agreement is based on some resemblance between the primitive sense of the word and metaphorical sense. In Hebrew a *material bond* is a symbol of a *law*, so to *bind* is the same as *command*. So in the first book of Chronicles where we read 'the Lord commanded Moses' the literal Hebrew translation would be *God bound Moses*,<sup>121</sup> i.e. God *commanded* Moses. We speak of 'binding laws', i.e. laws that must be obeyed.

6. *A symbol may also be made clear by learning some historical information about its institution.*

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<sup>118</sup> *Hos* 2: 15.

<sup>119</sup> *Isa* 7: 18–19.

<sup>120</sup> *Ps* 68: 12–13.

<sup>121</sup> 1 *Chr* 22: 13.

*Appendix 1*

<b>Ref. 1.</b>	<b>St John Chrysostom sees Noah as a type of Christ</b>
	The Redeemer ‘substituted in the world justification in place of sin, giving to man a new generation, a new acceptable sacrifice, bringing in peace between heaven and earth and the everlasting Covenant; and being inebriated with the wine which symbolises charity, exposes himself naked to be mocked and despised’. <sup>122</sup>
<b>Ref. 2.</b>	<b>Justin and Jerome on Leah and Rachel as types.</b>
Justin	‘The marriages of Jacob were types of that which Christ was about to accomplish. For it was not lawful for Jacob to marry two sisters at once. And he serves Laban for [one of] the daughters; and being deceived in [the obtaining of] the younger, he again served seven years. Now Leah is your people and synagogue; but Rachel is our Church’. <sup>123</sup>
Jerome	‘Leah who was tender-eyed and Rachel whom Jacob loved Genesis 29:17-18 signify the synagogue and the church’. <sup>124</sup>
<b>Ref. 3.</b>	<b>Augustine and Jerome on the oath used by Abraham and Jacob</b>
Augustine	‘What else was pointed out by this, but that the Lord, the God of heaven, and the Lord of the earth, was to come in the flesh which was to be derived from that thigh? Are these small tokens of the foretold truth which we see fulfilled in Christ?’ <sup>125</sup>
Jerome	‘Whence Abraham also makes his servant swear upon his thigh, that is, on Christ, who was to spring from his seed, that he would not bring an alien-born as a wife for his son Isaac’. <sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesim*, hom., XXI–XXIII.

<sup>123</sup> Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo*, n. 134.

<sup>124</sup> Jerome, *Epistola ad Ageruchiam, de Monogamia* n. 13.

<sup>125</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, lib. XVI, cap. XXXIII.

<sup>126</sup> Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, lib.I, n. 10.



## Appendix 2

### Rosmini's Philosophical Explanation of the Real Presence

Rosmini's philosophical theory of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is supported by St Thomas's theory that the Sacrament is not present locally. But before discussing this it may be of some use to explain his teaching on *feeling* and *extension* for those who may not be familiar with these terms.

Rosmini claims that we have a 'fundamental feeling' of ourselves since conception. Life is the intimate conjunction of spirit and matter, of soul and body. This produces a fundamental feeling that remains constant and permanent as long as there is life. It is at the basis of all other particular feelings which are felt in a part of the body simply because the whole body is constantly felt by the fundamental feeling. The fundamental feeling is the feeling of our body diffused through the nervous system, through which we feel our own life. It is through this feeling that we have a most intimate and unique perception of our own body which we feel as one entity with us.

If we examine carefully the feeling we have of ourselves which is the result of our body acting on our soul, we find that it is an internal feeling wholly uniform and without any measurement of extension. We might be surprised at this because normally our attention is drawn to external sensations acting on us. In other words we possess this feeling but we do not normally advert to it. But Rosmini, ever observant, explains how we can come to an awareness of it.

If I sit in a totally dark room, and stay perfectly still for some time while trying to disengage my phantasy from every image I have ever received, I will eventually arrive at a point where I seem to have lost all knowledge of the limits of my body. My hands and feet, and other parts of my body, will no longer be located in any discernible place. When I carry out this experiment as perfectly as possible, or try to arrive by abstraction at a moment prior to all acquired sensations, I find that I still have a vital feeling of the whole of my body. It is easy to see, therefore, that if this feeling exists it must be very difficult to recognise and indicate because we do not normally pay attention to what is in us unless we experience change, without which we lack awareness, reflection and a means of comparison. Change is necessary for awareness; it is not necessary in order to have feeling.<sup>1</sup>

Let us imagine we move from a cold to an oppressively warm room. Obviously we notice the higher temperature immediately. But this is not the case with people accustomed to such warmth. For them it is tolerable and perhaps natural. Because

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *NS*, Vol. II, sez. V, parte V, cap. III, art. IX, n. 711, 248–249 [Durham, p. 213].

they are used to it and experience it in a stable way, they feel the warmth of the room without adverting to it.

Another way in which we become aware of our own body is that of the modifications of our fundamental feeling by the action of external forces. We readily advert to an upset in this fundamental feeling, when, for instance, we suffer from toothache. The equable subjective feeling of ourself is, in this case, upset to the point of pain. On the contrary, pleasurable sensations, which enhance this feeling, equally draw our attention. Both these ways of feeling are subjective, because it is our own body of which we are aware. In the first case it is by a uniform sensation and in the second it is by the variations of this feeling.

It is important to realise that this fundamental feeling is not extended in the way we normally understand the term. It is 'unfigured' and 'shapeless'. The experiment outlined above demonstrates this to us. We feel our body but not any particular part of it.

There is a third way of feeling which is the way by which we become aware of external matter which is not part of our body. When an external body comes into contact with ours we notice two elements: a) the modification of a part of our body which draws our attention, and b) the perception of an action outside our own body which has acted on us. The first element is, as we have seen, *subjective* to us but the second element is foreign. Rosmini calls this second sensation *extra-subjective* because it indicates a force outside us, the existence of bodies different from our own. He says, 'Let us take the sense of touch as our example. When we rub some rough surface against the back of our hand, we feel two things: the hand and the surface rubbing against the hand. The first is what I have called a modification of the feeling of our body; the second is the sense perception of the rough surface'.<sup>2</sup>

Thus our fundamental feeling is modified by external sensations and in this case only the part of the extension affected by the sensation is felt, the external agent diffusing its action in the same extension as our fundamental feeling. This particular part of our feeling is felt more vividly than the other parts. This also is an accidental feeling, it comes and goes. Fortunately my toothache goes when the dentist treats me.

'We have established two elements necessary for the essence of a body: 1. an action done on us; 2. an extension in which that action is diffused and terminates.

Our own body exercises a continuous, internal action on us, occasioning the fundamental feeling, and this effect of the agent spreads throughout an extension.<sup>3</sup> Here we have therefore the two elements forming the essence of body. Hence the perception of our body is undeniable, and its essence is as certain as the fact of consciousness.

The perception of an external body is brought about when we first feel an action done on us, although the immediate effect of this action is simply a modification of our fundamental feeling.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, art V, n. 703, pp. 241–242 [Durham, p. 208].

<sup>3</sup> Note, an unfigured extension.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. IX, art. X, nn. 843–844, pp. 319–320 [Durham, p. 279].

If we establish firmly the principle that the essence of the human body consists, in its individual conjunction with the spirit by which it is informed, and together with which it produces the fundamental feeling, the truth and reality of the body of Christ in the most holy Eucharist is very clear even though it does not act upon our senses, and is not extrasubjectively perceptible. The subjective perception of it by Christ remains and this is the foundation of its truth and reality.

There are thus two modes of perceiving extension, the one subjective, the other extrasubjective. The essence of extension is perceived by us subjectively by means of the fundamental feeling and its modifications; so that the subjective sensation is the measure and firm criterion of the judgements we form as to external and extrasubjective extension.

There is no contradiction in saying that subjective extension exists without there being any corresponding extrasubjective extension. The act which the corporeal substance makes in the subjective extension, is different from that which it makes in the extrasubjective. The fundamental feeling is the effect of a force, namely our own body, acting in our spirit and with our spirit; and which produces it with its mode of subjective extension so that we perceive this extension immediately with our fundamental feeling. But the extrasubjective extension is that which we perceive when our own body is modified by an external body and we do not experience a spontaneous feeling as with our fundamental feeling, but an external agent acting on us modifying the fundamental feeling. Hence the essential distinction between the act which produces the subjective extension and the act which produces in us the extrasubjective extension.

The act which produces the subjective extension operates immediately on our spirit. The act which produces in us the extrasubjective extension does not operate on our spirit (at least not immediately) but it operates on our body; and if we find an identity in the two extensions this is because the external extension modifies our fundamental feeling so that it is identified with and equal to our internal extension.

Now action upon a spirit and action upon a body are things essentially different and we may therefore conceive of them as divided.

Moreover these two actions are observed in bodies as they are in their natural state; but the action of our body upon our spirit is anterior to the action of external bodies upon our body; and this is sufficient to cause in us the concept of an extended body.

Hence subjective extension alone belongs to the true essence of the extended body, and it involves no contradiction to say that it may remain without the extrasubjective extension which is posterior to it, and essentially distinct from it.

And in fact if our body continued to be felt by us with our fundamental feeling, but it ceased to act entirely on external bodies so that they ceased to fall any more under the sense of others, such a body would have all its subjective extension, and yet it would have lost all its extrasubjective extension. It would continue to act on our soul and would have ceased

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to act on the bodies of others for those actions and faculties are widely different from one another. And this it seems to me, may very well probably be the state of the glorified body of Christ in those moments when it may have ceased to make itself externally sensible; in those moments although it no longer struck the organic senses of the apostles and disciples, it nevertheless continued united with the soul of Christ and there still remained in the soul the feeling of its own body to which it was united.

Now although a body loses its extrasubjective extension, it does not lose on this account (as Bellarmine observes) the faculty itself of acting externally, that is to say, it retains the act of that force by which it acts on other bodies, whence it happens that this faculty, in the case of glorified bodies is able either to put forth its act or refrain from it, and thus to be visible or invisible, at one time tangible, at another intangible.<sup>5</sup>

Let us now apply this doctrine in relation to the mode in which the body of our Lord exists in the Eucharist.

Firstly we can now see that a human body which retained subjective extension only would exist as before, would have the same dimensions, and every part outside of every other relatively to the sentient subject, but relatively to external bodies it would appear not to exist; relative to them it would have no relation either of place or of action, namely that action which constitutes the extrasubjective or external extension.

From this we may understand what St. Thomas says viz. that the body of Christ is in the Eucharist not locally, that is to say as a measurable quantity, but as a substance.

‘Christ's body is in this sacrament not after the proper manner of dimensive quantity, but rather after the manner of substance. But every body occupying a place is in the place according to the manner of dimensive quantity, namely, inasmuch as it is commensurate with the place according to its dimensive quantity. Hence it remains that Christ's body is not in this sacrament as in a place, but after the manner of substance, that is to say, in that way in which substance is contained by dimensions; because the substance of Christ's body succeeds the substance of bread in this sacrament: hence as the substance of bread was not locally under its dimensions, but after the manner of substance, so neither is the substance of Christ's body. Nevertheless the substance of Christ's body is not the subject of those dimensions, as was the substance of the bread: and therefore the substance of the bread was there locally by reason of its dimensions, because it was compared with that place through the medium of its own dimensions; but the substance of Christ's body is compared with that place through the medium of foreign dimensions, so that, on the contrary, the proper dimensions of Christ's body are compared with that place through the medium of substance; which is contrary to

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<sup>5</sup> *AS*, vol. II, lib. IV, II, cap. III, art. XL, p. 396–7.

the notion of a located body. Hence in no way is Christ's body locally in this sacrament.<sup>6</sup>

For the substance of the body remains even when it is not commensurate with any place, that is to say with its external space. This commensuration of St. Thomas corresponds with that which we call extrasubjective extension.

'I answer that, as stated above (1), any part of Christ is in this sacrament in two ways: in one way, by the power of the sacrament; in another, from real concomitance. By the power of the sacrament the dimensive quantity of Christ's body is not in this sacrament; for, by the power of the sacrament that is present in this sacrament, whereat the conversion is terminated. But the conversion which takes place in this sacrament is terminated directly at the substance of Christ's body, and not at its dimensions; which is evident from the fact that the dimensive quantity of the bread remains after the consecration, while only the substance of the bread passes away.'<sup>7</sup>

Although, then St. Thomas teaches that the body of Christ is not in this sacrament as in place, for otherwise it could not exist under that form, because the place which this sacrament affords to the body of Christ is much more restricted than the dimensions which are proper to the body of Christ in itself; and although he teaches also that the body of Christ is not in this sacrament by way of a measurable quantity (*quantitas dimensiva*) and is not present in a limited fashion; nevertheless the holy doctor adds that if not by force of the sacrament, yet by way of real concomitance, the whole measurable quantity of the body of Christ exists in the Eucharist. Now these statements are apparently contradictory; for if he proves that by reason of the body of Christ in the sacrament not existing in place, this fact of the place occupied by the sacrament, being much more restricted than the body of Christ in itself this reason equally excludes its absolute measurable quantity whether 'in virtue of the sacrament or by concomitance'. But the Angelic Doctor is easily reconciled with himself, if we admit the distinction suggested by Bellarmine and understand that the body of Christ in the sacrament is deprived of the *external measurable quantity*, but not of the *internal measurable quantity which is also that which is essential to it*. This last being essential to the body must be there in virtue of the sacrament; the first has no need to be there except virtually, and therefore would be there in consequence of *natural* concomitance; but in virtue of a wonderful *supernatural* force it is held back, the potentiality only remaining and not the act. Or else we can

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<sup>6</sup> ST, III, LXXVI, art. V.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, art. IV.

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distinguish in the internal measurable quantity, the determinate measure of it, and understand that it is by concomitance that it is this determinate measure which is found in the sacrament, and not any internal measurable quantity which however must be there as an element of the corporeal substance.

But here a difficulty presents itself. If the body of Christ is wholly deprived of extrasubjective extension, it has no relation with other bodies, or with places occupied by them, how then can we say that the body of Christ is beneath the species of the bread and of the wine? How can we say that if not circumscribed by its own proper *extrasubjective* extension it is at least circumscribed by the external and extrasubjective extension of the bread and of the wine themselves? However, this extension is not one of its accidents, but is the limit of the place within which it is found.

St Thomas says: 'The place and the object placed must be equal, as is clear from the Philosopher (Phys. iv). But the place, where this sacrament is, is much less than the body of Christ. Therefore Christ's body is not in this sacrament as in a place'. Whether or not this passage is by St. Thomas or a conclusion of someone else who has completed his work, it proves the impossibility of the external measurable quantity of the body of Christ being in the sacrament both in virtue of consecration and of concomitance. To sum up, the extrasubjective extension of the body of Christ is wanting, but the extrasubjective extension of the bread remains with which the body of Christ has these relations which the bread had before transubstantiation, only then the bread was the subject of that sensible extension but not the body of Christ. How then shall we explain this relation, when the quantity which the body of Christ preserves, is altogether deprived of the relation to an extraneous body or to any place?<sup>8</sup>

We must take notice that St. Thomas says expressly that: 'Hence in no way is Christ's body locally in this sacrament.'

As regards the accidents, 'as stated above (4), the accidents of Christ's body are in this sacrament by real concomitance. And therefore those accidents of Christ's body which are intrinsic to it are in this sacrament. But to be in a place is an accident when compared with the extrinsic container. And therefore it is not necessary for Christ to be in this sacrament as in a place.'<sup>9</sup>

The consequence is absolute. Now this 'being in place' or being commensurate with place is precisely as it seems to me what may be called external and extrasubjective

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<sup>8</sup> *AS*, *ibid.*, pp. 398–399.

<sup>9</sup> ST, III, LXXVI, V, ad 3.

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extension; which is not in fact, in the sacrament, nor even by concomitance; although it ought naturally to be there.

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