

CORNELIO FABRO

St. GEMMA GALGANI



WITNESSES TO THE SUPERNATURAL

English Translation:

Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS

In his 60th Anniversary of Ordination to the Holy Priesthood

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To the pious memory of my sister

ALMA TERESINA [+ July 27, 1985]

A Soul of simple and strong faith

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do not seek vision or revelation!

Ours is not a material copying of the Lord's Life – Grace is converted into an inferior similarity.

Make ourselves like unto Him.

The central mystery, of course is to take up one's Cross

Christ is the Way – this Way is Death to our natural selves.

Christ is the 'Great Unknown' by those who consider themselves His friends

This Chapter re-affirms in the most radical manner the necessity of recurring to Jesus Christ in order to orientate one's life.

The spiritual life is a constant struggle between closeness and distance with the Lord.

Friendship with Jesus Christ introduces a germ of restlessness and renovation.

Filiation is a profound conformity, configuration to Jesus Christ.

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PRESENTATION

Is this just one more biography of St. Gemma Galgani? No. What you have in your hands is a contemplative study of Gemma as a qualified witness to the supernatural. Her other biographers – beginning with Fr. Germano, her spiritual director and first biographer, up through Antonelli, to Zoffoli, to Bonardi – to Monsignor Agresti, to Viallapelee – all have spoken of the supernatural of which the life of Gemma was so full. However, their efforts seem simply to have been that to bring out the more just one more mystical gift of hers, or some further aspect of a spiritual trial to which the Lord chose to subject His servant.

Fr. Cornelio Fabro, CSS, with his acute philosophical and theological investigation, united with his love and reverence for her, he approaches Gemma more closely in order to discover the world in which she lived. Redemptive grace transforms Gemma into a new creature, recollected totally on the crucified Jesus. Gemma lived uniquely on the Crucified Jesus, on fire with love for Him, and yearning to collaborate so that the purposes of the Passion of Jesus might become a reality in the salvation of every person.

Here visitations from Jesus, the presence in her life of her Guardian Angel, of the Passionist Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother – as well as the very darksome movements of the Evil One in her, are all studied not only as a mystical gift, or as a spiritual trial that Gemma simply had to undergo, but much more to see all this as an aspect of her mission in life. God had willed that through these truly authentic interventions, to render Gemma a witness to the supernatural, in an epoch in which rationalism tried to reduce the human person to the one phenomenon of what is felt and seen.

Cardinal Gasquet noted in this connection: ‘For those of us who live in this period, materialistic to the extreme, which has faith solely in reason, and in which the supernatural is either constantly denied, or exposed to the so-called critique, is all placed in doubt it is so comforting to read the writings of Gemma herself.

The root of this unusual aspect of Gemma’s mission is noted however, in her real and profound participation in the Passion of Christ and in the cause of this passion, i.e., the presence of sin in the world. The author guides the reader through the analysis of the saint’s writings in order to understand something of Gemma’s unspeakable and terrible experience. Her pathway follows a double track: there are rays of grace that are transfigured into an atmosphere of her continuous ‘stupor’, and her ever-increasing love and stupor through her sense of her unworthiness before God and neighbor. The infinite horror for sin, which has Crucified Jesus, becomes the infinite measure of her love for the Crucified Jesus and the seal in order to be crucified with Jesus.

But, was all this reality, or fantasy? The author in his fifth chapter ponders Gemma in her human vivacity, understanding and tenderness, concludes: Gemma was indeed endowed with a genuine 'supernatural normality', through which, despite so many sufferings endured in her body and spirit - despite so many diabolical temptations, she never collapsed into any melancholy of her own, noted often in persons suffering from neuroses. Rather, she always seemed to maintain herself in serenity and objectivity. All this, received in the obedience of her faith in God, transforms and capacitates her human person without her wandering out of the temporal realities in which she lived.

This work contains an abundance of the citations of the writings of Gemma, as well as a few of her writings not yet edited. There are included the citation of the two official 'opinions' of theologians specifically requested by Pius XI, which have thus far never been printed before and are included here in the Appendix. There are also included here certain notes that broaden the horizon with reverences to the Processes of the Canonization of the Saint. There are brought forward as well as the experiences of other mystics, and an analysis of the statements of some philosophers. All these reflections render this book not only worthy of respect but all these sources assist mightily in one being able to understand better Gemma and her unique mission. There can also be noted herein a better grasp of the abundance of the gifts of Knowledge and Wisdom with which the Holy Spirit has poured into 'poor Gemma' [as she was often called].

Fabiano Giorigni, CP

PROLOGUE

The reality of the life and Mission of St. Gemma Galgani as a ‘Witness of the Supernatural’ is presented in the form of an immediate experience, i.e., one that is both intensive and direct, as an *itinerarium Crucis – a Way of the Cross*], thrust between the radiance from on high and the thrusts of the powers of darkness, in her total conformity to the sufferings of Christ in His Passion and Death. It is true that Gemma has been declared a Saint by the Church, not so much because of her singular charisms, but much more through her heroic practice of the Christian virtues, testified to in the Process of many who knew her in her short life, as one who lived hidden in God and in Christ. However, though, even her exceptional charisms with which she was endowed, present the precise significance to revealing to human beings the existence of another world’, one beyond and above this very dark world of ours.

Gemma yearned to be buried in a cloister and to be the ‘servant of all’: However, God disposed differently and destined her to be the ‘light for all’, with her testimony to the sufferings of Christ, stamped with the fervor of her love in her virginal flesh. It is in this ‘theological space’ that faith opens to the soul, where Gemma worked out her exceptional ecclesial mission at the beginning of the previous century.

St. Pius X declared this in an express manner. He was the Pope who signed the Introduction of the Cause of her Canonization, as testifying to this, over-turning the contrary statements of Fr. Farnocchia, the secretary of Monsignor G. Volpi. The Monsignor made explicit reference to the Holy Pontiff who condemned Modernism, as the world-wide denier of the existence of the Supernatural, and stated: ‘I remember having heard, or more probably read, that Pius X was much consoled by both the extraordinary and very numerous incidents of her life that he hoped that she would be one of those means brought forward by God in order to recall the world toward the Supernatural from that excessively material state into which it had been reduced [Apostolic Process, Pisano, fol. 451. This was cited in the ‘Observations’ of the General Promoter of the Faith, n. 32, p. 46]. The above mentioned Fr. Farnocchia was the rather imaginative confidant of Monsignor Volpi, the Saint’s confessor. The bishop’s counselor always showed himself to be most adverse to the Saint. Her Confessor, however, just a few years before his own death in 1931, retracted his skepticism regarding the supernatural character of Gemma’s ‘phenomena.’

Very informative, however, in this context is the testimony of the English Benedictine Cardinal Gasquet: ‘It is very difficult to find another such prodigious example of the action of the Omnipotent God in a soul that had handed herself over so totally to the divine grace. For those of us who live in this excessively materialistic

age, it is seen that only only to reasoning does it place its faith, and is a time in which the Supernatural is either constantly denied outright, or something exposed totally to the 'criticism', and is placed in doubt. Thus, it is so comforting to read a book which leads us to God, and shows Himself to be near this poor world of ours. As for me personally, I do not know of the life of any other saint, in any other age of the Church, which has so brought near to me the Supernatural, with any greater spontaneity and with any greater fullness than the Life of Gemma Galgani¹. [cf. Introduction to the English translation of the biography of the saint, written by Fr. Germano, CP, under the care of the Benedictine, A. N. O'Sullivan. London Herder, p. xxiv. This witness is recorded in the '*Positio* on the Revision of the Writers', p. 22].

And still today - with the agitation so rampant in many sectors of the Church in this post-Vatican II era – in the dogmatic field, as well as that in the moral, the witness of the Supernatural, lived by the humble virgin of Lucca, remains providing a powerful light of truth and an ardent stimulus of holiness.

Rome, the Feast of the Annunciation 1987.

¹ Italics of the Author.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

These comments of ours are based almost solely on those direct fonts and in the very first place, on the writings and on the words of St. Gemma herself. These have been collected in the editions under the care of the postulation of the Passionist Fathers.

I. Letters of St. Gemma Galgani: these are taken from that edition of 1941, of Fr. Hyacinth of the Most Holy Crucified. The volume is divided into three parts:

1] Letters to Fr. Germano, her extraordinary Spiritual Director: [In all, these number 131 letters and form the most important block of material, since in these the very soul of the Saint is poured out in all the spontaneity and vivacity of her sentiments, even reaching often to exceptional expressive heights]. There exist in the Postulation some other letters, so far un-published, that have been placed at the disposition of this, our Collection.

2] Letters to Monsignor Volpi, her Ordinary Confessor: [These number 67 and the editors say that these are the most important' – p.310]. Some are just jotted on small slips of paper but there are others that are in no way any the less in spiritual density and depth compared to those addressed to Fr. Germano: among all of them, # 55 of 1901 stands out as it describes her ecstasy of the Infant Jesus Who transmits to her a message for her Confessor: '... Assure him that it is I, Jesus, who speaks to you and that in a short time, you will be a Saint, you will perform miracles, and you will reach the honors of the altar.' [p. 384].

3.] Letters to a variety of persons: among these, there are 10 of her letters addressed to the Passionist religious in Tarquinia, Sister Maria Giuseppa [Armellini], and 9 addressed to a Mrs. Giuseppina Imperiali of Rome [known as 'Serafina']: these are outstanding documents because of the thrust, fervor and delicacy of her sentiments. These letters often reach to the depths of profound spiritual and mystical commotion: '... in their [descriptions of her] distance from those to whom the letters are addressed.

This work is an excellent edition and is preceded by the splendid Introduction written by a fellow citizen of the Saint, Cardinal E. Pellegrinetti. There is still desired an integral critical edition which would include also those letters stilled filed in the General Archives of the Passionist Postulation, with various fragments.

II. Ecstasies - Diary – Autobiography – various Writings [these have been re-printed in a 2nd edition, Rome 1975. [This volume, too, is preceded by a worthy preface of Cardinal Pellegrinetti].

In all, the *Ecstasies* number 141 in all and even while every reader might be surprised at this small number that have been recorded when one thinks that almost all of the record of her Ecstasies she experienced in her family, and in vacation times and those which for about 4 years that Gemma lived as a guest in the Giannini home, where she experienced ecstasies almost every day, and several times on some days. There Gemma in ecstasy is recorded to have spoken almost whispering in a very soft voice: but one could never offer sufficient thanks to the Giannini family for all they were able to accomplish in collecting these authentic 'gems of Gemma'. These are expressed in a truly celestial language that still remains to be studied in depth.

Her *Diary* describes every day, the celestial favors from Thursday, July 19th until Monday September 3rd, 1900. This would merit to be compared with the respective Letters and Ecstasies contemporaneous with these dates, in order to have a certain concept of unity and continuity in the spiritual life of Gemma's conscience.

Her *Autobiography* goes from her early childhood to the coming of Fr. Germano, in the summer of 1900. This stands alone as a united total². This work is a jewel in its type for the Tuscan frankness of her style and for the spiritual transfiguration that the events of her life receive there, in the unfolding of the work of grace in Gemma's soul: there are described the ambience and the family misadventures, the sufferings due to the illness and the death of her mother and father, and her sufferings due to her brother Ettore's conduct and that of her sister Angelina. There are descriptions of the celestial affection she had for her seminarian brother Gino, and her little sister Julia, both of whom preceded her to heaven. There is also noted her serious illness and miraculous healing of March 3, 1899, especially with her experience of the Crucified. There is noted in a particular manner the description of that 'very great grace', of the impression in her body of the Stigmata [June 8, 1899], all presented in a direct style and an immediacy of expression: the Saint condenses all this, with expressions of rare efficacy, recording not only the solemn greatness of the event, but at the same time the nature of her Mission as a Daughter of the Passion.

² In the edition on pages 223 and 226 there are indicated [with several dots] two omissions. Recourse to her original manuscript makes known two episodes in the family circle which must have brought some embarrassment to the young child. [cf. in this regard that suffering she experienced from the medical examination concerning kidney problems through the surgery that she underwent]. It is true that the text of her Autobiography [or 'Confession'] was meant solely for Fr. Germano...[and which he burned immediately]: but the insertion in a later edition, there are two phrases, which it seems to us would assist in integrating the framework of her soul and to comprehend better that actuality of her example, as a model of mortification and purity due to the Christian education of the youth in our own time.

Her Varied Writings are important for the knowing of the saint's spirit – these are: Report on her Healing [Marcy 9, 1899, written six days after her healing]; Notes for the Diary [of the year 1899]; a Revelations which came to her from Jesus regarding a Mother Gluseppa, a Passionist Nun [December 1899]; Responses to certain Questions put to her by Fr. Germano [around September 7, 1900]; all these are prevalently in the manner of a theological-spiritual content: The Scourging – the two Crowns [Thursday, February 7, 1901]; on the Mystery of the Incarnation [an explanation that came to her from her Guardian Angel on Mary 25, 1901]; there follow then: Proposals and Promises – Verses [her yearning for the cloister]. Affections for Jesus – Statements and Aspirations – Ejaculations for every circumstance.

Gemma's own judgment on her sufferings is quite severe³: 'But how much I suffer over the duty of writing down certain experiences! The repugnance that I experienced at the beginning, rather than diminishing, became all the more in continuing to increase, and I experience a pain unto death. How many times today was I not tempted to find them and burn all of my writings! What then? Perhaps You, o Lord, would want me to write even those more hidden matters⁴, which make me now understand through Your goodness that for always You will to keep me lowly and to humiliate me? If You want, O Jesus, I am ready also to do even this: make known Your will. But, of what use will these writings ever be? Are these for Your greater glory, o Jesus, or to make me always fall more into sin? You have wanted me to do this, and I have done it. Think of this: in the wound of Your Side, o Jesus, I hide my every word [*Ecstasies*, p. 200]. To Fr. Germano, she wrote: 'I do not read what I have written down, since they make me ashamed.' [Letter 101, p. 243].

Lost Writings: some of these were destroyed by Gemma herself: Letter 12 to Fr. Germano: 'Among all the notes that I have thrown away ... [p. 264]. 'But these writings, of what use will they be?' [p. 200]. There is also the letter written to St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother and entrusted to her Guardian Angel, has been lost. [cf. *Ecstasy*, pp. 212, f.] as was also her letter of July 14, 1901 to Fr. Germano has been lost and perhaps still others. Her *Autobiography recalls* also that little booklet in which from the beginning of 1896 the Saint was recording her proposals [p. 235]. However, in the archives of the Retreat of St. Eutizio there was found a letter of hers to Mrs. Rosa Caducci, who belonged to the College of Jesus. The letter is a sublime invitation to suffering out of love for the Crucified Jesus. [The cause of

³ By contrast, the judgment on these by the authoritative review, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, is both enthusiastic and profound.

⁴ And who knows whether these 'hidden matters' to which the Saint refers here were ever written down.? The witness, St. Cecilia Bettini, states further: 'I recall that my cousin wanted me to show him a notebook written by Gemma, said to me: 'There are so many beautiful experiences, where Gemma's holiness stands out: but I did not show them to anyone until Gemma had died.' 'My cousin, the Sister adds, died a little after she did and I do not know whatever happened to that little notebook.' [Witness XXXIII, pp. 232, ff.]

this loss is due to the high level of reserve of Gemma herself]. For all these incidents some explanation is offered in the declaration of Eufemia Giannini: ‘ This reserved countenance of hers, this is all due to her silence particularly regarding those matters that pertained to herself, has made us lose much further information and who can ever know how important these might have been. [New *Positio*, Lucan p.2]

The final edition of the two volumes [of her *Letters and Varied Writings*] is notable, especially from the appearance of those notes which often report from ample pieces of correspondence, especially that of Fr. Germano with Gemma, with Monsignor Volpi, with Cecilia Giannini and from their responses, and it would be useful to clarify in depth and context of the Saint’s text.

One bit of precious information noted in the official Processes is that of Teresa Natali, who gives us some insight into the losses of those writings of Gemma which are notable. On the occasion it seems of the publication of Gemma’s ‘Life’ by Fr. Germano there is the declaration: ‘I have read the published life of Gemma Galgani, and other writings published and I read a letter that was placed there; and I also read other letters of hers, where she was giving good advice to a young girl who had been a bit depraved, recalling her to a good life.

Gemma exhorted her so well and said to her that she was praying very much precisely for her in order to obtain the favor that she might return to the good life. However, she died and this young girl died well. There must have been many other such letters, and with so much else to say, because this person used to go to Gemma every day. I have also found this: that Gemma was ill and was not able to move and she said to the young lady in tears: ‘please do me this favor, go to confession and you will be more content and you will also obtain the graces that you desire’ [Ibid., n. II, Catalogue of Testimonies, Text XVII, p. 19]. There has also been published by Fr. G. Mucci, SJ, a previously unedited letter to Mrs. Giuseppina Imperiali, also a penitent of SFr. Germano and was a member of the organization of the ‘College of Jesus’. Gemma wrote to her to console her on the loss of her baby [cf. *Civiltà Cattolica*, n. 3284, 1987, pp. 150, ff.]

III. *Processes:*

Lucan I: ‘Position on the Virtues of the Servant of God, Gemma Galgani,’ Rome 1927, pp. 112; 913; 47; 135].

Lucan II: ‘Position on the Revision of her Writings’ [Sacred Congregation of Rites, Rome 1917, which contains [on pp. 160], the Notations of the Sub. Promoter of the Faith as well as the observations of the Theologian Censor [pp. 3-66], with the Responses of the Fr. Postulator of her Cause, Fr. Luigi Besi [pp. 1-168].

The Saint's writings, as these are presented by the Postulator, have been divided into a good 10 series, including those that have been omitted in the two volumes of the current edition, with the exception of the Letters. The theologian in the Cause shows that he had gone through with much commitment and a sense of responsibility, these writings [which bear the date of September 15, 1913], and the Author shows that he had understood the trait of the rare simplicity and depth of Gemma's soul: he remained struck by the 'celestial language' of the Ecstasies [called here the 'Colloquies', p. 8]. The observations are divided into two classes:

- Those Matters and Expressions that might seem to be contrary to Catholic Doctrine: his response to these is: These are very few and are also such that without much effort they can be interpreted in an acceptable and orthodox sense' [p. 9]. The reader, who has a good familiarity with the Saint's writings, can only be in agreement with this assessment.
- Those Matters and Singular and Extraordinary Expressions which however, do not contain anything contrary, either to the faith, or to good Customs [p. 10].

Then, as far as the Letters to Fr. Germano are concerned: '... these exhibit such a character of sincerity, of humility, and of confidence in her Spiritual Director, that would not permit any reader [unless, of course, one was already forearmed with criticisms of the Servant of God] to think badly of her, or to hold her as deluded. This same is likewise true for the other letters already examined up to this point or which are still to follow [p. 41].

The final judgment [known as the 'Votum'] confirms the preceding observations: 'Having read attentively all the writings of the Servant of God committed to me, and having reflected diligently also on those matters which I have noted above, as singular and extraordinary and which seem to be in some contrast with the faith and with truth, I declare before God that I have not found anything that would merit any theological note less than good. Rather, I have found so many matters that would attest to the holiness of the Servant of God' [p 66].

The Commission of the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, on December 9, 1913, judged it opportune [was this perhaps because it would seem too benevolent?] to submit the work and the conclusion of the Theologian Censor to a further examination that the Promoter of the Faith thought opportune to entrust to the Postulator of the Cause. This was Fr. Luigi Besi, General Councilor of the Passionist Congregation, because of his singular knowledge of Gemma's writings. His study is full of theological, historical and hagiographical observations, and

confirms this point by point, thereby deepening the observations and the conclusions of the Theologian Censor⁵.

Among the testimonies in favor of the Cause, those of Cardinal P. Gaspari, a fervent devotee of Gemma Galgani, and that of Cardinal G. Della Chiesa [later Benedict XV, a study companion of Fr. Besi at the Capranica College] as well as those testimonies which came in from the missions. Among these, we remember the enthusiastic witness of Dr. E. Sugit, of the University of Tokyo for whom: ‘... the seraphic virgin of Lucca seems to have been placed in this world in order to oppose her candor and her humility with the rampant sophisms of modern philosophy, an invention of the devil.’ [p.21]

Further ahead there is the truly magisterial review of the Cause as it appeared in the *Civiltà Cattolica* [p. 45] composed by the Jesuit, Fr. Geli, on Gemma’s writings [the year 1909, Vol. II, p. 727]. There was also favorable support in the *Ciencia Tomista* of the Spanish Dominicans [n. VI, 1915, p. 122 as cited in the Cause pp. 47, f.]. In Note 1 of pp. 49, f. there can be read the enthusiastic review of the *Araldo Cattolico* [a. III, n 9, and on p. 50]. In this same note, there is an ample list of both Italian and foreign reviews and papers which reported the ‘distinguished’ [egregie] judgments on the life and writings of Gemma.

It is a joy to take note of the precise and balanced view of the [already cited above] English Benedictine, Cardinal Gasquet: ‘In this book everything seems admirable and mysterious to me, and in reading it, one experiences the presence of God, of Mary most Holy, and of the Angels in our world: and above all there stands out the vivid impression of the pains of our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us’ [p. 51].

This patient and very sharp work of Fr. Besi, who was an excellent theologian, built up the life written by Fr. Germano the platform for the recognition of the holiness of Gemma Galgani: this is still recommended also for the breadth of the documentation and the profundity of the knowledge of the mystical and hagiographical literature.

Under his theological reflection of all this, Fr. Besi brings out clearly, as did the preceding Censor, that one cannot pretend to demand of Gemma a perfect precision of theological terminology, but that the over-all content of her doctrine is exact and profound, as we, too, have had occasion to note. Fr. Besi also has recourse to the Testimonies of the Summarium of the Cause e.g., pp. 124, ff.].

⁵ Lucan, Beatificationis et Canonizationis Dei famulae Gemmae Galgani, Virginis, *Positio super revisione scriptorum* Rome 1917 [pp. 168].

III. A New *Positio super virtutibus*, Rome 1928, pp. 27, 132, 78, 448, 124]. There needs to be pointed out here the 'Vote' that is included here [p. 78] of the Very Rev. Monsignor G. Antonelli, a doctor and professor of the natural sciences, regarding the extraordinary facts in Gemma's life: 'Whether the extraordinary happenings of Gemma Galgani could be attributed to pathological or to diabolical causes, or to the strength of her own imagination and auto-suggestion', He offers a solidly reasoned response as befits a man of genuine science, and is consistently negative: 'All the extraordinary facts are of a divine nature and therefore, they proceed from God Who has willed to endow His Servant with so many and with such great and singular graces, probably with the exception of sweating blood'. [p. 74].

Regarding this ultimate exception: cf. pp., 68, f. - 71]. Here there is a comparison made between the phenomena experienced by Gemma and those of Teresa Neumann, leaving under judgment the case of the German seer, since this had not yet been examined at the time. The final Vote of Professor Antonelli has been published separately, as *The ecstasies and the Stigmata of the Blessed Gemma Galgani* [Isola del Liri 1933]. Professor Antonelli had believed it to be opportune to present some general notions regarding ecstasies and on the stigmata, which God indeed has granted to certain saints, so that they might be the more appreciated in a just light the supernatural gifts of Gemma Galgani.

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N.B.:

[1] The biographical references have been taken from the monumental treatment of the Saint by Fr. Enrico Zoffoli, CP: '*Poor Gemma*' 2nd ed. Roma 1957: the historical part of this work is interwoven with theological reflections.

[2] The 'unedited Letters' in great part are just scraps, but were very kindly communicated to me by Fr. Federico of the Sorrowful Mother, the Postulator of the Passionists, and who has now passed into eternity. However, he was one who influenced me broadly with his counsels and precious suggestions. To him I also owe a photocopy of the 'General Confession', or the 'Autobiography', the original of which is conserved in the specially dedicated rooms of Sts. John and Paul in Rome. And to a good extent, the merit is mostly his that these pages now see the light of day⁶.

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⁶ I also owe a particular thanks to the Very Rev. Fr. Fabiano Giorgini, CP, who accepted the task of reviewing this text and to attend to its Presentation. At the same time, I also thank Sr. Rosa Goglia, for her revision of the proofs for the final printing. The writing of this work committed the author for more than three lusters, 15 years. In the new climate of the Post-Conciliar naturalism he had to appeal, but in vain, to the better Italian Catholic publishing companies.

INTRODUCTION

THE PLAN OF GOD

[The World of Gemma]

‘My heart is always united to Jesus and Jesus continues to consume me. My dear God, how I would like to destroy all in Your flames...’ [Letter III, to Fr. Germano]

It seems that all of us have the same world – the world of nature and of history, that envelops and contains us. It is the world of days and nights, of the unfolding of the seasons and of the passing cycle of the years. This is the world of earthly events of everyone in their family, in society, in the country of their birth, which provides each with the space in order to move within the enigmatic adventure of life. It is in this world that we meet each other and come to know each other: it is that cycle of thoughts and affections that move us and agitate us; the alternating of plans and the enkindling of hopes. It is the world, then, of joys and sorrows that pursue us through the course of time which is made up and interwoven by a fabric of evident happenings as well as of mysteries.

However, it also seems that each one has his/her own world. And this is not only because *when I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, and reasoned as a child...* [1 Co 13:11] The reason for this is that the world for a child is different from that as an adult – but also because the childhood consciousness is developed differently from child to child, such that each one bears personally in life the depths of one’s own infancy – and we will see with what intensity this took place in our Saint – and remains in expectancy of our choices.

And all this is in function of those choices that each one makes his/her own world – constructs it, tears it down, because it is a world that is constructed in the ever open space of freedom: all the more is it proper and special, we would like to see even isolated, the world of saints, the more that each of these is endowed with particular and exceptional charisms, as is the case of our Gemma. She noted herself, as we will strive to see in the following pages, and sometimes she was overwhelmed by it all much like a little bird all caught up in the whirlwind of a storm.

Quite special, however, is the world of the Christian. This is not only the arena of the senses, and not only the object of some scientific and technical investigation, and not only the field of each one’s endeavor. The Christian world is above all one of creation, *in the beginning*, one that is beyond all time, and this implies that for the Christian, the world in which we live has a figure which is passing [cf. 1 Co 7:31], i.e., that it has its first and ultimate sense beyond oneself and in God, in that Principle Who has drawn forth each one and continues to

conserve and to guide each with wondrous Providence. This is above all the world of redemption, that has taken place in time and has become the object of the mystery of the Mercy of God in Christ, i.e., one of the entrance of God into the world and into time in order to assist each person to be saved from sin which one continues to commit in the world and in time.

The world of the saints, i.e., of those souls who allow themselves to be drawn by God is even more special: not because it is some other world, one that is different from the one being offered and is present to each soul thanks to the light of the faith, but rather because this light is received and lived with a greater and more sublime intensity. And the more intense the world of the soul becomes the more high it its flight.

We must therefore say that the only authentic manner is that of the Christian, in that it is illumined, from its inception until its final consummation at the end of time by the light of faith which unveils the insertion of eternity into time with the Creation and of that eternity entering time with the Incarnation all mixed up as a concoction of history, with its errors and horrors, as a tract of sacred history which indeed is that plan *hidden from all the centuries in God* [cf. Ep 3:9] Even more authentic is the world of the Saints, because is one penetrated by divine grace, which transports the soul into the participation of the very divine life, in a flux and reflux of loving correspondence, even though enfolded in mystery – a mystery which becomes ever more acute in the Saints – and Gemma experienced this to the depths of doubt and even discouragement as we will soon read.

To speak of ‘the world of Gemma’, only Gemma herself is authorized to do so. And she has indeed accomplished this, following the orders of her spiritual directors, above all in her Letters and in her autobiographical writings, which have had various editions always the more cared for through references to her history and environment. However, those letters addressed to Gemma [and to Cecilia Giannini] on the part of Fr Germano, of Monsignor Volpi and her other correspondents. The citations that we will read in the notes to the most recent editions of her Letters and Writings increase in us the desire for the entire text in order to recompose that unfolding of the dialogue between this holy young girl and her fortunate interlocutors.

It seems that Gemma herself had destroyed various notes and writings of her own, those perhaps for the greater part in the writing of her own Autobiography. One may speak of some of her Letters which are still unedited: there is no wonder, then, that for more than three quarters of a century which separate us from her death, a time in which the figure of this world has been drastically and profoundly changed, that much of her material has been lost, and it may be the most important of her writings.

But even if this is so we do have that which has come down to us and this constitutes a treasure to be listed among the most notable in the entire Christian spirituality. The other source, surely on another level and almost a kind of refection on her person, are those Testimonies assembled in the informative Processes of her Cause of Canonization: this is true even though these documents have been somewhat broken up in harmony with the theological outline of the Christian virtues. Perhaps it is writings such as these which provide us with tones of immediacy and otherwise inaccessible, of the historical daily world of Gemma.

The first effect of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the Blessed Virgin, as preparation for her Divine Maternity has been that of producing in her soul – which was already exempt from all sin - a state of total recollection:

Ad 3um: The Holy Ghost effected a twofold purification in the Blessed Virgin. The first was, as it were, preparatory to Christ's conception: which did not cleanse her from the stain of sin or fomes, but rather gave her mind a unity of purpose and disengaged it from a multiplicity of things (Cf. Dionysius, Div. Nom. iv), since even the angels are said to be purified, in whom there is no stain, as Dionysius says (Eccl. Hier. vi). The second purification effected in her by the Holy Ghost was by means of the conception of Christ which was the operation of the Holy Ghost. And in respect of this, it may be said that He purified her entirely from the fomes⁷.

Regarding Gemma, we can say that the concentration of her soul grew from year to year toward this vital unity, because the One was the sorrowful consciousness of her own sins and her compassion for the sufferings of Jesus Christ. When in that January of 1900, Fr. Germano assumed from her regular confessor, Monsignor Volpi, the direction of her soul – Gemma was already conformed to the Crucified Christ and deeply yearning to live crucified with Him.

As the foundation of this, her mission and the testimony of the Church of God, is the conviction that Jesus has come into this world, He has suffered and died, and continues to suffer for the sins of mankind - in accord with Christ Himself as He Himself stated that the *Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost* [cf. Lk 19:10] With St. Paul she believed: *..Christ came into this world to save sinners of whom I am the first in line...* [cf. 1 Tm 1:15]. She was much in harmony with the commentary of St. Augustine on this passage found in Luke: '... Therefore if man had not sinned, the Son of Man would not have come...' ⁸ The commentary of the Gloss on this is: there had been no reason that Christ the Lord should have

⁷ There is a very beautiful Latin expression here, that is almost untranslatable: ... *mentem eius magis in unum coligens, et a multitudine sustollens...* [III, q. 27, a. 3, ad 3 um].

⁸ *Sermons to the People*. Sermon 174, c. 2 [PL 38, col. 940].

come other than in order to save sinners. Take away the illness, and remove the wounds, and there is no longer any need for medicine.’⁹

However, in Gemma and for that matter, as in every mystical soul and especially in stigmatists, this conviction has become a reality lived of suffering and love, a profound conviction - pay close attention to this since it seems to us to consist in this the particularity of their mystical experience and at the same time as a consequence], regarding their entire ecclesial mission - that she, Gemma, is the greatest of sinners, one who has sinned more than all other human beings, we will see. [little Flower; St. Paul; St. Francis de sales – “pious exaggerations”]

And herein lies the second aspect of her experience which is the ‘living presence’ in her soul of the sufferings of Jesus Christ in their presentation in act [and not always as ‘a representation of imagination, even when it is a matter of ecstasies’¹⁰] of the principal physical and moral torments of the Passion of Christ.

The third aspect is Gemma’s participation in the sufferings of Christ with an ever-increasing tension of a contrast between repulsion – attraction, which is the humbling conflict in each one of us between corrupt human nature and the merciful movements of the communications of grace at work in us.

We know of Gemma’s precocious ‘experience of the Crucified’ which goes all the way back to her earliest years when she was still along-side her holy Mother [while I was still a ‘little one’ as she puts it in her Autobiography]. This phenomenon remained in her soul much like an under-ground fire and was present as the substance of her predestination and vocation. This interior fire seemed to break out and to become noticeable, invading her fully, after her healing of March 1899 and therefore in the flower of her age and of her health, miraculously restored. The grave and painful malady – had left in her sensibility, the endowment of exceptional depth in her soul – the experience of a devoid aspect of life, of a true emptiness of her pleasures and mirages and a freedom from all covetousness in her meditation on death. When Fr. Germano arrived, his avowed mission was that of ‘defending’ Gemma, already totally immersed in the Passion of Christ, from dangers and the lack of understanding in the environment of increasing assaults made on her by the spirit of evil.

⁹ These are texts quoted by St. Thomas, III, q. 1, a. 3, *Sed contra*.

¹⁰ Ecstasies in the supernatural order are events in time, namely, real communications of God to a person; these accompany the divine revelation, both of the OT and NT and are distinguished both through their object, sublimely spiritual and moral – as well as for their first origin in the power of God, elevating the creature to a superior sphere of life. This is realized in such intensity of union with God as to remove all bodily sensibility with the total and superior sense of the reality of ones surroundings [cf. t. Alvarez, *Ecstasies*, in the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Spirituality [Roma 1975, pp. 728-732]. For the ecstasies of Gemma according to the testimonies of the Apostolic Processes, cf. E. Zoffoli, *La povera Gemma*, citing her Autobiography, ed., pp. 406, ff.]

Her true masters in the school of the Crucified, after her first [yet decisive] child-hood impressions, first with her Mother and then with the good Sisters of S. Zita [Sr. Camilla Vagliensi first of all and then Sr. Giulia Sestini] had been the Madonna, her Guardian Angel, St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother, and Jesus Himself above all others. The Saint in fact confesses: ‘Only once did I see Jesus upset with me, and a thousand times I would have chosen rather to suffer the pains of hell during life, than to find myself before a displeased Jesus and to place before my eyes that horrible picture of my soul¹¹.

By the time she was a young woman, when she turned 19, her Dad died. He had always been most affectionate toward her and she totally committed in caring for him in his terrible illness until his death¹². At this hard time, Jesus intervenes, as she wrote: ‘In those days of sorrow He seems to do all the more in order for me to experience Him in my soul – as a result I was able to draw on a strength so great that I was able to support that awful time, in a rather tranquil state of mind. And on the very day that he died, Jesus prohibited me from losing myself in any useless cries and sobs, and I overcame all this by praying, and was most resigned in the will of God, which in that time took him from me and He took his place as my Heavenly Father and my earthly Father. [Autobiography, p. 239].

That heroic restraining herself from being lost in cries and sobs proved to be some indication of her maturity in her experience of the Cross. Even before this, we can read of how her religious vocation matured in her, when she notes that Jesus Himself provided her with some lights [Autobiography, p. 235].

One episode, just a few months before the impression of the stigmata upon her, in April of 1899, Gemma – thus recounts herself the experience - she had taken part in a rather frivolous conversation with two of her young girl companions, friends of her sister: ‘But this morning Jesus gave me such a strong correction, that my terror was so great that I would have desired not to speak ever again and not see anyone again.’

Jesus’ teaching in her life was continuous, as she writes: ‘Jesus continued in the meantime to make Himself experienced ever more each day and to fill me with consolations – whereas I, on the contrary, turned my back on Him, and offend Him without any discomfort.’ [Autobiography, p. 255].

At the first appearance of her Guardian Angel¹³, Gemma was already 18 years of age and she received the first lesson as an admonition for detachment from all

¹¹ Her Autobiography, p. 238.

¹² He died on November 11, 1897, and it seems from a cancer of the throat.

¹³ Regarding the Saint’s relationship which became more and more familiar and affectionate, with her Guardian Angel, cf. E. Zoffoli, *La povera Gemma*, ed. cit., pp. 459, f.

earthly realities. This immediately involved a gold watch and chain, which had been given to her by her God-Mother, the Countess Guinigi. The record of this is as follows: 'Just remember that the only precious trinkets that embellish a spouse of a Crucified King can only be thorns and the Cross.' The words she heard and the apparition brought her some 'fear', but she obeyed. She removed a ring that she had on her finger, '... and from that day onward I no longer had anything...' [Autobiography, p. 235].

Her Guardian Angel supported her and comforted her throughout the periods of discouragement she experienced during her terrible illness. This is a particular indication: '... One night, when I was more restless than usual, I expressed my laments to Jesus, saying that I would not have prayed anymore and I asked Him in what manner had He made me so ill.' The response from on high was immediate: 'The Angel responded to me thus: If Jesus afflicts you bodily, He does this always in order to purify you in spirit. Be good!' And she observes in her humble candor: '... O how many times in my lengthy illness, He made me experience consoling words in my heart! But I never paid much heed to them' [Autobiography, p. 243].

And after her healing, the Guardian Angel stayed with her, and became her Master of the spiritual life: he corrected her – the Saint confesses - for each and every little failure, and exhorted her to speak little and only when she was interrogated, and he taught her how she should be in the presence of God. And he often used rather forceful means: 'Once when those in the house were speaking about a person, and they were not speaking all that well, I wanted to say something, and the beautiful Angel in a strong manner gave me a real correction. He taught me to keep my eyes lowered, and even when in Church he would correct me decisively, saying to me: 'Is this the way you conduct yourself in the presence of God?' And other times, he seemed to bawl me out in this manner: 'If you are not good, I will no longer let you see me'. [Autobiography, p. 251].

The Angel assisted her in her Hour of agony, which she made privately, on Good Friday, March 31, 1899: '... I was not alone, my Guardian Angel came with me and we prayed together; we assisted Jesus in all His sufferings, we had compassion with our Mom in her sorrows. Yet, my Angel did not fail to give me a gentle correction, telling, that I should not complain when I wanted to offer some sacrifice to Jesus, but I rather should thank those who provided me with the occasion to offer some sacrifice.'

When Fr. Germano came into her life in order to take over her spiritual direction, he ordered her to write her 'General Confession' [Autobiography], and she was thinking to limit her account to her sins and failures; and then her Guardian

Angel corrected me by saying to me that I should obey ... And further: 'The Guardian Angel promised me that he would help me to call to mind everything in my life [p. 221]. While, in her humility she continued to accuse herself of new sins and that Jesus was not pleased with her. Nonetheless, he consoled me; He sent me my guardian Angel to serve as my guide in everything.' [Autobiography, pp., 253, f.].

The Angel demanded of her an absolute obedience rendered to her Confessor, and intervened to remove the rope, taken from the well and undo its knots, as it were, as my life was bound by it, because I was lacking my Confessor's permission. [pp. 255, f.]. And the Guardian Angel was present at the moment of her being impressed by the stigmata, and he was at the right side of the Madonna, '... he first commanded me to pray the act of contrition'. When the actual moment came of the divine communication of the harsh participation in Christ's Passion, it is again the Angel who came to her assistance: 'I covered myself as best I could, those parts, and then, helped by the my Angel, I was able to get into bed'. And in this new life of hers, it is her Guardian Angel who was always ready to stimulate her [as she noted herself] whenever she relaxed her effort. She tells us that her Guardian Angel several times advised her, telling her that he would depart from her and end contact with her, if at that time, she would have continued in her manner; I was not obedient, and he seemed to go away, or at least hide himself for a while.¹⁴

It is already known to her devotees that in the actual composition of her 'General Confession', her Guardian Angel had dictated it to her, 'word by word'.

Gemma's familiarity with her Guardian Angel, with St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother and with Fr. Germano are all noteworthy: the Angel satisfied for Gemma her celestial world. In her Diary for July-September 1900, the Guardian Angel was always at her side: he comforted her, 'restored her to peace', following a temptation, he protected her with his 'out-spread' wings. He often corrected her and she notes 'my Guardian Angel never failed me', and he exhorts her to accept her sufferings: 'you are only worthy to be disdained, because you have offended Jesus.'

She also records a rather delightful scene of Paradise, and we should really quote it in its entirety: 'Then, the Angel brought me to some quiet; he sat down right beside me, and said to me, ever so gently: 'O daughter, 'but do you not know that you have to be wholly in conformity with Jesus' life? He suffered so much for you, and do you not know that you ought to suffer for him in every moment? And so why do you give such displeasure to Jesus? He suffered so much for you, so do you

¹⁴ Noteworthy also is her previous statement: 'I was not doing any better, as every day I was committing sins beyond counting, those of disobedience to my Confessor, and I was never really sincere with him and always kept something from him...' [Autobiography, p. 263].

not know that you must suffer in every occasion for Him? And then, why to you give this displeasure to Jesus, by leaving aside each day that meditation on His Passion?’

This was also true: I remembered that I made the Meditation of the Passion only on Friday’s and Thursday’s” ‘You ought to make this meditation every day, remember it!’ Finally, he said to me: ‘Have courage, much courage! This world really is not a place for repose: rest will come after your death; for now, you must suffer, and suffer in all things, in order to keep some soul from eternal death.’ I begged him much that he might say to my dear Mom that she might come to be with me a bit, that I would have so many things to say to her; he told me he would. That night, though, she did not come’ [p. 181]¹⁵.

She invoked him in order to be liberated from the Devil: ‘I called upon my guardian Angel, he spread his wings, sat beside me, blessed me, and then I escaped. May Jesus be thanked. [p. 184]. The Angel was totally committed to his duty: ‘... The Guardian Angel, every time that I do something bad, castigates me: the night never passed without him doing this, and he threatened her that if she did not confide everything to her Confessor, the Devil would return. [p. 176].

In this Magisterium through the angelic assistance, Gemma perhaps surpassed perhaps the anecdotes recorded by her most bold biographers. On August 19th, she awaited in vain for Jesus: ‘Only my Guardian Angel never ceased to watch over me, to instruct me, and to give me wise counsels. Many times a day, he appeared to me and spoke to me. Yesterday, he accompanied me while I was eating, but he did not force me, as others do. After I had eaten, I did not feel well at all; then he prepared for me a small cup of coffee that was so good, that I seemed to get better immediately, and then he made me rest a while. Many, many times I asked him to ask Jesus whether He would allow the angel to remain with me through the night; I was about to say this to him, but then he returned and stayed until the next morning as Jesus permitted him to do. [pp. 213, f.]. The Angel helped her to prepare herself for confession and when the Madonna went away, he remained with me, ‘and he was affable and happy until the morning’ [p. 209]. And at times, she spoke ‘with her angel’ for hours at a time [p. 215].

¹⁵ Other corrections were given to her by her Guardian Angel, as on Thursday, August 9th [p. 191], on September 2nd [p. 217](this is an outstanding scene!) And just above all this: ‘He corrected me above all for my carelessness in prayer; he also reminded me of several other matters, always something regarding my eyes, warning me severely. Last night in Church once again he reminded me that which he had said to me during the day, telling me that I should pay more attention to Jesus. Finally, before going to bed, in the act of a diabolic assault, and this happened because I had been careless for some days in my prayer. He advised me that the Demon would make every effort in order to impede me from praying, with maxims that were for my mind reminders for the whole day - and he would have deprived me also of his visitations [I mean here those of my Guardian Angel], but only for today [p. 202]. He looked upon her with such a severe expression that it frightened me...He cast rather severe glances upon me...[p. 210]

It can be said and the Epistolary does supply a confirmation of this, that by this stage, Gemma's life was conducted with her angelic accompaniment. When Lady Cecilia was absent, Gemma wrote to Monsignor Volpi, the Angel took her place: 'whenever she thought of it, she would ask him to remain hidden [Letter 36, p. 361]! And the Angel showed himself immediately to assist her when her brother¹⁶ began to curse and swear' [Letter 44, pp. 372, f.].

And 'this dear Angel' of Fr. Germano was present in another of the scenes of Paradise she records: 'Today there also appeared his Guardian Angel. How beautiful he was! A shining star seemed to radiate always from His Head, and how radiant it was! Just imagine: he came into the kitchen while I was making meat balls! I was about to have him made present, and I thought ... and I thought [I saw, dear Daddy, I believe, how small I felt my brain to be, as I believe that which I suffer is a lot; just imagine, it is a bit of heart that I would love to see enlarged, and would break itself open [at the presence of Jesus, and I thanked Him thus: 'O Jesus, I thank you; I suffer, but then you will bring me to Paradise, isn't that so?' I then experienced a man placed upon my brow and it raised my head. It was his Angel, he said to me: 'Therefore, daughter, if you have the sweet hope to reign one day with Jesus and Mary in heaven, why don't you suffer, and struggle a bit with more courage and strength?' These words came to an end, he kissed me, and went away, and left me so contented. I say that my own angel did not go away but it was as though he was no longer there as afterwards he did not indicate anything to me' [Letter 61, pp. 163].

In her beautiful letter of July 20, 1902, we read that He Angel accompanied her 'for two days in a row' [the 14th and 15th] and then, among much else that took place it happened that 'at the presence of the good Angel, I gave all I had [I will put it this way] to make my confession. How much he wanted me to know of his love! He looked at me so affectionately! ... and when he was about to depart [I noticed this as he came close to me and kissed me on the forehead] I begged him not to leave me yet, and he responded: 'It is necessary for me to go!' Then, go, I said, and greet Jesus for me.' He gave me a final glance saying to me: 'I do not want you to get engaged any more in empty conversations with creatures: when you want to talk, speak with Jesus and with your Angel... [p. 273]¹⁷.

In this 'angelic commerce' of hers, the ecstasies were none fewer. In Ecstasy 15, she invokes him: '... Angels of heaven, bend down all of you over me, for the Passion of Christ [p. 23]. She asked her Guardian Angel to send to her confrere, St.

¹⁶ This seems to have been her brother, Ettore, of whom we can offer a testimony of another brother of his, still alive at her writing.

¹⁷ Her Angel does not seem so severe ...she writes almost satisfied – as was the Angel of Fr. Germano and after he had departed, he came back every evening to bless her! [cf. Letter 13, p. 38].

Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother [Epistolary 43, p. 68]. The apex of this angelic magisterium of her love for the Cross is perhaps noted in her Letter 54, to Fr. Germano on Good Friday, April 5, 1901: 'O how much His Angel loved me! He told me that I should be content, that Jesus is in my heart but that I will have to suffer so much ... And at these words, without my noticing them, tears came to my eyes. The old flesh of mine always wants to turn back, but I would domesticate it all, if I could obtain from You... the power of doing this. The Angel blessed me, and went away, crying out: Long live Jesus! Long live the Cross of Jesus! [p. 147]¹⁸.

The Angel brought her letters to Fr. Germano; she dictated to him her wonderful consideration of the Annunciations, to which reference has been made. Thus we might say that the Angels do create - but often so does the devil, and for the devil, that essential atmosphere in which there unfolded this exceptional life of her witness to the supernatural.

Her much beloved Master in the spiritual life and in her consecration to the Cross was, however, her Passionist confrere, St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother, when her time was still 'Venerable', as the heavenly guide of her Passionist vocation¹⁹.

He came into the life of St. Gemma in an occasional manner during her serious illness of 1898-1899. There was a lady, who often would come to visit her and brought her the Life of the Saint, which Gemma initially did not give much attention. Indeed in her Autobiography, in Gemma's very realistic style, she tells us: 'took this Life almost in disdain and I placed it under the bedside table.' That lady suggested it to her to recommend herself to the saint and in their home they were praying for her healing. She took it in hand only on the occasion of a great temptation during which the Devil longed for her to follow him and then she would be healed...and the devil seemed to do all in his power that she would do precisely that. The poor child was almost on the verge of giving in, and she thought of the venerable Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother and cried out: 'First in importance is my soul, and then my body!' However, the temptation turned to unleash its fury on her and the poor Gemma implored the assistance of her Passionist Gabriel and '... with his help, she won her battle; I returned to my senses and I made the sign of the Holy

¹⁸ Therefore, she begged: 'Send your Angel often! [Letter 68, p. 181]. In her 54th Ecstasy, Gemma conversed with the Angel of Fr. Germano and said to him to prepare himself ... for a good bawling out,' because she was undergoing punishment! [p. 84]

¹⁹ These notes were compiled toward the end of the year 1978, when the notable study of Carmelo Naselli, CP, came out: *My Sister...St. Gemma Galgani and St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother. Between the Visible and the Invisible*. [Ed. Eco Teramo 1978]. We suggest this study for anyone who would like to follow, step by step, this exceptional 'super-spiritual direction'. The work reveals the total simplicity of Gemma's soul, but at the same time there remains hidden the still unexplored depth of Gemma's soul [perhaps because it is beyond exploration] regarding her vocation to that singular conformity with the Passion of Jesus.

Cross and in a quarter of an hour I returned to unite myself the more to my God, who had been so disdained by me. I remember that that very night I began to read the biography of my Confrere, Gabriel. I read his biography various times: I was never surfeited in re-reading it and of admiring his virtues and examples.’

It was in this way, the Gemma found her ‘Protector’, as she called him, even before she had come to know the Passionists. In fact, one night she saw the Saint appearing to her: Gemma had already made a vow of virginity and the saint exhorted her: ‘Gemma, make also the vow to become a religious, but do not add anything else.’²⁰ And what follows from this prophetic scene, as it is understood today is to understand the ‘why?’ This is what she asked – and the Saint responded to her touching her forehead. ‘My Sister!’ He said to me looking at me and smiling. I could not understand anything of all this; to thank him, I kissed his religious habit. I touched the heart in the Passionist symbol [which makes up part of the religious habit] and he asked me to kiss it and he placed this sign on my sheets and once more repeated to me: ‘My Sister!’ Then he disappeared [cf. Autobiography, p. 246].

And it was St. Gabriel who on those days of the Novena to Blessed Margaret Mary in order to obtain her healing, that he would come to her [each evening’, and placed his hand on her brow and recited the prayers with her. The assistance of St. Gabriel to her is of particular efficacy against the devil’s temptations. To Monsignor Volpi in her Letter 40, she writes: ‘The Madonna first said to me: You are now under assault. This will last until you will be able to have in your hands the image of your Confrere, Gabriel.’ And this was true; I had to struggle to get one, but as soon as I had one, I was able to say, I have since remained free’ [p. 367]²¹ The saint then reassured Gemma and she wrote to Monsignor Volpi, in Letter 43, that she had been liberated from all diabolical temptations and all vexations [p. 372]. In her presentation of Letter 42, the Saint placed one hand on her head [‘it seems to me’, she noted] and had her repeat three times: *From the insidiousness of the Devil, deliver me, O Lord!* She noted that it seemed to her that the Saint blessed her and this left her free of all vexations.

Her diabolic infestations would cease only if she would enter into a Convent [p. 370]. Also in her Diary of July 23 1900, during a vexation of that ‘... customary

²⁰ This reserve suggested to her by St. Gabriel would come to be most opportune, due to the rest of the saint’s subsequent life. She would go from disappointment to disappointment in her ardent aspirations, apparently confirmed, rather even guaranteed by heavenly voices, to bury herself in the monastery of the Passionist Sisters just founded in Lucca [cf. the excellent exposition of C. Naselli. ‘*My Sister...*’, o.c., especially III, pp. 57, ff.]. The problem was, in our poor view, that there lie hidden still some obscurity, at least from the point of view of the religious phenomenology.

²¹ Also in the following Letter 41 in which St. Gabriel appeared to her and also an ‘elderly Passionist’ [according to the editors this was St. Paul of the Cross himself]. There was treated here the matter of the temptations of the devil and the matter of her one day entering the Convent.

total darkness, how dark it all was!’ – she noted that her Confrere, Gabriel blessed her: ‘... with certain Latin words that remained in my mind...’²² And he promised her that for that Saturday, she would be visited by the Madonna, and given the gift of the cincture.

Gemma was totally transferred into this world of heavenly visitations and personalities – Jesus Himself, the Madonna, her Guardian Angel, St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother – with all of whom she openly discussed the problems of her soul and her devotion. We know also from her Diary that Jesus, the Madonna, and St. Gabriel she saw them all in her ecstasies [‘alive and active’], while – when the Guardian Angel came, she was awakened [p. 182]: thus on July 31st, she uses the expression that is repeated on Wednesday and Thursday, August 1st & 2nd: ‘Every once in a while, my guardian Angel would say to me certain things, but I was always wide awake.’ [ibid.]

In her Letter 1 to Fr. Germano, the matter of her Passionist vocation as suggested by St. Gabriel is still very explicit: ‘Do not fear, you will be a Passionist...’ And he would continue to repeat this to her ‘every evening’, when he appeared to her from around 11:00 p.m. until mid night, even to presenting to her 7 persons [and she recognized three of them, who would then initiate the foundation at Lucca [...within 21 months!] together with some young lady, who would then give the final emphasis²³.

We do know now that despite the explicit assurances of the Saint to this very anxious young girl, life did not turn out that way as from the words of Jesus is clear: ‘But, do you know, my daughter, that there is a life more blessed even than that in the Convent? [Letter 7, p. 23]. Yet the saint continued to enkindle in her heart that desire for the Convent, as she writes in her Letter 10: ‘You should have seen how he spoke! And with such force! His eyes were sparkling; they seemed like two lamps...He spoke to me much about the new Convent. How much did she lament as with Fr. Ignatius, and also with a certain Father Consulter, whom I did not know because he did not stay long, without even thinking that very soon... [p. 31].

This elliptic form of writing is simply Gemma’s style: the singular gifts and her many divine communications became a trial to her faith and stages along her life of continuing martyrdom that all would remain hidden, even though always the more present to her and intense even to her death. There were also the many divine promises, even the most categorical, and all seemed to lead her into failure in this ardent desire of hers. And above all, all this constituted for her something that she would think was about to happen, only to see it not realized before her spiritual

²² Perhaps those of Letter 42 to Monsignor Volpi.

²³ It is just unknown who this ‘young lady’ was.

master. Her world was so unreal, because it was apparently so far beyond this world, and through the obstacles brought through human intervention that she had to pass. Some of these were such miserly human attempts, totally of this world, and apparently beyond, contrary to the will of God. She seems to have been proclaimed to her explicitly, only then to be thwarted by the very confusing inter-weaving of weak human wills that troubled her but worked out the mysterious divine will in her regard.

The result of all this shows that her authentic teacher, on the existential level, had been her sufferings and failures of her most ardent aspirations. This was her life-long yearning for the Convent, with a most sublime Convent. Her 'Convent' was life, one of constant purification, as Gemma herself came to recognize, that her Teacher was indeed the Magisterium of the *Suffering Jesus*.

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Chapter 1:

The Salvific Mystery of Christ's Passion²⁴

1. Christ's Passion, The Font of the Supernatural

The most grave deception in the life of Christians and also in theology, is when the supernatural seems to be overlooked, or just ignored: it might be said, however, and without exaggerating, that the 'crisis of the supernatural' has reached in these latter times one of the most acute heights in the history of the Church. The cause of this is the so-called Anthropological Shift in theology. This is a return to that flame of Modernism which St. Pius Xth sought to weaken at the beginning of the 20th century, followed then by his successors. The Passion of Christ is the Font of the Supernatural participation in grace and glory.

a.] We owe to the most extraordinary Confessor of St. Gemma, as has been seen, the precious testimony which St. Pius Xth saw in the supernatural virtues and the charisms of the humble virgin of Lucca. She has served as a powerful recall for the supernatural, obfuscated also in the Catholic world due to the most deceptive penetration of modern subjectivism, with the subsequent return to naturalism. The first consequence of this shift was the obfuscation of the natural dignity of each human being.

²⁴ Cornelio FABRO, CSS, *Gemma Galgani. Testimone del soprannaturale*. Roma: Ss. Giovanni e Paolo 1989, pp. 37-127.

b.] St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, Prologue:

Since, as Damascene states (De Fide Orth. ii, 12), man is said to be made in God's image, in so far as the image implies "an intelligent being endowed with free-will and self-movement": now that we have treated of the exemplar, i.e. God, and of those things which came forth from the power of God in accordance with His will; it remains for us to treat of His image, i.e. man, inasmuch as he too is the principle of his actions, as having free-will and control of his actions.

Each human being in virtue of his/ her spiritual soul has been created to the image and likeness of God [Gn 1:27]²⁵ – and each participates in his/her mode, i.e., that of a finite creature, on the divine life which is that of understanding and willing: while all other creatures are limited to show a similitude of God with one or other of the divine attributes [wisdom, beauty, power] proper to the divinity, the spiritual creature is also naturally capable of God, since God Himself chose to elevate such a creature to Himself. The rational being thus becomes in an immediate order toward God, who is the only ultimate terminus and fulfillment of the proper human perfection and happiness.

2.] St. Thomas treats this matter with simple lucidity: ... Only the rational creature is capable of God because only such a creature can know Him and love Him in explicit manner [De Ver. q. 22. A. 2, ad 5 um]:

... I answer that, Wherever one nature is subordinate to another, we find that two things concur towards the perfection of the lower nature, one of which is in respect of that nature's proper movement, while the other is in respect of the movement of the higher nature. Thus water by its proper movement moves towards the centre (of the earth), while according to the movement of the moon, it moves round the centre by ebb and flow.

In like manner the planets have their proper movements from west to east, while in accordance with the movement of the first heaven, they have a movement from east to west.

Now the created rational nature alone is immediately subordinate to God, since other creatures do not attain to the universal, but only to something particular, while they partake of the Divine goodness either in "being" only, as inanimate things, or also in "living," and in "knowing singulars," as plants and animals; whereas the rational nature, in as much as it apprehends the

²⁵ From that which proceeds according to St. Thomas, who in this depends on St. John Damascene, that man is the principle of his own actions in so far as each is endowed with free will and the power of one's own actions. [De Fide Orthodoxa, II, c. 12. St. Thomas quotes this in his Prologue to I-II.

universal notion of good and being, is immediately related to the universal principle of being.

Consequently the perfection of the rational creature consists not only in what belongs to it in respect of its nature, but also in that which it acquires through a supernatural participation of Divine goodness. Hence it was said above (I, Question [3], Article [8]) that man's ultimate happiness consists in a supernatural vision of God: to which vision man cannot attain unless he be taught by God, according to Jn. 6:45: "Every one that hath heard of the Father and hath learned cometh to Me." Now man acquires a share of this learning, not indeed all at once, but by little and little, according to the mode of his nature: and everyone who learns thus must needs believe, in order that he may acquire science in a perfect degree; thus also the Philosopher remarks (De Soph. Elench. i, 2) that "it behooves a learner to believe." [*oportet studentibus credere!*].

Hence in order that a man arrive at the perfect vision of heavenly happiness, he must first of all believe God, as a disciple believes the master who is teaching him. [II-II, q. 2, a. 3].

Reply to Objection 2: To be united to God in unity of person was not fitting to human flesh, according to its natural endowments, since it was above its dignity; nevertheless, it was fitting that God, by reason of His infinite goodness, should unite it to Himself for man's salvation. [III, q. 4, a.1, ad 2 um]

3.] In virtue of each person's spirituality, then the soul has a kind of virtual destination toward the possession of God, and to participate in His life for all eternity. This participation, then, is already communicated here on earth through sanctifying grace, which has already been merited for us by the Passion of Jesus Christ. This concept that human beings, by their very spiritual nature, have an affinity toward God, and this was not unknown in the pagan world. St. Paul remembered this in his discourse in the Areopagus: ...

It is He who set limits to human epochs and fixed the boundaries of their regions. They were to seek God, yes grope for Him and perhaps eventually find Him – though He is not very far away from anyone of us. In Him, we live and move and have our being, as some of your poets have put it, we, too, are His off-spring... [Ac 17:27, f.]

4.] Divine Grace, therefore, is above human nature. While Grace restores the fallen soul to the image of God, deformed by sin. Divine grace elevates the human soul to the participation into the divine modality of being and of acting. The actions of a restored human being flow through the theological virtues and the gifts of the

holy spirit, which are founded on grace itself. Thus, through sanctifying grace, the human soul:

... On the contrary, Augustine says (De Trin. xv, 19): "As the body of flesh is nothing but flesh; so the gift of the Holy Ghost is nothing but the Holy Ghost." But the Holy Ghost is a personal name; so also therefore is "Gift."

I answer that, The word "gift" imports an aptitude for being given. And what is given has an aptitude or relation both to the giver and to that to which it is given. For it would not be given by anyone, unless it was his to give; and it is given to someone to be his.

Now a divine person is said to belong to another, either by origin, as the Son belongs to the Father; or as possessed by another. But we are said to possess what we can freely use or enjoy as we please; and in this way a divine person cannot be possessed, except by a rational creature united to God.

Other creatures can be moved by a divine person, not, however, in such a way as to be able to enjoy the divine person, and to use the effect thereof. The rational creature does sometimes attain thereto; as when it is made partaker of the divine Word and of the Love proceeding, so as freely to know God truly and to love God rightly.

Hence the rational creature alone can possess the divine person. Nevertheless in order that it may possess Him in this manner, its own power avails nothing: hence this must be given it from above; for that is said to be given to us which we have from another source. Thus a divine person can "be given," and can be a "gift."

The human soul is thus enabled, capacitated to produce divine operations. And this is holiness, i.e., that divine manner of operating, acting, which God concedes through the mysterious operations of the Humanity of Jesus Christ, present in the sacraments, and in souls living in grace. St. Peter put it this way: *"By His own virtue and power He has bestowed on us the great and precious things He promised, so that through these you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers in the divine nature ..." [2 P 1:4].*

5.] And Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, has merited for us the pardon of sins and the life of grace through His Passion and earth, according to this marvelous indication of the Angelic Doctor III, q. 46, a. 1, ad 3 um]:

Reply to Objection 3: That man should be delivered by Christ's Passion was in keeping with both His mercy and His justice.

With His justice, because by His Passion Christ made satisfaction for the sin of the human race; and so man was set free by Christ's justice:

and with His mercy, for since man of himself could not satisfy for the sin of all human nature, as was said above (Question [1], Article [2]), God gave him His Son to satisfy for him, according to Rm. 3:24,25: "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood." And this came of more copious mercy than if He had forgiven sins without satisfaction. Hence it is said (Eph. 2:4): "God, who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ."

St. Thomas insists, therefore, on the fundamental corruption of sin, common to the entire human nature [III, q. 49, a. 5]. And this opens up for us an entire spiral in order to clarify that sense of sin which so attacks the Saints. In St. Gemma Galgani this took the form of suffering and repentance, her deep yearning for the expiation of herself and for others.

6.] And within the Passion of Christ, that St. Thomas following the guidance of St. Augustine, illustrates the positive consolations that come into a soul of faith – this is all due to the fact that God Himself in Christ had suffered and died for us:

- a believer comes to know in the Passion just how much God loves humanity;
- how Christ has given us in His Passion the example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice and of all the other virtues necessary for salvation;
- the Passion has merited for us grace in justification and the glory of beatitude [cf. III, q. 48];
- the horror for the sufferings of the Passion should the more greatly move each human being toward avoid future sin in order to save each from sin – keeping in mind that Jesus Christ had poured out His Precious Blood in order to wash each from all sin;;
- with His Passion and Death Christ has overcome the Devil, who had deceived our first parents. Christ has also conquered that death borne in its wake by sin. This liberation from the power of the Devil has a particular significance for that sorrowful expiation that God requested of St. Gemma Galgani.

7.] The Devil, in fact, St. Thomas explains, had acquired through sin the 'rights' for holding humanity captive in slavery:

On the contrary, St. Augustine says (De Trin. xiii): "There was no other more suitable way of healing our misery" than by the Passion of Christ.

I answer that, Among means to an end that one is the more suitable whereby the various concurring means employed are themselves helpful to such end. But in this that man was delivered by Christ's Passion, many other things besides deliverance from sin concurred for man's salvation.

In the first place, man knows thereby how much God loves him, and is thereby stirred to love Him in return, and herein lies the perfection of human salvation; hence the Apostle says (Rm. 5:8): "God commendeth His charity towards us; for when as yet we were sinners . . . Christ died for us."

Secondly, because thereby He set us an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and the other virtues displayed in the Passion, which are requisite for man's salvation. Hence it is written (1 Pt. 2:21): "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps."

Thirdly, because Christ by His Passion not only delivered man from sin, but also merited justifying grace for him and the glory of bliss, as shall be shown later (Question [48], Article [1]; Question [49], Articles [1], 5).

Fourthly, because by this man is all the more bound to refrain from sin, according to 1 Cor. 6:20: "You are bought with a great price: glorify and bear God in your body." Fifthly, because it redounded to man's greater dignity, that as man was overcome and deceived by the devil, so also it should be a man that should overthrow the devil; and as man deserved death, so a man by dying should vanquish death.

Hence it is written (1 Cor. 15:57): "Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It was accordingly more fitting that we should be delivered by Christ's Passion than simply by God's good-will. [III, q. 46, a. 3]

The very fearsome diabolical vexations that God permitted to afflict the 'poor Gemma', especially in the last years of her life and even to including her death-bed, are perhaps the most mysterious and sorrowful part of her participation in the Passion of Jesus Christ.

8.] In his formal analysis, which is also quite moving of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, St. Thomas shows how the entire human nature in its internal and external senses, and in the very soul was permeated by sufferings of every type. He speaks therefore, of an authentic exterior and sensible suffering for physical suffering - and

of an interior suffering which sadness is for the more evil. Both of these aspects were found in Christ in a supreme manner.

a.] Under sensible suffering, St. Thomas makes mention of the sufferings of the sense of touch: the scourging, the stigmata leaving the wounds of the nails – the conflicts endured by His nervous system, in both hands and feet.

[It is interesting to note that toward the end of his Pontificate, Pope Paul VI placed the Church on guard against the fire of Satan – which had entered into the Church with heterodox movements after Vatican II.

This aspect was taken up again with an even fuller treatment by St. John Paul II in his public catechesis of August 20, 1986. Here the Pontiff had reminded us that our faith as for what pertains to truth regarding Satan, is surely not directly willed by God, but as supreme Love and Holiness, Whose sapient and powerful Providence is able to lead our human existence to victory over the Prince of Darkness.' [Oss. Rom., August 21, 1986, p. 5]

b.] For the interior suffering of Jesus, St. Thomas includes all the sins of the human race. This is the greatest sadness ever possible – it is in this suffering, too, that Jesus has surpassed all that of almost every penitent in the history of the Church:

... Reply to Objection 2: Moral virtue lessens interior sadness in one way, and outward sensitive pain in quite another; for it lessens interior sadness directly by fixing the mean, as being its proper matter, within limits. But, as was laid down in the I, Question [64], Article [2], moral virtue fixes the mean in the passions, not according to mathematical quantity, but according to quantity of proportion, so that the passion shall not go beyond the rule of reason. And since the Stoics held all sadness to be unprofitable, they accordingly believed it to be altogether discordant with reason, and consequently to be shunned altogether by a wise man.

But in very truth some sadness is praiseworthy, as Augustine proves (De Civ. Dei xiv) ---namely, when it flows from holy love, as, for instance, when a man is saddened over his own or others' sins. Furthermore, it is employed as a useful means of satisfying for sins, according to the saying of the Apostle (2 Cor. 7:10): "The sorrow that is according to God worketh penance, steadfast unto salvation." And so to atone for the sins of all men, Christ accepted sadness, the greatest in absolute quantity, yet not exceeding the rule of reason.

But moral virtue does not lessen outward sensitive pain, because such pain is not subject to reason, but follows the nature of the body; yet it lessens it indirectly by redundances of the higher powers into the lower. But this did not

happen in Christ's case, as stated above (cf. Question [14], Article [1], ad 2; Question [45], Article [2]).

9.] St. Thomas Aquinas was enabled to surprising depth analyze a Divine Kenosis in the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. The Angelic Doctor was led here by St. Cyril at the Council of Ephesus: [in this reflection, for the first time perhaps in theology we read the clear meaning of the Death of God. [cf. J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*]. The Death of Jesus Christ, comes, as it were, the Death of God – i.e., through the union in the divine person, destroys all other death's effects since the One who suffered was both God and Man:

... *On the contrary*, Athanasius says (Ep. ad Epict.): "The Word is impassible whose Nature is Divine." But what is impassible cannot suffer. Consequently, Christ's Passion did not concern His Godhead.

I answer that, As stated above (Question [2], Articles [1],2,3,6), the union of the human nature with the Divine was effected in the Person, in the hypostasis, in the suppositum, yet observing the distinction of natures; so that it is the same Person and hypostasis of the Divine and human natures, while each nature retains that which is proper to it.

And therefore, as stated above (Question [16], Article [4]), the Passion is to be attributed to the suppositum of the Divine Nature, not because of the Divine Nature, which is impassible, but by reason of the human nature. Hence, in a Synodal Epistle of Cyril [*Act. Conc. Ephes., P. i, cap. 26] we read: "If any man does not confess that the Word of God suffered in the flesh and was crucified in the flesh, let him be anathema."

Therefore Christ's Passion belongs to the "suppositum" of the Divine Nature by reason of the passible nature assumed, but not on account of the impassible Divine Nature.

Reply to Objection 1: The Lord of glory is said to be crucified, not as the Lord of glory, but as a man capable of suffering.

Reply to Objection 2: As is said in a sermon of the Council of Ephesus [*P. iii, cap. 10], "Christ's death being, as it were, God's death"---namely, by union in Person---"destroyed death"; since He who suffered "was both God and man. For God's Nature was not wounded, nor did It undergo any change by those sufferings."

Reply to Objection 3: As the passage quoted goes on to say: "The Jews did not crucify one who was simply a man; they inflicted their presumptions upon God. For suppose a prince to speak by word of mouth, and that his words are committed to writing on a parchment and sent out to the cities, and that some rebel tears up the

document, he will be led forth to endure the death sentence, not for merely tearing up a document, but as destroying the imperial message. Let not the Jew, then, stand in security, as crucifying a mere man; since what he saw was as the parchment, but what was hidden under it was the imperial Word, the Son by nature, not the mere utterance of a tongue." [cf. III, 46, 12 ad 1 um - 3 um]

10.] St. Gemma Galgani, even before her participating in the indescribable suffering of the stigmata, had from the Madonna that special grace of a real suffering for sins that brought her almost to death's door. Which she would have entered were it not for the fact that she was supported by a special divine assistance. And it may be helpful to bear in mind that in the history of the Church, the few stigmatists [such as Gemma], obtain a sublime similarity with Christ because theirs is more sorrowful, and therefore the Lord asks more of any soul that is thanks to perhaps a greater union with Christ and therefore, they all come to realize – like the martyrs – that theological-mystical union with Christ.: The Head and the members are as one mystical person:

... On the contrary, on the words of Phil. 2:9, "Therefore God exalted Him," etc., Augustine says (Tract. civ in Joan.): "The lowliness" of the Passion "merited glory; glory was the reward of lowliness." But He was glorified, not merely in Himself, but likewise in His faithful ones, as He says Himself (Jn. 17:10). Therefore it appears that He merited the salvation of the faithful. [III, 48, 2]

On the contrary, It is written (Apoc. 1:5): "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

I answer that, Christ's Passion is the proper cause of the forgiveness of sins in three ways.

First of all, by way of exciting our charity, because, as the Apostle says (Rm. 5:8): "God commendeth His charity towards us: because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us." But it is by charity that we procure pardon of our sins, according to Lk. 7:47: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much."

Secondly, Christ's Passion causes forgiveness of sins by way of redemption. For since He is our head, then, by the Passion which He endured from love and obedience, He delivered us as His members from our sins, as by the price of His Passion: in the same way as if a man by the good industry of his hands were to redeem himself from a sin committed with his feet. For, just as the natural body is one though made up of diverse members, so the whole Church, Christ's mystic body, is reckoned as one person with its head, which is Christ.

Thirdly, by way of efficiency, inasmuch as 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.

Reply to Objection 1: Although Christ did not suffer as God, nevertheless His flesh is the instrument of the Godhead; and hence it is that His Passion has a kind of Divine Power of casting out sin, as was said above.

Reply to Objection 2: Although Christ's Passion is corporeal, still it derives a kind of spiritual energy from the Godhead, to which the flesh is united as an instrument: and according to this power Christ's Passion is the cause of the forgiveness of sins. [III, 49, 1]

11.] Through the medium of this union of souls with Jesus Christ, He indeed 'pardons all the offenses of the human race, and therefore - pay attention [!] – for those who are joined to the suffering Christ – or, for those who communicate in His Passion, through faith, charity, the Sacraments of the faith:

On the contrary, is the saying of the Apostle (Heb. 10:19): "We have [Vulg.: 'having a'] confidence in the entering into the Holies"---that is, of the heavenly places---"through the blood of Christ."

I answer that, The shutting of the gate is the obstacle which hinders men from entering in. But it is on account of sin that men were prevented from entering into the heavenly kingdom, since, according to Is. 35:8: "It shall be called the holy way, and the unclean shall not pass over it."

Now there is a twofold sin which prevents men from entering into the kingdom of heaven. The first is common to the whole race, for it is our first parents' sin, and by that sin heaven's entrance is closed to man. Hence we read in Gn. 3:24 that after our first parents' sin God "placed . . . cherubim and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." The other is the personal sin of each one of us, committed by our personal act.

Now by Christ's Passion we have been delivered not only from the common sin of the whole human race, both as to its guilt and as to the debt of punishment, for which He paid the penalty on our behalf; but, furthermore, from the personal sins of individuals, who share in His Passion by faith and charity and the sacraments of faith. Consequently, then the gate of heaven's kingdom is thrown open to us through Christ's Passion. This is precisely what the Apostle says (Heb. 9:11, 12): "Christ being come a high-priest of the good things to come . . . by His own blood entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption." And this is foreshadowed (Num. 35:25, 28), where it is said that the slayer* "shall abide there"---that is to say, in the city of

refuge---"until the death of the high-priest, that is anointed with the holy oil: but after he is dead, then shall he return home." [*The Septuagint has 'slayer', the Vulgate, 'innocent'---i.e. the man who has slain 'without hatred and enmity'.] [cf. III, q. 48, a.2; q. 49, aa. 3, 5].

In the history of the Church are the stigmatized mystics [such as St. Francis of Assisi; St. Catherine of Siena, St. Gemma Galgani St. Fr. Pio of Pietrelcina — as well as many other saints — who the most slake their thirst in the sacraments of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, such as Penance and the Eucharist.

12.] For this reason, every authentic disciple of Jesus Christ goes along with the entire commitment of his/her soul the Way of the Cross. Each Christian is called to the 'Folly of the Cross' — this is that folly of love for the Christ, crucified for us. Much here pertains to St. Gemma, as is known today from the Processes of her Cause and all that has been said. However, in this context, a disproportioned weight has been given to a number of the Saint's contemporaries, and even to some ecclesiastics and religious, who disdained her. Her case was similar to that of Jesus Himself Who was derided and taken to be out of his mind by Herod [Lk 23;11]. The Way of the Cross has always existed in the economy of salvation, which is a sighing for holiness, and the way of self-giving Love: this obligatory passage, full of darkness and horror, aims at the final purification of one's soul — this is experienced first by the night of the senses, and then by that of the spirit.

13.] For the non-believers, the Cross was stupidity and supreme torment: for the Jews, as is known, it was a scandal [cf. 1 Co 1:22, ff.]. In the religious expectancy of the people who await ultimately the triumph of the Reign of God, the Cross was always a 'scandal', a 'weakness' and this leads many to refuse it. For the Greeks in their supposed learning, they were asked to accept the Cross of Christ in a time which for them there was only the intellectually brilliant in their culture. But in Christianity, the Cross reaches the very culmination, vertex beyond all art and philosophy which would all have to appear as 'folly': St. Paul in this regard admonishes the people of Colossae: let no one deceive himself with any mere philosophy - or, this is an empty deception [Col 2:8]. The faithful are expected to avoid sophistry into which every philosophy of this world, as it is destined to tumble, whenever it pretends to provide that ultimate sense of life. In this context [1 Co 1:24] one can understand the likes of Heidegger maintaining the incongruence of the Greek philosophy with the Covenant of God's Mercy. while it is true that the Greek world understood some aspects of human suffering — [as punitive, purifying; pedagogical, etc.] there was highly valued a purifying suffering. This was seen more in the inexorable irrationality of the limited human situation. Greek philosophers could never understand suffering as part of the plan of God's love. Christianity has always assumed the Cross as the sign announcing committed Christianity. This

revealed data makes of Christ's Cross the sign of blessing and salvation, and the fathomless Font of a superior certainty of hope in eternal life.

14.] All this hinges on the fact that being and life itself express participation which the creature has of the Being and Perfections of God – tribulations and sufferings of the body, as well as the anguish of the soul – these are all a participation, as abandonment of love which grace achieves in the human soul, at the Cross of Christ.

[a] For Plato and the Platonic school that which really counts and constitutes the truth. This was thought of as the objectivity of ideas, which are 'separate' and withdrawn to be applied in the cases of the future. Therefore, these are already completed and eternal: all that we can have of these is some knowledge and truth. Aristotle had already rejected this 'separation' of the concrete from the abstract, to say that the sensible realities are 'models', paradigms, and that the sensible realities simply share to some extent in these separated ideas, is empty talk.

[b] For Aristotle, who identifies the real existent with the concrete sensible, to speak of 'separated ideas' is empty talk!, and is inexpressible, meaningless. Therefore, he concludes his diatribe against the transcendence of forms and species, because he has coined the expression PARTICIPATION of the sensible in the intelligible.

[c.] Thus, Greek thought, having reached the high point of its development, for its conception of the real breaks up into two antithetical positions. It is true that after a millennium, St. Thomas Aquinas knew how to recover the aspect of truth in both of these. His idea of reality as PARTICIPATION as the foundation of the concrete nature of being as a reality. However, the Angelic Doctor was by his time at work in a thoroughly Christian era. For St. Thomas, as for St. Augustine, the ideas [or, primordial models] of things that are in God, and more precisely in His eternal Word – by means of Whom all that has been made, has been made! [Jn 1:-2-3]

[d] According to Christian Faith the reality of things is that which we observe in created nature by God, and altogether all of nature rests in God, in Whom all continues in being according to the perfect MODEL of the eternal Word, the permanent MODELS of creation and conservation: these are MODELS of descent - that could be said to be those by which the human reason ascends to God, follows his/ her *Itinerarium Mentis/Voluntatis ad Deum*.

15] With the advent and the event of the Redemption of Humanity from sin, it is the Eternal Word and the most-beloved only begotten Son of the Father who

descends on earth and enters into time to PARTICIPATE in human nature and the entire mortal condition in order to redeem humanity from sin and death, PARTICIPATING His entire earthly situation and accepting for humanity, this world, His Death on the Cross.

16.] Now, humanity created by God ‘out of nothing’, made to the image and likeness of God, is in creation according to a process of descendency. Hence, no one can be saved from the Abyss without conforming oneself to the new MODEL which is now no longer simply a divine Idea but is One who has become the Incarnate Word. The suffering Christ is not only a symbol or image of a past event in history, but remains the living imprint that the Christian has received in Baptism in order to become conformed to Christ, and to follow His pathway of humiliation and suffering, without compromises, with one’s starkly limited worldly wisdom and with concupiscence of the flesh.

[a] Now, the MODEL, of course, is Jesus Christ in so far as He has redeemed us with His death on the Cross. This is the ultimate intensive paradigm of the God-Man synthesis. This is a mysterious synthesis [antinomy] of both eternity and time; of fragility and omnipotence; of humiliation and glory; of Mercy and Justice. Thus each person, having fallen into sin and into death, is now seen to be ‘uplifted’ into PARTICIPATING in the Grace of Christ, and with this, sharing in very nature of God [2 P 1:4]²⁶.

[b] However, if one considers solely the Cross, one would take as the MODEL and vantage point, solely the Crucified Christ – and each would simply have the ideal with Paul of allowing oneself to be crucified with Christ [Ga 2:19] and to bring oneself into conformity with Him after this brief earthly sojourn. The MODEL that is presented to us is INTEGRAL.

[c] Without the RESURRECTION from the dead, the Exaltation of the Kenotic Christ, salvation from sin and death would not be possible. However, Christ’s resurrection was preceded by His Most harsh Passion, and by His most cruel death on the Cross. It is here on the Cross that each of the faithful needs to crucify human reason. In this, every Christian is consecrated by Baptism to follow Him, including the mystics, and perhaps most especially, those few favored through Church history with the stigmata imprinted on their bodies. Gemma, like these others favored as she was, ascended on high on the Cross of Jesus Christ, remaining thus pierced and wounded as He was.

17.] The FOLLY OF THE CROSS is indeed a folly that one might call ‘second nature’, ‘her second power’. Folly is all deeply yearning love, much like that of St.

²⁶ cf. M. Sanchez, *La gracia como participación de la naturaleza divina*. Buenos Aires 1979.

Gemma. She was endowed most ardent spasms in a kind of continuing *crescendo* of her love for Jesus Christ, which in the end absorbed her every capacity for life.

[a] And that which is marvelous is the fact that in this ultimate and supreme manner of being consumed, Gemma's soul became ever more positive and realistic, the mistress of her sentiments even to her no longer believing in the reality of her mystical phenomena in which she lived and was so richly endowed. We know this from her last letters to Fr. Germano. Thus, her psychic and spiritual balance was revealed and confirmed in her most difficult and delicate moments.

[b] This matter of the mental balance of the mystics has been studied in real depth. With regard to St. Gemma, however, even after the explicit declaration of the Papal Bull of her canonization – she is still considered by not a few [including also priests and religious], to have been a highly emotional young woman, not to say 'hysterical', as one suffering deep illusions. Gemma's mystical phenomena, even the most extraordinary, as those received and lived by the Saint in a simple manner, and even with a sense of surprise, with an increasing sentiment of her own unworthiness: while it is true that they were enjoyed, they were also suffered with her sole intention of consoling Jesus and of saving the souls of sinners.

[c] It is necessary to recognize – if indeed one would not care to insist on one side chosen in this discussion – that the objective fact of her condition, or if she were being deluded – however one would want to so categorize her brief life - these phenomena seemed to be for her the heavenly assurance of the humble fulfillment of her Passionist vocation. Her extraordinary state was much suffered by her, understood and interpreted with a real sense of a balanced faith and with a fortitude of spirit - and let us add here, with a genuine theological clarity – all of these qualities both stupefy and reveal [as she herself stated] the direct guidance of her soul by Jesus Himself.

[d] In all this, St. Gemma was a limpid and incisive MODEL, without any superficial additions or her assuming any doctrinaire manner. Hers was a life of total abandonment of her soul to the will of God and this state of mind and heart is what is asked of all, whether with, without any special charisms.

18.] Another great mystic, who influenced profoundly the German Theology of the Cross, was Blessed Angela da Foligno, formed in the school of St. Francis. She passed through similar trials, showing the same sentiments of St. Gemma and almost anticipated her even to some of her expressions.

[a] In her 'sixth step'²⁷ which is the next to last in her spiritual ascent. Angela, in treating of humility and pride, presents a situation that leaves one terrified, and perhaps remains alone in its dramatic nature and crude realism, as that of St. Gemma which she is taken for a ride by the demons: 'In my soul there was a real battle between a sure humility with a certain pride, which gave me so much trouble. The humility seems to have come from the fact that I could see myself as fallen away from all good, far from virtue, deprived of grace. I see in myself only sins and defects in such a measure that I cannot think that God would now have any mercy on me. I saw myself as the devil's dwelling place, that I had become a very active disciple of the demons, almost as though I was their daughter. I saw myself beyond all rectitude, far from all virtue, meriting only the most profound, last place in hell.' [pp. 99.f.]

[b] However, for some interpreters this is a level of humility that consoles and approaches the Lord by shaking the soul toward penance, rather than abandoning it to indifference: 'Such humility is not the same as I experienced other times, that which would eventually bring some joy to my soul and comforts it in the recognition of the divine goodness; this particular experience, though, seems to have lead only toward evils beyond number. I have the impression that the soul is surrounded by demons, and I uncover defects in both soul and body.

[c] God appears to me as closed off and hidden in every direction, even to the extent that I was unable to call Him to mind, neither in my memories of Him, nor in the thought that He might be permitting all this. Seeing myself condemned to damnation, I did not concern myself with all this, but rather took care and experienced sorrow that I had offended my Creator, Whom indeed I would never have wanted to outrage any further neither for all the goods nor for all the evils that can be named.' [p. 100].

19.] In such a state that she was destined to support at least for two more years, despite the fact that she was indeed struggling with all her powers against the devil and his, she is recorded to have said that she did not have a moment free nor any kind of a holiday to celebrate, nor did she find any remedy of relief from her struggle.

[a] In all this frightful experience, feelings of pride descended onto her battle field and then her reaction was one of 'full wrath, bitter sadness, and her strutting about like a peacock, without understanding in any manner why all this was so.' Her soul became resistant to any form of celestial consolation, to the point

²⁷ *Il libro della Beata Angela da Foligno*.. Translation of M. Castiglione Humani. Introduction and notes by Antonio Blassuci. Preface of Giovanni Ioergensen. Roma 1950. Cf. also the critique of Ludger Thier and A. Calufetti. Grottaferrata 1985, pp. 349, ff.

that ... if God Him had spoken with me, provided He would not have changed and worked in some different manner in my soul, I would receive from no one any consolation – nor would I have been able to experience any remedy from my troubles, nor would I ever have been able to relieve indeed that relief was on the way.’

[b] Probably what was taking place here is that which St. John of the Cross three centuries after Blessed Angela, the Dark Night. Then it would be that the Blessed Angela would pass to the ‘seventh and final step’ and would return to heavenly consolations, almost much like a prelude of the blessed life and the beatific vision²⁸.

[c] Even though blessed Angela had her in a vision with St. Francis ‘you are the only-begotten of me [p. 234]. She still reverted to her an almost bitter and comprehensive listing of her faults, so much so that she experienced the need to cry out in public: Just look on this most vile woman, full of malice and of a contrived simulation of all vices and devils.’ In among all the evil enormity she experienced, the principal accusation she experienced was: ‘... more than being prideful and being the daughter of pride, how much I felt like I was being deceptive and a hypocrite – she too, like Gemma, at the end of her life – she felt she was even the abomination of God; it was given to me to see rather than a woman of prayer, that I was rather a daughter of wrath, of pride and of Satan.’

[d] And this is what later took place in Gemma, seeing herself to be a *Sarabande* [bedlam], shouting and shrieking with the demons: ‘Do you not want to believe me anymore, can you not see the sway the devil has over me? You who have just been called my daughters, please beg for the justice of God, that my soul might be delivered from these demons, and these might at least make known my truly evil deeds, so that God will no longer be so much offended by me.’ And she went on railing against herself well beyond [it seems to us!] all measure: ‘Do not notice that everything I ever said to you is false²⁹?!’

[e] You should not want to believe in me anymore, cease adoring this idol, since in it the devil is present in my every word, all I said has been deceptive and diabolical. She roared on, totally disheveled and trembling, in these tones in order to finally conclude humbled and sorrowful. ‘My head is broken open, my body is

²⁸ Nonetheless, the radical experience of sin would return also in this period, as she notes: ‘... When I come out of this sublime state ... then I discovered myself to be full of faults, obedient to sin, darkened and unclean, made up of untruth and error.’ [p. 119].

²⁹ This confession was directed to her followers. And just a little above this passage, she is recorded to have remarked: I have been blinded, all is darkened and I am bereft of all truth. Therefore, my followers, keep under suspicion all that you have ever received from me, as coming from a truly evil person...’ [p. 219].

weighed down for my many tears and my members seem to becoming detached, because I am so capable of manifesting the evils and lies of my soul.

[f] Her conclusion to this total unraveling: When I was still very small, I already committed great evil.³⁰ And even before she had made a confession to her spiritual followers, while she was exhorting them to come to the Cross and to weep with her over Christ: ‘... who died there for our iniquities.’ She made no hesitating, therefore, to invite also those who have not offended God, to offer themselves to him totally, as I now who am so full of sin.³¹

20. There still are Saints and above all great mystics, like Blessed Angela, and ‘the poor Gemma’, to remind us of Jesus Who mounted onto the Cross on Calvary in order to expiate our sins and veto show us that that is the only way of love, the royal way of the Holy Cross.

[a] Very few, like our very humbled transfigured creature, have accepted without stipulations, the mystery of Grace of the total self-emptying of all visible realities and all of life and time. We are often scandalized by the mystery of iniquity of our times, but we do not even dare look into the face of that horrid monster of sin and pertains to us, and has taken deep root in us of hypocrisy and deception: very willingly do we empty out on the sins of ‘others’ but rather than persuading ourselves that this belongs as our own in each and every one of us.

[b] No, even this is not precise: it would be more like a formula of philosophy, and therefore extraneous to the burning love of the saints. These are the ones who on the example of our redeemer, have taken on the sin of this world, the sins of all human beings, in a continuing suffering of love, made sin in an infinite misery.

21. St. Catherine of Siena also, as St. Gemma, who was so innocent, yet thought of herself as the world’s greatest sinner, and she took almost as her personal motto: *I have sinned, O Lord, have mercy on me* !. And she presents herself almost breathlessly offering her prayer here: ‘I, so wretched, miserable.’ And she confesses in her lacerated soul: ... because the darkness of the perverse law, which I have always followed, I have dulled the eye of my mind.’ [Or., VII, p. 72] And she even sighed: ‘O most sweet love, I have not loved you all the time of my whole life’ [Or. VIII, p. 94]. And with a style of sincere imploration: ‘I confess. O eternal God, that I have always loved that which you hate and have hated that which You love.’ But today, I cry out in the presence of Your Mercy that You bestow on me to follow the troth with sincere heart.’ [Or XIX, p. 212].

³⁰ Op.cit., pp. 235-238, *passim*.

³¹ Op. Cit. P. 183, italics of the present author.

There is no surprise, then, that Gemma, in her suffering realization that she was full of sins, should be so desirous of presenting herself to the Sacrament of Penance, encouraged to do so also by her Guardian Angel³².

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Chapter 2

Gemma's 'Contemporaneity' in the Passion of Christ

The birth of Gemma's vocation to follow the Crucified Jesus, in order to expiate for the sins of humanity, seems to go back to 1896 [as she herself has stated] and is also connected with her experience of the Crucified. The Saint was just about 18 years of age but already much matured in her physical and spiritual sufferings, while other real and most challenging difficulties awaited her. This was not so much an apparition, but rather a deeper commotion that she experienced within, which she describes: 'In this same year, 1896, there began also in me another desire: I could experience within an increasing yearning to suffer and to be of assistance to Jesus in His sufferings. One day, I was taken over with such pain, i.e., in just riveting her eyes on Jesus Crucified, that she collapsed on to the ground.'³³ There has already been noted here that extraordinary mission of Gemma's life: her aspiration to love the Crucified Jesus and her yearning to suffer and – meaning through - assisting Jesus in His sufferings.³⁴

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³² Cf. her Diary, Tuesday, March 28, 1900, p. 211. See also the testimony of Cecilia in her Processes [*Summar. Super virtutibus*, n. xi, 8, p. 506.

³³ *Ecstasies*, p. 236. These texts are cited from the recent edition under the care of the Postulation of the Passionist Fathers. The texts of the *Positio on the Virtue* and of the 'New *Positio*' which are derived from the official edition of the Sacred Congregation of Rites [1927 & 1928]. There should also be noted the important volume called the *Positio super revisione scriptorum*, compiled by the then Postulator of her Cause, the well-known Fr. Luigi Besi, CP, 1917]

³⁴ The following reflections have been suggested by the new simple insights into phenomenological-existential effects and these are considered and taken as a modest attempt here, *ad experimentum* in order to interpret her participation in the reality experienced. Their scope is above all that of emphasizing on the one hand – on the existential level – the relationship of the two-fold *contemporaneity of Christ as Man*, to each and every Single human being, and of the humanity with the 'Single' human being to Christ the Man-God in that instant, moment of one's decision either for or against Christ, in the refusal or in the acceptance of the decision either for or against God, for or against Christ, in the chosen acceptance or the rejection of the grace of salvation.

1. What is being considered here is that concept of contemporaneity based on the reflections - resulting from Kierkegaard's 'read of God's Word'³⁵. This is the opposite side of that idea of Heidegger [if I might coin the phrase, 'the presence of the present']³⁶ – the Saint implies the cosmic presence to the Passion of Christ. Her humble, yet profound call of her assisting Jesus in His sufferings, expresses the sense of our problem: Jesus suffers always, suffers still, suffers now – for the sins of humanity; therefore he suffers and he will suffer every time that human beings freely sin, when each and every one of us might sin, until the end of the world.³⁷

2. There is a letter of Gemma sent to Fr. Germano [of April 22, 1901] which may be able to enlighten us a bit. To the questions of the saint: Jesus '... responds 'yes', but He has tears in His eyes. When I put myself to pray, no matter what prayer I offer, He looks at me and weeps [as it seems to me]³⁸. She mentions often that she sees often the tears of Jesus. And then follows some attempt at dialogue: 'I have never had the courage to ask anything of Him. Yesterday morning, ordered under obedience I was directed to ask Him something: I said to Him: 'Jesus, why do You cry?' And he responded; 'My daughter. Do not ask me this... He also made me cry... it seemed to me that He was holding me more closely than usual, and He kissed me on the forehead.'

³⁵ This is the 'Christian dialectic of Kierkegaard, in those two moments of a human being before God in the sphere of being – and of a human being before Jesus Christ - these are the only possible responses in Salvation History. : 'This is one's 'I' in front of Christ, and the 'potentiated I' from an immense concession of God, empowered for the immense importance that is granted to each by the fact that God also out of love for this 'I' for whom He has deigned to come to birth in the Incarnation, and then suffered and died for humanity. As is said above, further than the idea of God, more than the 'I' also here it is necessary to say: the greater the idea of Christ, the greater is the 'I'. An 'I' that which is qualitatively that which one is its measure. In the fact that Christ is my measure, there is expressed on the part of God with utmost evidence, the immense reality which such an 'I' has; because only in Christ is it true that God is the goal and the measure, or better, the measure and goal of every one. However, the greater is one's 'I' so much the more intensive is one's sin' [S. Kierkegaard, *Mortal Illness*, P. II; Ital. ed. 1972, pp. 216 ab].

³⁶ This philosophical expression, which is the 'essent' (essence), that indicates in H. his detachment from the disregarded essentialistic philosophies regarding being as the act of presence, and therefore means: the 'unhidden', or, The opening, or openness.... [etc, etc.]

All of this endless speculation is at the far end of those realities which St. Gemma presents to us, and this philosophical attempted connection has only that value to indicate the immediacy of presence, of the event, since while that of phenomenological ontology is beyond all dimensions – while that of Gemma is pregnant with the intensity of theological and mystical transcendence. These will be the very words of our Saint to show quite another penetration of the presence of the very Being of the Existing One.

³⁷ Translator's Note: this view might be rejected by Fr. K. Rahner, SJ. [cf. below, pp. 66 ff.]

³⁸ It is necessary to pay attention here: the saint's expressions [*it seems to me* - *this is how I see it* - *this is what it looks like to me*] and many other such expressions that are so frequent in Gemma, are not expressions of her doubts. It seems rather that the saint intends to refer the reality of the fact, i.e., of the phenomenon which she has present to herself; these are expressions expressing rather her 'caution' due to the humble conception that she has of herself and her respect for the doubts of others concerning her, especially those of her confessor, Monsignor Volpi.

The Saint reflected on all this and humbled herself before the suffering Jesus: 'I did not ask anything of Him, He continues always to cry.' And immediately she is deeply loved: 'If this had all been due to me, my Dad, that I am the one making Jesus cry so much³⁹!

3. What would I do? Who is worse than I am? And yet I have the courage to say Why does Jesus have to cry so? I would humble myself so much, because I consider myself culpable of thousands of iniquities', but why do I not fall into desperation because if Jesus is upset, I will go to my Mom, and I pray that she might say to Jesus that I will be good and I will no longer make Him cry.' It seems that she has some event in mind, the tears of Jesus for the sins of humanity, are what the saints see in the present [because she says that] she herself had caused this, and that she, too, had caused Jesus to weep, for indeed He always loves me, and leads me to experience this. This, too, is almost too strong.'

4. The effect that Gemma experiences ever increasing in her spirit is that thrust toward becoming a saint herself and to sharpen in herself her sense of compassion for the sufferings of Jesus, together with a deeper comprehension of her own sins. These words are the conclusion of that wonderful letter: '... After so many sins I recognize in Jesus my true Father, full of Mercy! ... Oh! When I see Jesus weeping, this pierces my own heart: I think... and think ... that with sin I have aggravated His deep oppression which reached its height in His Prayer in the Garden ... In that moment, Jesus sees all my sins, all my failings and at the same time the place that I would have occupied in hell, if the heart had not begged pardon for me... [pp. 152, ff.]. And the situation repeats itself under a different form, in the following Letter 58, after having exposed the exhaustion she finds herself in when she was alone, or when she was with stranger when these sorrowful phenomena of her participation and she invokes the help of Cecilia: 'O my beloved Dad, help me! From every part I see so many of His words verified. I continually weep, Jesus weeps, and my dear Mother [Cecilia] also weeps. I feel, my beloved Daddy, that if goes on this way, I will die and I will go to... [p. 155].

5. And here we are at the knot [nub; core; crux; gist; kernel; central point] of the matter, i.e., the fact that Christ, in those apparitions, appears really suffering: 'My poor Jesus! He made me remain alone for an hour, but then He came and presented Himself in this manner, *all bloody*, saying to me: I am Jesus of Fr. Germano! But I did not believe, and why? I fear always, ... always... [Diary August 1-2, 1900, p. 138]. Gemma is in control of herself and is in no way hallucinating. More

³⁹ Already in Letter 54, of April 5th, Good Friday, I had written: ... this morning, around 10:00 a.m., my heart sought ... and sought ... but found myself lacking. But that which came to me above all else is all that preceded, it was sorrow for sins: how strong is this suffering! If it were any greater I would not be able to survive...' [p. 146] this is noted also in her Autobiography' I have always experienced horror for sin...'[p. 234]

symptomatic again is the appearance of Wednesday of Holy Week, 1899 - almost in her immediate preparation for the reception of the stigmata, during her Holy Hour: 'I spent the entire hour praying and weeping, and finally, as tired as I was, I went to sit down; the suffering continued. I experienced myself recollecting a bit over all and after a little while, almost as though all at once, my strength left me! I stretched out prostrate on the ground, and I remained in that position for several hours.' 'My daughter', He said to me, see, these wounds that you have opened by yours sins, but now be consoled, because you have closed them all up because of your sorrow. Do not offend me anymore. Love Me, as I have always loved you. Love me! – he repeated this to me many times! [pp. 252, f.]

6. It seems judging from her *Notes in her Diary*, according to the chronology of the editors, that a phenomenon very much like this one, had happened on Monday of Holy Week, March 27 of that same year, 1899. Gemma was at home and had just finished making her penance from her Confession, when she experienced being shaken and she heard a voice: '... Just look at what state you have reduced Jesus by your sins!' I raised my eyes – the saint continues - and it seemed as though I saw... the Crucified Jesus, all bloody, and covered with wounds... Again, the same voice: ... but what evil did Jesus ever do to you? Why have you treated Him thus? Look at all these wounds which you have opened with your sins. Poor Jesus! He desired to suffer so much out of love for you, and you...??? That evening, Holy Friday, she heard the same voice: 'Just look at all these wounds that you have opened on Jesus with your sins, and you have healed them all with your sorrow...!' [p. 283].

7. Symptomatic in this sense is her 49th letter, in October 1900, to her Confessor. Gemma resisted Jesus who wanted to give her the wounds because she had received a prohibition from her Confessor, Monsignor Volpi, that she greatly feared that it was all a matter of diabolical hallucinations. And the Saint continues: And Jesus: 'I will show you that it is I, do not be afraid.' Then Jesus said: 'But what do you fear? Many times I have shown you who I am. What do you believe? Your doubts are displeasing to Me...!' I responded: But I doubt because others are doubting.

[a] This is the dialectic of her tension - for charity's sake, if you are indeed Jesus, make Yourself known right now; do you believe us. We cannot go ahead any further, neither I, nor my Confessor, nor those who are experts in such matters.' And with an incredible paradox, almost fearing confusing Jesus for the devil: I am so afraid, o Jesus, because I greatly fear being deceived by the Devil. I am so afraid, of deceiving the others.'

[b] The conclusion becomes dramatic. I was speaking and Jesus was looking at me, and He wanted me to look at His wounds, that poured out much blood, and He said to me: 'Come approach, look at these wounds, touch them. No,

be assured that I am not deceiving you.’ I wept but I did not draw closer and he often repeated: ‘No, I am not deceiving you, be sure of this. Tell your Confessor that he should do what he wants. From here on I am ready to make him understand these matters so clearly, that there will no longer be any doubt. ‘

[c] Then He began to speak but in seeing Jesus in that state, I felt so badly, and it seemed to me that I began to feel something in my hands and feet; but as soon as He was looking at me, I got up and went away immediately – I left Jesus and thus I obeyed and was content [p. 378]

8. We retain the reality of the phenomenon of the opened wounds and the invitation to touch them: therefore, it seems to be a matter of a present reality one of sensible verification: ‘Look at these wounds, touch them.’ – therefore is an external reality, present to her in her ecstasy, who goes away so that she would not be lacking in an obedience imposed upon her. These were the ‘phenomena’ which in Gemma, beginning with June 1899, were repeated in a form more or less complex, especially on the Thursdays and Fridays. However, in the years 1901-1903 these phenomena happened almost every day, as well as during the night, as we know from testimonies in her Cause. There is also more directly an accounting of her *Ecstasies*, and these phenomena are noted in her Autobiography and in her Diary. There is hardly even a single letter, or above all any recorded Ecstasies which do not present the suffering Jesus, which attracted the young girl in order to participate in His ‘Poor Jesus’... How many blows, poor Jesus! While there were never lacking. Those evil ones, but neither was there ever lacking Your patience. Leave Jesus alone ... Strike me instead, but not Jesus. Why do you want to take out your vengeance on Jesus? Take revenge on me... [E. 30, p. 45]

9. The realistic significance of the phenomenon is clear: for Gemma, it was simply a matter of fact, the real sufferings of Jesus Christ, that she sought for herself. The nature of the scope of this suffering of Gemma leads us to understand [to some extent!] the first part of the description of the impression upon her of the stigmata. This amounted to a relationship with a loving constellation: the recollection of human sins and of sufferings of Jesus, the sorrow of compassion and the yearning for expiation... all this created in the Saint the disposition of her PARTICIPATION in the Passion of Christ. This phenomenon presents three specific principle moments that stand in a relationship of causality and of PARTICIPATION on the part of the rather over-whelmed soul:

- the first: SORROW for personal Sins: it was evening: all of a sudden, more suddenly than usual, I experienced an internal dolor for my own sins; but I experienced this in so strong a manner, that I could hardly stand them any longer; that suffering reduced me, I would almost say, right there for dying;

- the second: the PARTICIPATION of the faculties of the soul: ‘after this, I experienced a calling to mind all the powers of my soul: the intellect did not seem to know my sins and the offense against God; the memory of them all came to me, and made me see all the torments that Jesus had suffered in order to save me; my will made me see all of these, and to detest them and to promise that I wanted to suffer as much to expiate them;
- thirdly, the total CONFORMITY of my soul: a mountain of thoughts flooded all into my mind: there were thoughts of sorrow, of love, of fear, of hope and of comfort.

10. Her lucidity of mind is very clear here - and this is the surprising aspect - to the intensity of her experience which was renewed each time that the stigmata was repeated, i.e., between Thursday and Friday. It is the Saint herself to attest to this, making clearer that it was mental suffering, that overcame even that of the wounds in her body: ‘I spent much time in this, and every Thursday about 8, and before, I would experience the customary dolors of my hands and my feet. This was all so strong and intense over my sins that this caused me greater sufferings and the pain in my hands and feet, of my head and heart; this suffering for my sins reduced me to a state of such sadness that I thought I would die.’ [p. 263] The sobriety of Gemma’s style makes us regret the advantage of her teaching that it has not been more accessible to many others – and we are [I am convinced!] the greater part – who do not enjoy the phenomena of PARTICIPATING ACTUALLY IN THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST!

11. There should be here one pertinent and singular observation in order to affirm the existential character of the PARTICIPATION of Gemma in the Passion of Jesus Christ, and it is that she speaks of her own sins, and that she honestly considered herself to have been the greatest among sinners. If it had been I who has made Jesus weep so much, what would I do? - who is any worse than I am? And still I have the courage to say: what would Jesus have to weep about? Anyone who like Gemma, becomes immersed in the Passion of Christ, does not look at anyone outside of him/herself, but rather recalls to mind on herself the fault of all, as Gemma did. This was to lead to her sharing in the suffering of Jesus Himself and of consoling Jesus for all, to assume unto herself the suffering of all, in order to console Jesus.

[a] What should be said? We find ourselves here in that most intimate, existential moment of the manifestation of the Passion of the Incarnate Word of God to His Church, which is the Society of the Saints, but which on earth is made up mostly of sinners. Therefore, when the Mystics and St. Gemma affirm that they see Jesus suffering, Who bears His Cross, Whose wounds are opened, which pour out an abundance of blood, etc. - all these phenomena lead us then to a real present

which is not some simple image, or recollection of the past. This will be a MYSTICAL PRESENT but it also must be always. This is already real on another level, that of the SACRAMENTS – such is the renewal, the RE-PRESENTATION of the SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS in the consecration of the Bread and Wine.

[b] Can we then speak also of MYSTICAL SUFFERINGS_ and therefore, the real sufferings that Gemma experienced of those real sufferings which CHRIST STILL SUFFERS for sins which human beings continually commit by the avalanche – and even at times, sometimes in disdain of the redemptive death of Jesus Christ. It does not seem to us that this interpretation is already, or should be condemned, if one truly wants to provide a plausible conception of that SIN HANDED ON by Christian spirituality in those mystical appearances attested to by Mystics and more in particular, as has been seen, by St. Gemma⁴⁰.

12. This is a symptomatic test of Gemma who seems to reducing her idea to the traditional explanation. Her Letter 57 [April 22 1901] to Fr. Germano has been re-read again and re-studied. St. Gemma wrote that Jesus ‘... did not respond to her in joy as He used to do – but now He responds to me indeed, but He now has tears in his eyes.

[a] As whenever I set to pray, no matter what prayer it is that I offer, He looks at me and weeps [by that I mean, it seems to me that I see Him with tear-filled eyes]. This then makes me cry. I never have the courage to ask Him anything, and so I said to Him: ‘Jesus, why do You weep?’ And He answered: ‘My daughter do not ask this of me... This made me weep even all the more. So I no longer asked him anything, but He continues always to cry. Is it not true, my loving Dad, that to remain united with Jesus I would say almost that it is like tasting the joy of Paradise?

[b] If this had indeed been me, beloved Father, is it I who make Jesus weep so much? What shall I do? ... Unfortunately, I know so well how weak I am, ungrateful toward Jesus: I have not observed as I should His laws; I have never carried out the resolutions made in confessions; I recognize my self as without merit, because I wasted the graces that Jesus granted me: I see myself full of demerits for my useless thoughts: I have no idea at all on how to mortify my eyes.

⁴⁰ In the first fascicle of her Diary, for Thursday, April 19, 1900, the following is recorded: ‘...At the time of recollection, there occurred as on many other occasions – my head seemed to go away and I found myself alone with Jesus who was suffering terrible pains. How could anyone see Jesus suffering and not help him? But I experienced then a great desire suffer in order to help him, and so I asked Jesus to grant me this grace. He contented me immediately and there took place that which happened other times: HE approached me, and he took from his own head his crown of thorns and placed it on my head...’ [pp. 165][cf. also pp. 192; 205, etc.]

Who could ever worse than I am? And yet, I have the courage to ask: ‘why would Jesus be crying?’

[c] I will humble myself to the very depths, because I recognize myself as culpable of a thousand iniquities, but as I do not want to fall into despair, because if it is I who upsets Jesus, I will go to my Mother and I will beg her that she might say to Jesus, that I will be good and that I will no longer make Him weep.

[d] And, if it is correct to call it this, she offers her explanation: ‘Oh, when I see Jesus weeping, this pierces my own heart; I think... and think ... that with sin I have made worse the oppression that he must encounter, and all this reached its peak in the garden.... in that instant, Jesus sees all my sins, all my failings, and at the same time he sees the place that I would have occupied in hell, if the heart of your Jesus had not besought pardon for me. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, no! no longer will I take it easy on myself, because I want with your grace to keep subjected my body to my will. Furthermore, o Jesus [this is my prayer] pardon me: I will make it up to you Jesus, by treating myself more like your servant, slave, and to put my shoulders to your cross...

[e] Jesus, my Jesus. I know that you want me to rise on high, very soon slipping again, and soon fall again into the swamp. Beloved Father, I cease now... [pp. 152. f.]⁴¹

13. However, the real meaning of this singular phenomenon of Jesus which appears here and now as suffering, bleeding profusely, weeping for all for all the sins that men and women, rejecting His Grace, continues to need deciphering. Gemma writes in full agreement with the Tradition: ‘... Jesus sees all my sins and sees the place that I would have occupied in hell – it is certain that not only as the Eternal Word, but also of the Man-God, now in glory seated at the right hand of God. [cf. *Mystici Corporis*, # 75; CCC # 478; cf. below, p. 62]

[a] Jesus Christ embraces from the beginning to the end, the story not only of humanity, but of each and every individual in particular. It can also be believed – but the Gospel does not say so specifically - that the Christ in the Garden had also seen the sins of all human beings and suffered for them His sweat of Blood.

⁴¹ Such sentiments are found also in her Autobiography: ‘Every Thursday, I went on making my Holy Hour, and it occurred to me at times that this hour was last even 2 hours because I was with Jesus, and almost always He made me a part of that sadness which He experienced in the Garden, at the sight of so many of my sins, and those of the whole world, such a sadness that it might indeed be compared to the Agony of death [p. 256].

This experience of a CONTEMPORANEITY in the real suffering of Christ in His Passion, goes back in the Christian tradition at least to Origen. In his VII homily Of Leviticus §2: ‘My Savior now also laments for my sins!’ This text is quoted by Kierkegaard in his theological reflections in the Diary of his maturity [X. A, 131]

[b] For this reason, Jesus desired that Gemma should REPEAT IN HERSELF the physical and moral sufferings of His Passion. Jesus continued: 'If it is true that the affection that so many times you have expressed that you would serve Me in your heart, I wish now that you should bear in yourself, My sculptured image. Look at Me you will see Me pierced, derided by all, dead on the Cross, and I invite you to die on the Cross with Me [Letter 64, p. 169].

[c] Therefore, the Christ who appeared to her as weeping, dying even to the outpouring of His blood, crucified: all this, RENEWS MYSTICALLY, AND THEREFORE REALLY [?], the sufferings of the passion for our sins. therefore, at every human sin committed through history, Jesus suffers mystically and therefore really – even today [?] STILL TODAY AS HE SUFFERED YESTERDAY AND AS HE WILL SUFFER TOMORROW. It is a matter that for Christ- the Man-God – there is a real synthesis of the finite and the Infinite, of time and eternity ... the dimensions of time are not experienced as in us: in fact, in human beings, the present must be realized, to be separated, and not to be separated from the past and to tend toward the future.

14. In Christ, as humanity is conjoined really to eternity in which there is fulfilled the divine eschatology of existence and of Salvation History. In this manner, one might [?] then say that the three elements of time [dimensions, parts...] co-exist distinct and yet simultaneous in the human conscientiousness of the Glorious Jesus, as God and the Divine Word He sees all from on high, FROM THE REFUGE OF ETERNITY [*in arce aeternitatis*⁴²]. Hence, CAN IT BE MAINTAINED THAT JESUS CHRIST CONTINUES MYSTICALLY AND THEREFORE, REALLY, HIS REDEMPTION AND THEREFORE ALSO TO SUFFER MYSTICALLY AND THEREFORE REALLY - FOR THE SINS OF HUMANITY? For Christ, the unfolding of time in human history and in particular, in Church History, cannot be some kind of indifferent spectacle, as would be a kind of travel film that is already mounted and being shown – it remains and is present at every moment. There is to be kept in mind here the liberty of humanity which divine grace continues to stimulate and respect.

15. Therefore, does Christ 'as man' continue to suffer? Or, is this idea only the scene for privileged mystics, in their re-presentation of an image from the distant past? If this latter were the case, would not part of the mystical call to declare this to the whole church in their writings, from the outset? Why is it, then, that all the mystics insist on describing the 'phenomenon' in terms bespeaking of a REAL PRESENCE in which ALL PARTICIPATE with their own personal sharing in this

⁴² This is a beautiful expression of St. Thomas Aquinas, and it has a metaphysical meaning: *But God is totally outside the order of time, as thought constituted 'in the bulwark of eternity', which is that all being is simultaneous, to Whom lies subject the entire unfolding of time according to His one and simple view...*[Comm. In Periherm. Book I, c. 9, *Lectio* 14, ed. Leon. I, fol. 70 a]. It is a pity that we cannot contemplate the more deeply here this profound doctrine of the Angelic Doctor. [cf. "OT Saints" in the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ].

suffering, and their own dolor? In the final analysis the problem as it arises so often in the writings of the mystics, does it have any real meaning? The answer of some is in the affirmative, in that it all seems logical to some scholars, but it is doubted that in the present level of studying these matters anyone can give a clear description of them: it is often hoped that some superior intelligence, with great spiritual and intellectual acumen, might fathom ever further the depths of these privileged writings. The modest present attempt here is inspired to look toward a kind of EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS of both time and space of true freedom understood in this sense, if it might be expressed in such a manner. There is always the requirement of keeping active this possibility, in that human freedom is the principle for each one of us, from birth until death. Thus, on the EXISTENTIAL LEVEL – NOT CERTAINLY, OBVIOUSLY, ON THE METAPHYSICAL LEVEL – every decision is a choice of liberty ever new on the part of human beings, i.e., of each and every SINGLE individual .

16. There comes to mind here that spontaneous reference to the sudden expression that comes to the fore in the incomparable commentary on the Agony of Jesus in the Garden as this is found in Pascal's *The Mystery of Jesus*⁴³. In the other phases of the Passion, it is revealed how human beings torment Jesus – but, here, as Pascal emphasizes, in the Garden, this is torment Jesus experienced deeply within His own being. He uselessly seeks the aid of the three Apostles very dear to Him, but they are all asleep. Thus Jesus experiences being totally abandoned by all in the horror of that terrible night, to the mysterious Wrath of the Father. And this is the expression that Pascal jots down so unexpectedly: '*... Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world: one should not sleep during this present time.* According to an exegete of modern vintage this text is susceptible to at least a two-fold interpretation:

[a] Even though the Agony of Jesus is a 'localized' fact in the past, and also regarding place [the Garden] nonetheless, this Agony, by its influence, is co-extensive to the entire human history;

[b] Since Jesus is the only Savior, He does not at all prolong His agony in His disciples, as is demonstrated in so many experiences beginning with St. Paul. [Ga 6:17: *...From, now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body...* Note in NAB: The marks of Jesus: slaves – soldiers - were often branded by marks [*stigmata* in Greek] - burned into their flesh to show to whom

⁴³ cf. A. Feuillet, *L'Agonie de Gethsémani. Enquête exégétique et théologique suivie d'une étude du Mystère de Jésus*, de Pascal. Paris: 1977, p. 280. Different from St. Gemma and Fr. Pio, in the *Mystery of Jesus*, according to Steinmann: '...the images are non-existent, lost in the Night. Jesus Christ has not been seen, He is simply more profoundly understood. [cf. J. Steinmann, *The Three Nights of Pascal*. Paris 1962, p. 51] . However, is there not any mention in Pascal the representation of the sleeping Apostles, the recollection of Christ there all alone, and in the night that so totally envelops both the events and the persons involved in them...?'

they belonged; so also were devotees of pagan gods. Paul implies that instead of outdated circumcision, his body bears the scars: of his apostolic labors (2 Co 11:22-31); such as floggings (Ac 16:22; 2 Co 11:25) and stoning's (Ac 14:19) that mark him, wound him, as one belonging to Jesus Christ who suffered (cf. Rm 6:3; 2 Co 4:10; Col 1:24) and will protect His own].

What can be said to all this? One is almost tempted to find support in the first view here, if the Author had not added his own explanation: '... Jesus is dead and suffered much for the sins of all human beings of all times.' However, Gemma notes that Jesus RIGHT NOW in the time of her ecstasy – Jesus is suffering, weeping, lamenting, in distress... whenever human beings sin and because they continue to sin, as has been seen.

17. It seems to us, though, to be more faithful [even literally] to the profound rhythm to the sense generated by Pascal, expressly recorded above. There has not been quoted here what may be read in a letter of St. Fr. Pio of Pietrelcina, of March 19 1913] to his spiritual director: given the exceptional importance of the text because of its similarity with the situation of the Mystic of Lucca, who had preceded him with expressions that are even more vehement. The meek Gemma was remembered in a testimony of her Aunt Cecilia: 'We in the Church, admonished Gemma, are not what we should be. If you could only see how the Angels and the Seraphim are all around the Altar, no one would act as they may now. One time, Gemma told me that Jesus wanted her to pray much for priests and one day she even said: My daughter, see, if it were not out of respect for these Angels who stand about Me, how many lightning bolts would fulminate from this altar! And she was referring to that time as they were celebrating Mass. And she prayed often for Priests so much that He even came to sweating blood, one month when she felt into it, in August. She used to say to me at times: 'I saw this when they were dragging the priests in bonds, here and there. And there was a continuing prayer for them, the Priests⁴⁴.

18. We believe that it is opportune here to recall those testimonies regarding St. Fr. Pio, in their entirety, dividing them into four paragraphs, following as with St. Gemma, the profound rhythm of the text:

⁴⁴ In the Vatican *Summarium*, N. VII: *Concerning Her Heroic Charity In God*, N. 18, F. P. 332:

This theme was treated the more deeply in the *response to the observations*, *New Position*, pp. 90,ff., with reference to the revelations of St. Brigit, St. Madeline de Pazzi, St. Paul of the Cross... Still again in the Process, her Aunt Cecilia attests that Gemma said to her one day: Aunt, please pray for a poor priest who does not mention a grave sin of his in confession, and yet celebrates Mass; and I know further that she spoke of this to Monsignor Volpi, and when that priest finally did go to confession, rather than accuse himself of his sin, he denied it. The Monsignor said to him: 'And yet a holy soul said to me that you in going to confession never mention a sin of yours out of shame.; Then the priest brought down into tears and finally made a complete confession. [mr. IX, *Concerning her Heroic Prudence*, § IX, pp. 461, f.].

[a] THE VISION: 'It was on Friday morning, while I was still in bed, that Jesus appeared to me. He was really melancholic and disfigured. He showed me a great multitude of religious and secular priests, among whom were a number of ecclesiastical dignitaries. Among these, there were those who were celebrating, those who were preparing and some were removing their sacred vestments. Jesus' visage deeply moved me due to His evident anguish. I received no response from Him. However, His visage was turned toward those priests and as though He became tired looking at them, He withdraws from looking any further He rose up before me to my great horror, two tear drops rolled down my cheeks. He then distanced Himself from that crowd of priests with a terrible expression of disgust. And of disdain on His face, crying out: 'Butchers!'

[b] JESUS' EXPLANATION: the Saint is recorded to this account of Jesus speaking to him: '... And after having turned toward me, He said: My Son, do not believe that my Agony lasted for only three hours – no, I will be in this state by reason of those souls the most benefitted by Me, IN AGONY UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD. During the time of My Agony, my son, there is no need to sleep. My soul' is seeking for some drop of human piety, but they ALSO leave Me alone under the weight of their indifference⁴⁵. The ingratitude and the sleep of my ministers render to me the most heavy agony. Alas! How badly they correspond to My love! That which afflicts Me is that these men, in their indifference, add their own distaste and incredulity. How many times have I been right on the verge of sending out a bolt of lightning, if I had not been worshipped by the Angels and by those souls in love with Me. .. write to our Spiritual Father and tell him all that you have seen and have experienced from me this morning....'

[c] THE SECRET PART OF THE MESSAGE: 'Jesus continued on, but that which he said I can never be allowed to reveal it to any creature in this world...

[d] THE PARTICIPATION AND APPREHENSION OF St. Padre PIO: 'This Apparition filled me with such bodily suffering, but even more that of the soul, that for the entire day I was prostrate, and I would have believed I was dying if the most sweet Jesus had not already revealed all this to me ... Jesus is right. These disgraceful brothers of ours correspond to the love of Jesus by throwing themselves open-armed into the infamous sect of Masonic influence. Let us pray for them so that the Lord might illumine their minds and touch their hearts.' There follow then in his text, a few words of encouragement for the Provincial for his task of re-organizing the Capuchin Province '... The good of our Province, the fatigue, the hardships, the disturbances – let him take care not to lose heart. Jesus will sustain him.' And he concludes: 'The war with these hardships continually intensifies, but with God's help, I will not fear them.' Therefore, I believe that it is possible to say

⁴⁵ Here there may be noted a very close likeness with the text of Pascal, noted above.

here that Baise Pascal, St. Gemma and St. Fr. Pio all are in the same line of an intense reality of the actual presence that we might call a two-fold CONTEMPORANEITY:

[i] THE CONTEMPORANEITY, OR THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN ALL OF HUMAN HISTORY: Jesus is suffering for and in us even unto the end of time, this world, the Son of Man will pronounce judgment on history and ‘the Prince of this world’ will be cast forever into the exterior darkness, when ‘the Great Babylon’ will be cast down for ever, and there will come down from Heaven the New Jerusalem [Rv 18:2; 21].

[ii] THE (1) *CONTEMPORANEITY* OR THE PRESENCE OF BELIEVERS, OF EACH ONE OF US, TO THE SUFFERINGS WHICH CHRIST HAD ENDURED FOR OUR SINS AND THOSE OF THE ENTIRE WORLD. In Jesus Christ there is (2) *a CONTEMPORANEITY OF SOLIDARITY* and OF MERCY for the sinners of the world as a continuation in the existential in the existential sense, a REAL MYSTICAL CONTINUATION of His Passion. Among the believers, there is a CONTEMPORANEITY OF REPENTANCE and of EXPIATION FOR OUR SINS AND THOSE OF THE ENTIRE WORLD, and all in CONFORMITY ACTUAL WITH HIS PASSION, i.e., PARTICIPATION as an ACTIVE PRESENCE OF REPARATION.

19. The theological truth of the divine transcendence and of God’s impassibility seems to be used to remain protected in these discussions. Furthermore, as a consequence that of Jesus Christ and His various ‘births’ of Jesus Christ - [commemorated in some of the Monasteries of old in the three Christmas Masses: Mid-night, Dawn, During the Day]:

- the eternal birth of the Eternal Womb [Jn 1:1 – [His ‘Pre-Existence’] - [Mid-Night Mass];
- the birth from Mary at Dawn, in her virginal delivery [Lk 2:1] – [Mass at Dawn];
- the on-going birth of the Trinity in the souls of those who keep the Lord’s word [1 Jn 3:24] – Mass. during the Day].

[a] There is a powerful commentary on all this in Eckhart as found in Tauler – when Transcendence and immanence – i.e., God and creatures – here come into contact and almost intersect: ‘... Because God Himself has no other creature so capable, as to pour out and inscribe the very basis of His own essence, as in that work which He accomplished in which He spiritually generates Himself in each and every soul. For this generation of God in the human soul, as earlier I have

mentioned quite often, is nothing other than the manifestation of Himself in a new way, in a certain new cognition and intelligence...⁴⁶

[b] But for Christ this holds for a very special reason: with His Incarnation and with the single mysteries of His Life, the Eternal Word has contracted in Christ a PARTICULAR SITUATION OF PERTAINING TO TIME, which is human history. This in fact, constitutes the oft-mentioned OPPORTUNE TIME [*Kairos*] OF SALVATION. This NEW SITUATION is something new both for the Incarnate Word, destined for His Paschal Mystery – as well as for each human being called through his/ her own freedom to a CERTAIN FREE PARTICIPATION in the Passion of Christ. This doctrine does not seem to draw opposition: it is through HIS PASSION AND DEATH, HIS PASCHAL MYSTERY THAT CHRIST HAS DELIVERED HUMANITY FROM SIN – AND IT IS THROUGH CONFORMITY WITH THE *CHRISTUS PATIENS* that the sinner becomes freed of sin and expiates the penalty due to each one's own faults.

20. The New EXISTENTIAL SITUATION – which in the present case under discussion has been suggested by the so-called 'MYSTICAL PHENOMENA' of Gemma, but the results are applicable in situations of similar Mystical Phenomena – so this intends to propose, or rather to speak, as already the spontaneous Christian piety of the traditional catechesis of CONFORMITY TO THE *CHRISTUS PATIENS*' .

[a] This is both a deeper and more concrete reflection on the originality of being that pertains to each human freedom – and consequently, at the same time, a contemplation of THE NEW QUALITY OF HUMAN TIME as well as THE HUMAN SPACE FOR FREEDOM: all of this has been assumed with the coming of Jesus. The Story of Christ is not the same as that of any other major personality of past ages [such as Alexander, Socrates, Napoleon] – who shook the world. These personalities have passed by and human history has gone on, as is evident; these personalities completed their time, and thus Lessing's principle is applicable here: 'Truths that are merely contingent cannot become the point of departure for an eternal decision!'

[b] The events of profane and passing history 'become' through a decision of human beings – but, once that have taken place they do not come again, they pass by forever, and need to cede their places to what is still becoming accomplished by someone else.

[c] The Events of Sacred History, on the other hand retain for all the protagonists the freedom of God and the freedom of the faithful and all human beings – God with humanity and humanity with God. For all these, the Man-God

⁴⁶ D. Joannis Tauleri, *Sermones de Tempore et de Sanctis reliqua eius Opera*, by R. F. Surio, a Carthusian, translated into a Latin Sermon, at Cologne and again at Macerata 1603. *On the Nativity of the Lord*, Sermon I, p. 45 – cf. also p. 40, especially p. 309.

remains the Redeemer and each human being remains a 'sinner' – these meet at the right time, in the opportune moment [the *kairos*] for redemption and for on-going conversion.

[d] The sudden appearance of freedom in time breaks open the relentless continuity of time and impedes that time can ever raise to the level of being co-extensive with being itself, or that it could ever become identified with it⁴⁷. This idea is generally acceptable to believers.

21. In simple terms, it is a matter of clarifying a bit that sacred History is a 'BECOMING' in the Plan of salvation unto the end of the world – and this that 'BECOMING' is the work of Freedom which gives to humanity the possibility of an alternative, either for or against God – either for or against JESUS CHRIST.

[a] Jesus, as Man-God, Savior and Redeemer surely is not indifferent to the quality of the choices of human beings and rejoices when each one chooses to be for God, and suffers whenever one turns against God. Right here it is a matter

of asking ourselves whether Christ is still IMPLICATED in the available time of human history, or if that which continues to unfold in our lives, which continue to move ahead in authentic openness to the freedom. The question needs to be asked whether one's personal history, whether one's human freedom remains disposed toward God and whether this the real possibility of each one's freedom itself, Who should be the only ever truly new openness to emerge in one's personal history.

[b] In the Thomistic [I-II, 109, aa. 3, 3, 6] world, this is treated as a certain EXISTENTIAL INDEPENDENCE- which God himself respects because He created human freedom this way. He respected these principles even with regard to the future Mother of His Divine Son, the Eternal Word. For her part, she awaited Him and reflected before uttering her initial *fiat* of her free and full consent, as the Handmaid of the Lord [Lk 1:26, ff.].

[c] A few texts from I-II, q 109:

I answer that, Man's nature may be looked at in two ways: first, in its integrity, as it was in our first parent before sin; secondly, as it is corrupted in us after the sin of our first parent.

⁴⁷ This is so different from what is sacrosanct in much modern thought, which, particularly after Kant, proceeds to dissolve being into appearance, and eventually arrives with Heidegger, to identifying time with being those, thereby removing, i.e., suppressing even to the very last end that decisive quality which is freedom. In Heidegger, in contrast, 'the essence of truth is freedom', i.e., the presence in the present' [*Die Anwesenheit des Anwesenden*, which is the present being, or to appear as identical to being. [cf. *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, Frankfurt, a. M 1949, pp. 18, ff.]

Now in both states human nature needs the help of God as First Mover, to do or wish any good whatsoever, as stated above (Article [1]). But in the state of integrity, as regards the sufficiency of the operative power, man by his natural endowments could wish and do the good proportionate to his nature, such as the good of acquired virtue; but not surpassing good, as the good of infused virtue.

But in the state of corrupt nature, man falls short of what he could do by his nature, so that he is unable to fulfill it by his own natural powers. Yet because human nature is not altogether corrupted by sin, so as to be shorn of every natural good, even in the state of corrupted nature it can, by virtue of its natural endowments, work some particular good, as to build dwellings, plant vineyards, and the like; yet it cannot do all the good natural to it, so as to fall short in nothing; just as a sick man can of himself make some movements, yet he cannot be perfectly moved with the movements of one in health, unless by the help of medicine he be cured.

And thus in the state of perfect nature man needs a gratuitous strength superadded to natural strength for one reason, viz. in order to do and wish supernatural good; but for two reasons, in the state of corrupt nature, viz. in order to be healed [from], and furthermore in order to carry out works of supernatural virtue [*for*], which are meritorious. Beyond this, in both states man needs the Divine help, that he may be moved to act well. [a. 2]

I answer that, As was said above (FP, Question [60], Article [5]), where the various opinions concerning the natural love of the angels were set forth, man in a state of perfect nature, could by his natural power, do the good natural to him without the addition of any gratuitous gift, though not without the help of God moving him. Now to love God above all things is natural to man and to every nature, not only rational but irrational, and even to inanimate nature according to the manner of love which can belong to each creature. And the reason of this is that it is natural to all to seek and love things according as they are naturally fit (to be sought and loved) since "all things act according as they are naturally fit" as stated in Phys. ii, 8. Now it is manifest that the good of the part is for the good of the whole; hence everything, by its natural appetite and love, loves its own proper good on account of the common good of the whole universe, which is God. Hence Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv) that "God leads everything to love of Himself." Hence in the state of perfect nature man referred the love of himself and of all other things to the love of God as to its end; and thus he loved God more than himself and above all things.

But in the state of corrupt nature man falls short of this in the appetite of his rational will, which, unless it is cured by God's grace, follows its private good, on account of the corruption of nature. And hence we must say that in the state of perfect nature man did not need the gift of grace added to his natural endowments, in order to love God above all things naturally, although he needed God's help to

move him to it; but in the state of corrupt nature man needs, even for this, the help of grace to heal his nature. [a.3]

I answer that, The preparation of the human will for good is twofold: the first, whereby it is prepared to operate rightly and to enjoy God; and this preparation of the will cannot take place without the habitual gift of grace, which is the principle of meritorious works, as stated above (Article [5]).

There is a second way in which the human will may be taken to be prepared for the gift of habitual grace itself. Now in order that man prepare himself to receive this gift, it is not necessary to presuppose any further habitual gift in the soul, otherwise we should go on to infinity. But we must presuppose a gratuitous gift of God, Who moves the soul inwardly or inspires the good wish. For in these two ways do we need the Divine assistance, as stated above (Articles [2], 3).

Now that we need the help of God to move us, is manifest. For since every agent acts for an end, every cause must direct its effect to its end, and hence since the order of ends is according to the order of agents or movers, man must be directed to the last end by the motion of the first mover, and to the proximate end by the motion of any of the subordinate movers; as the spirit of the soldier is bent towards seeking the victory by the motion of the leader of the army—and towards following the standard of a regiment by the motion of the standard-bearer.

And thus since God is the First Mover, simply, it is by His motion that everything seeks to be likened to God in its own way. Hence Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv) that "God turns all to Himself." But He directs righteous men to Himself as to a special end, which they seek, and to which they wish to cling, according to Ps. 72:28, "it is good for Me to adhere to my God." And that they are "turned" to God can only spring from God's having "turned" them. Now to prepare oneself for grace is, as it were, to be turned to God; just as, whoever has his eyes turned away from the light of the sun, prepares himself to receive the sun's light, by turning his eyes towards the sun. Hence it is clear that man cannot prepare himself to receive the light of grace except by the gratuitous help of God moving him inwardly. [a. 6] ⁴⁸

⁴⁸ It is clear that under the metaphysical aspect, also human freedom depends upon the divine causality, as the Secondary Cause would depend on the Primary Cause [i.e. God Himself]. This is so for the free cause in order to be genuinely free, in order to act freely and also to liberate itself from all shackles that would interfere, this is also in order to become ever more free in the sacrifice for the independence of that freedom according to the explicit teaching of Jesus Himself: "*The Truth will make you free!*" [Jn 8:32]. In order to be more explicit, while for the effects of natural causes, the divine influence falls upon their *neutrality* – for spiritual being this divine influence falls upon their rational freedom. Also grace, as St. Thomas teaches, is infused in order to reinforce one's freedom and in order to render one ever more free. [cf. I-II, q. 109, aa. 2, 3, 46].

22. In fact, at the first Annunciation of the Angel, Mary was deeply disturbed at this word and wondered what it meant [v. 22]. Once she understood the purpose of this divine visitation, she speaks directly to the Heavenly Messenger, presenting to the Angel of the Lord the profound doubt on her call to Virginité: *How can this be, since I do not know man?* [v. 34]. And only after having received the reassurance from the Angel, Mary offers her consent: *Let it be done to me according to Your word.* [v. 38]. Surely, according to our manner of speaking and also of understanding [metaphorically; analogically], God Himself has rejoiced over the Daughter of Sion and here, over her consent. If this is so, then with all the more reason, why can it not also be admitted that Jesus Christ, the God-Man in Glory, as Man in His divine presence in the passing of time, not also rejoice when a human soul with such love, goes to him, and rather than saddening Him, and bring more suffering, as occurs when a human being through sin distances him/ herself from Him?

23. Without launching here into an excessively technical and immensely complex discourse [which is that experienced in any philosophical pondering of the nature and structure of time], I think that there may not be offered any more difficulty as to be noted that distinction BETWEEN PHYSICAL TIME AND HISTORICAL TIME – BETWEEN COSMIC TIME AND HUMAN TIME – and we would add here, that distinction between NATURAL TIME AND SUPER -NATURAL TIME? Such a distinction seems to emerge from the diverse quality of the two fields, that of NATURE and that of GRACE. This is understood in the sense that PHYSICAL time presents itself as the following along the course of the development of natural phenomena. This involves that continuity of becoming in the physical processes. HUMAN time, on the other hand, is realized in the history of entire peoples and of the single individuals of these peoples in virtue of that quality of the decisions of their free choices: therefore, this proceeds by leaps and bounds, while the rupture of the projects of activity and the crises resultant u-on DECISIONS of choice. This is a proceeding by leaps and bounds also because of the disagreements, the struggles, the revolutions ... all of which are inevitably inter-woven in human history, which is as a result from that which has been continued and discontinued. The reason is that the TIME for all this is in its HUMAN time and included in it PHYSICAL time. Discontinuity occurs in order to break into some of the decisions of the freedom exercised.

24. With the coming of Jesus Christ, HUMAN time acquires a new INTERIOR RELATIONSHIP, i.e., it is inserted into eternity which is proper to the DIVINITY. As a consequence [I believe one can say] with the DISAPPEARANCE OF THE EXTERIOR PRESENCE of Jesus Christ from the human scene of world history, HIS REAL PRESENCE CANNOT BE ANNULLED. Even though such Presence of His remains INVISIBLE both to the world and to human history. Therefore, He is never absent from the events of history. This seems to be indisputable: therefore, to some it seems opportune and legitimate to conclude that the real 'NOW' of the CONTINUED

PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE CHURCH, in the happenings of its historical reality, there is never removed, but rather this is sustained from all ETERNITY. In this CONTINUED PRESENCE, the Humanity of Jesus Christ has been assumed and glorified, and so this GLORY NEITHER DENIES NOR DESTROYS, BUT SUSTAINS AND ILLUMINATES ON THE SOTERIOLOGICAL PLANE A PRESENCE AND A PARTICIPATION IN A NEW AND REAL SUFFERING OF THE MAN CHRIST FOR THE SINS THAT ARE STILL BEING COMMITTED EVEN TO THE END OF THIS HISTORICAL AGE WHICH WILL BE CLOSED IN THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

25. So now, in the Promise of Christ which He made, even while ascending to His Father, REMAINS EVER-PRESENT IN HIS CHURCH [cf. Mt 28:20], SEEMS IMPLICIT THAT HE MIGHT STILL SUFFER IN SOME WAY FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD AND ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF CHRISTIANS.

[a] And so, since these sins attain through time the Man-God – who lives in eternity and these sins merit a penalty of eternal damnation, so, took they realize – if it can put this way - a new type of EXISTENTIAL PRESENCE – some form of ETERNAL ACTUALITY. In this HUMAN time reaches eternity and the perverse actions of human beings effectively offend not only God but also and above all – if this can be said – the Man-God, Jesus Christ. [The ‘dimensions’ of sin in some reflections are presented as: Theological; Christological; Pneumatological; Ecclesial; Eschatological; Society; and each sinner him/ herself].

[b] Jesus Christ of course remains united to His human nature in glory, and in virtue of His Glorified Humanity also attains HISTORICAL time, not simply as a passive spectator in the reality of His human nature, but as the Savior of the world, His risen body being retained united eternally in glory, to His Divine Person.

[c] Jesus remains until the end of time for the definitive response of each and every human being to His grace, and as He may rejoice when a believer loves Him, and remains perseveringly faithful to him, in like manner would He not suffer when a human being offends Him? THERE ARE THOSE WHO STAUNCHLY MAINTAIN THAT JESUS CHRIST SUFFERS WHENEVER A SINNER OFFENDS HIM SINCE IT IS IN THE PERIOD OF HISTORIC TIME THAT HUMANITY OFFENDS GOD AND CHRIST – AND THIS IS THE EXISTENTIAL AND CONCRETE TIME OF THE EXERCISE OF HUMAN FREEDOM. DURING HIS/ HER EARTHY EXISTENCE.

26. In another sense, i.e., in that of ABSOLUTE PERFECTION, and therefore in the OMNISCIENCE of God, every created aspect and event are PRESENT to His glance, because nothing could ever be or occur without the influx of the divine Omnipotence. This means there remains the fact [and this is also a truth of the faith of the believer] that a human being is able to choose between real good and evil. This has been shown most clearly from the unfolding of human history from its initial

catastrophe. It is necessary to recognize that as in the *fiat* of Mary, at the Annunciation of the Angel [Lk 2] that the decision of a free creature has its own ontological weight, at the MOMENT OF ONE'S DECISION, there exists what theologians call this ACTIVE POSSIBILITY of HUMAN FREEDOM.

27. The precise action of the offense of sin a human being commits in the VERY INSTANT OF HIS/HER FREE CHOICE Prior to this, this offense was non-existent – it takes place IN THAT PRECISE MOMENT OF TIME [*in illo tempore*] that the evil is accomplished and not before that. There is reflected also that from the point of a THEOLOGICAL-MYSTICAL POINT OF VIEW, sin is the only reality that a human being has of his/her own doing and with this each sinner rebels against God, distrusts Him; disgusts Him, disdains Him – and disdains the Passion of Christ which nonetheless has offered redemption from all sin. Therefore, the fact that the soul of Christ in the Garden, by means of His infused Knowledge was able to know all the sins of the entire human race of all time [PIUS XIIth TAUGHT THAT DUE TO HIS HYPOSTATIC UNION, JESUS CHRIST 'KNEW' ALL FROM THE MOMENT OF HIS CONCEPTION⁴⁹], and which will be committed even to the end of time - all this does not eliminate but presupposes the PROPER QUALITY of the disorder inherent in each and every sin. Each one also acts with his/her own newness, or their actions take place right NOW, and in THIS VERY HOUR. This signifies not only that this action could take place prior to this, as well as after it, but it needs to be kept in mind but it also COULD HAVE NOT HAPPENED. Therefore, each person becomes responsible, either in merit or is culpable, in that HOUR, MOMENT, INSTANT in which the sinner expresses and acts on his/her decision.

28. Therefore, it seems that it would be a minimalist solution to deny that in reality for the sins of humanity, Jesus Christ now in His glory, and can no longer suffer as in His human nature, because HE HAS ALREADY SUFFERED FOR ALL THE SINS OF HUMAN HISTORY, which He had already foreseen one by one... for mine

⁴⁹ In *Mystici Corporis*, paragraph 75, June 1943, Pope Pius XII states that Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision in his humanity from the first moment of conception “and in that vision all the members of His Mystical Body were continually and unceasingly present to Him, and He embraced them with His redeeming love.” Pope Pius then spontaneously bursts into a prayer of adoration. Of course, in Mary's womb, Jesus could not communicate his knowledge and love:

... But the knowledge and love of our Divine Redeemer, of which we were the object from the first moment of His Incarnation, exceed all that the human intellect can hope to grasp. For hardly was He conceived in the womb of the Mother of God, when He began to enjoy the Beatific Vision, and in that vision all the members of His Mystical Body were continually and unceasingly present to Him, and He embraced them with His redeeming love. O marvelous condescension of divine love for us! O inestimable dispensation of boundless charity! In the crib, on the Cross, in the unending glory of the Father, Christ has all the members of the Church present before Him and united to Him in a much clearer and more loving manner than that of a mother who clasps her child to her breast, or than that with which a man knows and loves himself... [# 75]

and yours [as Gemma would say] - As well as those of each one and also due to the special level of malice in each one⁵⁰.

[a] This individual malice is in act only at that very moment of the commission of the sin itself, and this implies a free action which could have not been [and should have not ever taken place!], and the existence of which is HERE AND NOW the sinner alone is the responsible cause.

[b] However, since sin is indeed an action, which indeed happens at a specific time and willed by a finite will, this does achieve the sense of eternity with its implications of rebellion: thus the Man-God, precisely as SUCH pertains always to that eon of the development of human history, awaits, expects from each human being, an attitude and action of correspondence to His offer of Redemption from His Paschal Mystery.

[c] However, since Christ rejoices when saints flourish, so also would He suffer when sinners infest their malice. THAT PRESENCE OF SIN IN GETHSEMANE WAS A KIND OF REPRESENTATIVE PRE-VISION – BUT, THIS WOULD NOT YET BE THAT CONTEMPORANEITY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF VISION. This corresponds to the unfolding, working it all out in act, even to being exhausted on the plane of Divine Providence, World History and the History of the Church.

[d] However, the vision which Christ has right now, and in every moment, regarding the actions of human freedom whom He loves and who goes on sinning, ALWAYS HAS A REAL [*metaphysical?*] – AND RE-PRESENTATIVE CHARACTER [*mystical?*]

⁵⁰ Gemma Galgani: ‘... As the Man-God in glory is able in His human nature suffer in His human nature because of the sins of humanity – human beings are not able to explain this but this is the conviction expressed in the habitual language of Christian piety. It is Christ Himself who continuously has said this to mystics: all who would want to salvage the objective truth of all this, which is related by the mystics of the Church, they all maintain that they could see and even experience immediately from and in Jesus Himself those so-called visions and heavenly communications, thus participating in those mental and corporal sufferings which He says and makes clear that He suffers before their very eyes and at the same time, asks them to be involved in these by their participation...’

EXCURSUS I

The Trinitarian Aspect of the Cross of Jesus Christ or the “Suffering of God”

[cf. International Theological Commission, 1981]

For historical or systematic reasons God’s immutability or impassibility is often called into question in today’s Theology, above all in the context of a Theology of the Cross. In that way different theological conceptions of the suffering of God have arisen. It is necessary to know how to separate false ideas from elements in accord with the biblical revelation. Since discussion of this problem continues, we limit ourselves to a first approach, which nevertheless seeks to point to a solution to the question.

1. The supporters of this Theology assert that their ideas can be found in the Old and New Testaments and in some of the Fathers. But the influence of modern philosophy has certainly had a greater weight, at least in the systematic presentation of this Theology.

1.1. Hegel was the first to postulate that for the idea of God to be comprehensive, it has to include “the suffering of the negative”, that is, the “hardship of abandonment” (“*die Härte der Gottlosigkeit*”). In him there is a fundamental ambiguity: Does God have or not a real need of the world? After Hegel some Protestants and certain Anglicans developed so-called kenotic theologies, which are “Cross-centered”. According to these the Passion of the Son touches the whole of the Trinity in different fashions and manifests above all the suffering of the Father who abandons his Son: “*Since he has spared not his own Son but has consigned him for all of us*” (Rom 8:32; cf. Jn 3:16). It also shows the suffering of the Holy Spirit, who in the Passion takes upon himself the “distance” between the Father and the Son.

1.2. According to many of our contemporaries, this Trinitarian suffering is rooted in the very divine essence itself; according to others, it is based on a certain emptying of himself on the part of God the Creator, who in some sense binds himself to human freedom or, in virtue of a pact, freely forces himself to hand over his Son—a fact that they say makes the suffering of the Father deeper than all the suffering of creation.

In recent years a few Catholic authors have made similar suggestions, maintaining that the principal role of the Crucified consisted in manifesting the suffering of the Father.

2. One could often suppose from the Old Testament, the divine transcendence notwithstanding (cf. Jer 7:16—19), that God suffers because of the sins of men. Perhaps not all the expressions can be explained as simple anthropomorphisms (see, for example, Gen 6:6: “Yahweh repents that he had made man on earth and he sorrows about it in his heart”; Deut 4:25; Ps 78:41; Is 7:13; 63:10; Jer 12:7; 31:20; Hos 4:6; 6:4; 11:8ff). Rabbinic theology is even stronger in this respect and speaks, for example, of a God who abandons himself to lamentation because of the Covenant, which he has made and which constrains him, or because of the destruction of the Temple; and at the same time affirms the weakness of God when faced with the powers of evil (cf. P. Kuhn, *Gottes Trauer und Klage in der rabbinischen Überlieferung* [Leiden, 1978], pp. 170ff, 275ff).

In the New Testament, the tears of Jesus (cf. Lk 19:41), his anger (cf. Mk 3:5), and the sadness he feels are themselves also manifestations of a certain way of behavior on God's part. In other places it is stated explicitly that God gets angry (cf. Rom 1:18; 3:5; 9:22; Jn 3:36; Rev 15:1).

3. Without doubt the Fathers underline (against the pagan mythologies) the “apatheia” of God, without denying in this way his compassion for the suffering of the world. For them the term “apatheia” indicates the opposite of “pathos”, a word that means involuntary suffering imposed from the outside or as a consequence of fallen nature. When they admit natural and innocent suffering (like hunger or sleep), they attribute these to Jesus Christ or to God inasmuch as he feels compassion for human suffering (Origen, Horn. in Ez. 6, 6; Comm. in Matt. 17, 20; Set. in Ez. 16; Comm. in Rom. 8, 9; De prin. 4, 4, 4). From time to time they use a dialectical form of expression: God has suffered in Jesus Christ in an impassible fashion because he has done it in virtue of a free choice (Greg. Thaum., *Ad Theopompum* 4-8).

According to the Council of Ephesus (cf. the letter of St. Cyril to Nestorius: *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, 3:42), the Son makes his own the sufferings inflicted on his human nature (*oikeiosis*). Attempts to reduce this proposition (and others like it in the Tradition) to a simple “manner of speaking” do not sufficiently recognize its profound meaning. But the Christology of the Church does not allow us to affirm formally that Jesus Christ could suffer according to his divine nature (cf. DS 16, 166, 196f., 284, 293f, 300, 318, 358, 504, 635, 801, 852).

4. Despite what has just been said, the Fathers cited above clearly affirm the immutability and impassibility of God (e.g., Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4, 4). Thus they absolutely exclude from the divine essence that mutability and that passivity that would permit a movement from potency to act (cf.

Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, q. 9, a. 1c). Finally, the following considerations have been taken into account in the Tradition of the Faith of the Church to clear up this problem.

4.1. With regard to the immutability of God it must be said that the divine life is inexhaustible and without limit, so much so that God has no need whatever for creatures (cf. DS 3002). No human event could gain for him anything new or actuate in him any potentiality whatsoever. God, therefore, could not be subject to any change either by way of diminution or by way of progress. “Therefore, since God is not susceptible to change in any of these different ways, it is proper to him to be absolutely immutable” (Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, q. 9, a. 2c). The same affirmation is found in Sacred Scripture with regard to God the Father, “in whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (Jas 1:17). But this immutability of the living God is not opposed to his supreme liberty, something that the event of the Incarnation clearly demonstrates.

4.2. The affirmation of the impassibility of God supposes and implies this way of understanding his immutability, but this is not to be understood as though God remained indifferent to human events. God loves us with the love of friendship, and he wishes to be loved by us in return. When this love is offended, Sacred Scripture speaks of suffering on the part of God. On the other hand, it speaks of his joy when the sinner is converted (Lk 15:7). “To suffer is a more sane reaction and closer to immortality than complete insensibility” (Augustine, *En. in Ps.* 55, 6). The two aspects need each other. If one or the other is neglected, the concept of God as he reveals himself is not respected.

5. Modern and medieval Theology have underlined more the first of these aspects (cf. 4.1). In reality, the Catholic Faith today defends the essence and the liberty of God and opposes exaggerated theories (cf. above, B, 1). But the other aspect (cf. above, 4.2) merits further attention.

5.1. Today man desires and searches for a Divinity that will be omnipotent and certain but that does not appear indifferent; one, moreover, that is full of compassion for the miseries of man and in that sense “suffers with them”. Christian piety has always rejected the idea of a Divinity indifferent to the vicissitudes of creatures. It is even inclined to admit that, just as “compassion” is among the most noble human perfections, it can be said of God that he has a similar compassion without any imperfection and in an eminent degree, namely, the “inclination of commiseration ... and not the absence of power” (Leo I, DS 293).

It is maintained that this compassion can coexist with the eternal happiness itself. The Fathers called this total mercy toward human pain and suffering “the passion of love”, a love that in the Passion of Jesus Christ has vanquished these sufferings and made them perfect (cf. Greg. Thaum., *Ad Theopompum*; John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 7; AAS 72 [1980]: 1199ff).

5.2. As far as the question of the “suffering of God” is concerned, there is undoubtedly something worth retaining in the expressions of Holy Scripture and the Fathers, as well as in some recent theologies, even though they require clarification as shown above. This should perhaps also be said with regard to the Trinitarian aspect of the Cross of Jesus Christ. The eternal generation of the Son and his role as the immaculate Lamb who would pour out his precious blood are equally eternal and precede the free creation of the world (cf. 1 Pet I: 19ff; Eph 1:7). In this sense, there is a very close correspondence between the gift of divinity that the Father gives to the Son and the gift by which the Father consigns his Son to the abandonment of the Cross. Since, however, the Resurrection is also present in the eternal plan of God, the suffering of “separation” (see above, B, 1.1) is always overcome by the joy of union; the compassion of the Trinitarian God for the suffering of the Word is properly understood as the work of most perfect love, which is normally a source of joy As for the Hegelian concept of “negativity”, this is radically excluded from our idea of God.

We have learned that in attempting to reflect on these matters human and theological reasoning encounter some of the greatest of all difficulties (such as “anthropomorphism”). But in a remarkable fashion they also encounter the ineffable mystery of the living God and realize the limits of thought itself.

CONCLUSION

We neither can nor wish to deny that the picture we have presented of our researches is indebted to modern scientific Theology. All the same, the reality we have studied, i.e., the living Faith of the whole Church in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, tends—beyond the frontiers of particular cultures—to achieve an ever-greater universality in the knowledge and love of the mystery of Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul made himself “all things to all” (1 Cor 1:22), we in our turn must insert the evangelical message concerning Jesus Christ more deeply into all the languages and cultural models of different peoples. A task of the greatest difficulty!

We can accomplish it only if we can remain in continuous dialogue with the Holy Scripture, with the Faith, and with the Magisterium of the

Church, but also with the riches of the Traditions of all the particular Churches and of human experience lived in every culture in which the action and effects of the Holy Spirit can be present (cf. *GS* 44; *AG* 15, 22; Paul VI, *EN* 64 [*AAS* 68 (1976): 54f.]; John Paul II, *FC* 10 [*AAS* 74 (1982): 90f.]). We are encouraged to press on toward this goal by recalling the words spoken to the Apostles: “You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and in Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

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EXCURSUS II:**St. FRANCIS of ASSISI**

[First Stigmatist recognized by the Church]

MANY CLAIMS, FEW AUTHENTICATIONS⁵¹ :

PATHOLOGY, or PRETERNATURAL?⁵²

Presentation:

[1] The experience of persons with the *Stigmata* localized prevalently in the hands, feet and the side - is well documented through history. The records show that these wounds appeared spontaneously and seem to present the wounded reproduction of the crucified Christ - and these have been defined as the '*stigmata*.' The term derives from the one biblical passage where it is recorded: [Ga 6:17]. It refers to those signs of the suffering of Jesus Christ - for some few interpreters, the apostle Paul was also a Stigmatist/ Stigmatic [cf. Ga 3:1] - whereas most exegetes are not in agreement with that interpretation of the Galatians passage.

[2] it is only in the 13th century that this term appears to describe this phenomenon.⁵³ Elijah of Cortona, an early Franciscan, used the term in writing to all the brothers on the spreading and Franciscan order to communicate to all the death of St. Francis in the month of October 1224. His ally John said that he was joyfully announcing an extraordinary miracle - and that there had never been heard in the world anything like this other than the Son of God himself who is the crucified Lord. Our knowledge of this phenomenon is recorded by eye-witnesses and is remembered especially when there are many references in recognized legal documents. However, perhaps only a medical doctor on close examination could verify their authenticity.

[3] in 1727 Pope Benedict XIIIth granted the liturgical feast regarding the impression of the Stigmata on St. Francis of Assisi. In the recent 20th-century, research on the Causes for Canonization in the Vatican, there is some indication of these that are under study. In our lifetime we might mention Gemma Galgani [1878-

⁵¹ Paolo Maria Marianeschi, *Le stigmatizzazione somatica. Fenomeno e segno*. Vaticana 2000; Also by Prof. Marianeschi: *Stimate e medicina* [Terni 1983] [this edition has an interesting modern bibliography: pp.177-183]; *Le stimate della beata Lucia Broccadelli* [Narni 1985]; *La scomparsa delle stimate del Padre Pio da Pietrelcina* [S. Giovanni Rotondo 1987]; *Il problema scientifica delle stigmatizzazioni. Tavola Rotonda su il fatto delle stimate di S. Francesco*. [S. Maria degli Angeli 1966]; *Ipotesi mediche sulla spina ritiana* [Roma 1998].

⁵² Rene BIOT, *The Enigma of the Stigmata*. NY: Hawthorne Books 1962, *passim*.

⁵³ Cf. P. Adnes, *Stigmata*, in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Vol. 16, col. 1213.

1903], a lay woman, tertiary of the Passionist Congregation; Fr. Pio [1887-1968]. So there is no doubt that the Magisterium has declared so clearly on the reality of this extraordinary phenomenon in the day-in-and-day-out faith of the Catholic Church. While there has been some approval on the part of the Vatican, they has been no declaration regarding the immediate cause of these reported stigmatizations.

[4] In the light of truly scientific progress in our own times, a number of Causes containing this phenomenon have been deeply and broadly discussed - the entire area of 'psychosomatics', the reality extra sensitive human natures – such situations could also very well be the source of a truly natural explanation of so many of the reported extraordinary phenomena. Because of this, in our own time there is MUCH HESITATION AMONG THE AUTHORITIES OF THE CHURCH TO PRONOUNCE THEMSELVES ON THE OBJECTIVITY OF ANY OF THESE SIGNS - which in Jesus endured as the source of our redemption.

[5] It has been researched in our time that at the end of the 20th century there might have been as many as 100 such cases: 45 of these present on their bodies an undeniable stigmatization. Among these there are 15 men and 32 women. As for the other stigmatists, some are still alive in our time; five who were married; in addition, three women and one religious sister are indicated.

[6] Therefore it can be stated that in recent years following the middle ages hundreds of individuals have had this claim made concerning them: all of these were those professing the Catholic faith. Their bodies were clearly marked by these wounds, almost logically calling to mind those suffered by Christ in our redemption.

[7] In the official and detailed Causes of Canonization, all of these incidences are submitted to a very thorough medical examination - these have been taken on by the Vatican which dedicates careful scrutiny for all these cases. Doctors have been invited by ecclesiastical authority and this requires of all certain competent qualifications and expertise. These experts are asked for their opinion on the cases of this phenomenon which they study with admirable care.

[8] A possible definition: by 'stigmatization', it is generally understood those signs and those sufferings which certain mystics have manifested and experienced in the same parts of their bodies as Jesus Christ had experienced. There is committed prayerful study of those lesions claimed to have been in the limbs of those few noted in the Causes of Canonization. There is prayerful contemplation on those Sacred Wounds and sufferings endured in that period of Jesus' earthly sojourn from his condemnation until his death through execution by crucifixion. Therefore, the stigmata were inflicted on his sacred body after his crowning with thorns, his flagellation, the carrying of his cross, culminating in his authentic and

true crucifixion . In the Scriptures, Jesus shows His sacred wounds in Lk 24:39 & Jn 19:19-29, retained in his risen body after his Resurrection.

[A] MODERN INTERPRETATION OF THE STIGMATIC PHENOMENON

1. In the middle of the 20th century [perhaps due to the American, Rose Ferron of Rhode Island (USA) and Teresa Neumann of Konersreuth, (Germany) much heated discussion developed around this phenomenon. Centuries of studies in the medical and psychological fields, culminated in what might be called two extensive periods of scientific reflection developed:

a. From the 13 to the 18th centuries: there prevailed the opinion among doctors that the appearance of the stigmatized not considered to be a natural phenomena. They were seen generally as something that totally surpassed nature. These were generally considered preternatural.

b. However, from the 19th to the 21st centuries: during these years, there arose genuine etio-pathological theories. There was a profound and broad deepening of psychological and psychiatric studies. The first attempts to explain the experience in general as a totally natural happening. Specific disorders considered as causing this phenomena such as: excessive fasting; a delicate lymphatic condition; a remnant of high fevers, and other such natural physical or psychic conditions. Much study has been directed to the most famous of the Catholic stigmatists, St. Francis of Assisi.

2. Pathological Interpretations: in earlier times, interpretations such as a neurosis, or something under this general heading, never had a broad following. Perhaps the main reason for this hesitancy with the facts observed would have been out of respect for the faith, but also because the presence of the stigmata on someone's body's was generally held to be a marvel demanding respect – we might even say that there was something of a “prejudice” accompanying any consideration of them, generally considered always to be authentic – and they may have been! Furthermore it has been noted that it is only on the bodies of the Catholic faithful would these signs appear, and in relatively small, but consistent, numbers.

a. Today, however, most ‘scientific’ theories consider the appearance of the stigmatic more of a neurotic result, something resulting from one's delicate psyche. There is frequent mention of imbalance produced in the bodies of the seriously ill - sometimes leading even to convulsions, blindness and paralysis - and these maladies were seen more in those who have other illnesses. Others conclude that this is simply an unusual form of Hansen’s Disease, leprosy.

b. For so many modern scientists, a first theory that would be followed that the recipient would be suffering from hysteria, leading to psycho-somatic results, as for example, sympathetic contusions. In the later rejection of the phenomenon afflicting Teresa Neumann, was thought to be the result of a pathological state.

c. Other theories would be the result of a super-active emotional life, even though such persons would indeed be generally mentally competent and healthy, but some 'allow their emotions to run away with them'. It was noted that there are those who suffer deep physical effects after having witnessed terrible violence.

d. Further possible theories followed today are that they who experience extraordinary phenomena really 'engineer' these who often feel some 'neglect', and lead even to 'imagine these signs into existence, in order to draw attention to themselves, or to be noticed.

e. There are also modern specialists who would compare such phenomena a result comparable to hypnosis. This theory has gained many adherents since the mid-1950's. In extreme cases, any appearance of unusual indications were written off as the result of a certain physio-pathology, or basic psycho-somatic manifestations.

f. In most of these scientific theories, the appearance of the Stigmata on one's body would be concluded as being the direct result of exceptional 'stress', something like ecstasy, that state of conscience in which a believer might experience a phase of the Passion of Jesus Christ. There have been noted situations of severe pain being experienced that would lead to an open sore in the stomach, much like an ulcer. This school of thought would conclude that the stigmata are 'lesions brought about by stress.' Some scientists would agree that the stigmata in the human body are the expression not so much of an illness, but rather a most exceptional present state of one's health.

By way of summary: even the attempt to classify modern theories of explanation present a challenge:

- psychical-physiological theories;
- apologetical reactions;
- simply a natural counter-reaction;
- the para-mystic and his/ [mostly –as the claims are more numerous] "her" – psycho-somatic epi-phenomenon.

3. Recent reflections on Modern Scientific Claims: not surprisingly, some of these claims have led to much controversy and bitter discussion:

a. The Theory of Neurosis: today, perhaps the majority of doctors would hold for this view – that these wounds are of entirely natural order. These specialists are in the line of pathologists – to say that these wounds are neurotic in order, and this in no way reflects on the moral character of these patients – so many of them seem to be in good faith. For most of us who are not specialists, are forced to be confined to the general view of qualified technicians – however, there is also the matter of faith that needs to be kept in mind.

b. Serious Illnesses: There is a publication of some 250 pages, recording the reports made in France among Carmelites⁵⁴. A modern stigmatist, Teresa Neumann, was visited by thousands during the immediate post-war years. She displayed a combination of severe illnesses so threatening what seemed to be imminent death. Any diligent doctor cannot help wondering whether, behind these alarming symptoms, under these terrifying disturbances – there is some mysterious visceral state, organic lesions – or, whether they are simply functional disturbances in which psychological and imaginative factors are busy at work. Specialists of good will refrain out of delicacy, avoiding all indelicacy, or ‘accusing’ them of ‘miming’ the faith image. Many such things happened during the terrible ‘Great war’ of 1914-1918 – these were sometimes eliminated by the application of electrical shocks, customary procedures at the time. Frequently, the technical diagnosis was presented either as hysteria [the ‘more common diagnosis] and pithiatism [cf. Pythian oracle of Delhi]. However, it needs to be admitted that such terminology introduces real hostility into the discussion already suffering under this already].

c. Special ‘situation’ of Teresa Neumann: she was a widely reported stigmatist in the 1940s and the early 1950s. A serious fire broke out on March 10, 1918 when she was 20 years of age. She had to work long and laboriously passing buckets of water and as result of this she was chilled to the bone and soaked through and became violent pain in her back and remained in bed many weeks unable to eat or drink. Eventually she was admitted the hospital on April and to experience severe attacks. In all of this she was also diagnosed as being neurotic. She began to experience convulsive attacks and eventually on October 31st, she was given what were then called ‘the Last Sacraments.’ In an insurance claim the following January, it was reported that she was bed-ridden; her left side was without feeling- but in those times, it was reported that there was no appreciable lesion in her body. A number of occurrences took place and the report spread that through her sufferings miraculous effects were received by others. Her incapacity for work was because; of her very grave hysteria, partial blindness and paralysis –

⁵⁴ Aa. Vv., *Douleur et stigmatisation* Paris: Desclée 1936

leading to her being classified [perhaps] for insurance purposes as ‘totally incapacitated.’

1.] From a somewhat later medical report about her, a specialist determined hysterical neurosis as the main source for the phenomena that began to be associated with her. She remained the ‘victim’ of two widely diversified and contradictory conclusions on the part of doctors: some believed her appearing stigmata were genuine; more commonly, Though, the German specialists noted that these phenomena were nothing more than her psycho-neurotic maladies. It needs to be immediately noted that leading authorities on neuro-psychiatry, believe that very often these maladies do not bear the same certainty that maladies of the body do –this whole field has very vague contours.

2.] Along with many other conclusions, the whole matter is steeped in vague data. A general consensus was reached that there was indeed a mental foundation underlying so much in the daily life of this visionary. In so many areas of human knowledge we have to admit ‘medicine is silent.’ Resulting marks on a human body might have a variety of causes and science cannot explain them all. As research and science have developed in this area, fewer and fewer believe that her case was indeed preternatural. [This may be another effect of the fearsome spread of secularism in our own time.]

3.] For many believers there is also an excessive simplification for the marvelous. Some note facetiously: that one stigmatic dies, another is born! As there are many ‘doubting Thomases’ in the field of science, there are also many sincere believers, some of whom who manifest an almost insatiable appetite for the marvelous which can only be satisfied by the accumulation of the prodigious.

d. There is a major discrepancy regarding the wound in Christ’s sacred side – John alone mentions the sacred side [19:36]. In one survey of nearly 30 stigmatics, six of them are reported to have the wound on the right side – and the rest on the left. For some believers, as scripture does not clarify the side in which Christ’s fifth wound was positioned, conclude as follows: in line with the Sacred Heart devotion, the wound must have been on the left; but in harmony with Ezechiel’s vision of the Desert Temple: ... *the water flowed from under the right side of the temple* ... [Ezk 47:2]. This discrepancy of itself does not prove fraud. In the long history of the Church, there is still no guarantee of any preternatural and miraculous origin of the appearance of these wounds. For some scholars, of itself, this factor cannot be used as an argument either ‘pro’ or ‘contra’ authentic holiness.

[B] THE STIGMATA REMAIN AN 'ENIGMA'⁵⁵

1. The Caution of the Church:

a. There is no clear-but decision reached in most cases of stigmatism that have been submitted to the Magisterium of the Church. There is no opposition between the God of the Spiritual Life and the God of Nature.⁵⁶ It is also helpful to note a declaration published on May 31, 1923, and a *Monitum* published by the Holy See⁵⁷ denying the supernatural character to the phenomena presented by Padre Pio – later canonized. In the case of Fr. Pio there was far more wonder at his noble obedience in most difficult circumstances over the phenomena imprinted on his body. There is also the famous Franciscan quote [St. Bonaventure?]: there is a greater grace in the heart of Francis joined with that of Christ, than there is wonder at his reported Stigmata.

b. Regarding Teresa of Konersreuth, the Bavarian Bishops in 1927 adopted a resolution published in the Episcopal Curia of Ratisbon included these words: "...no final judgment should be made on these events until the ecclesiastical authority itself had given a decision on this subject, and that no visits should be made there, as the competent bishop has asked from the beginning. The press is asked to publish this advice. By this decision the bishops in no way mean to adopt a position on the events of Konnersreuth. But the decision was necessary in order not to allow a sort of pilgrimage to be organized there before the facts were accredited by the ecclesiastical authority, and still more to put a definite stop to the ill-will of those who priding themselves on having been there, were publishing false reports and speaking with utmost competence of things they know nothing about..."

c. The words of Michael Cardinal Faulhaber the late Archbishop of Munich on November 6, 1927 - were both weighty and prophetic in the light of later events. He offered seven points o fundamental Catholic Doctrine on the 'marvelous', the extraordinary: [one might summarize this approach pastorally as that exhibited in the style of St. Thomas Aquinas: *Videtur quod non ...!*]

- First Point: Christ worked miracles and promised to His Church the miraculous power of faith. A disciple of Christ must therefore, without hesitation should believe in the miracles of the Gospel - and warned also in the possibility of particular false miracles in the course of the Church's history.

⁵⁵ This is the title of the book by Rene Biot, *The Enigma of the Stigmata*. Vol. 27 of the 20th Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, Section 5. The Life of Faith – which is being followed in these notes.

⁵⁶ Cf. Msgr. Journet, *Le point de vue théologique sur les sueurs de sang et les stigmatisations*, in: *Douleur et stigmatisation*. Paris: Desclée 1936.

⁵⁷ Holy Office: cf. AAS, September 1, 1924.

- Second Point: Christ has warned us against false prophets and false miracles; he thus foretold that besides true, authentic miracles there would also be other apparent miracles that have never been verified. The Church must therefore examine each particular case to see whether the marvelous event is a true or apparent miracles, and we must be on our guard in the matter of miracles as much as against superstition on the one hand – and as against incredulity – no faith at all in the possibility of miracles. *[However, There will be false Christ's and prophets ... do not follow them!]*

Besides the true miracles worked by the finger of God, there are therefore signs, prodigies, states of suffering, which resemble miracles but which in the eyes of God have nothing to do with miracles... we need to separate the tares from the wheat.

- Third Point: attention needs to be given to the manner in which examination is made. The examination of a wonderful event must be made with sincere love of the truth, with the respect due to holy things and, with regard to the miraculous, with neither desire nor apprehension... The inquiry must not begin with the enthusiastic desire to find a miracle. There is often a morbid fervor and craving for the extraordinary. We need to recall the Biblical warning: *... the time will come when you will long to enjoy, but for a day, the Son of Man's presence and it will not be granted to you. Men will say to you: He is here, He is there: do not turn aside and follow them...!* We need to be guarded from the unhealthy pursuit of marvels and visions. There should be neither greed for the miraculous nor incredulity either.
- Fourth Point: Miraculous phenomena are no proof in favor of faith unless they have a good meaning and purpose, and the inmost feelings of the person concerned are inspired by God. Even acknowledged miracles do not force anyone to have faith if one is not convinced to believe.
- Fifth Point: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have learned to believe. The ancient miracles ushering in the Reign of God should be enough for our faith.
- Sixth Point: One good effect from the past has been that many in the modern age, with all of its horrors and emptiness, return to devotion to the Person of Jesus Christ.
- Seventh Point: only very slowly does the Church use the word 'miracle'. We should never be hurried in it. One strong appeal rings forth from any reported stigmata: pray again the Way of the Cross – read and pray over the

Passion, Death, resurrection and Ascension narratives before the Blessed Sacrament.

2. The “Franciscan Problem” and a mature, responsible, sober response⁵⁸: what really happened?

- First Critical Theory: An Apparition of the Seraph, and the discovery of the “stigmata”: the first biographer presented Francis’ stigmata as concrete, specific and material, i.e., physical. In this primitive presentation it truly seems that the appearance of the wounds are due to the theophanic event, the appearance of the Seraph. This immediately places the phenomenon in the category of the little used term, ‘miracle’. This indicates a new identification with Jesus Christ.
- Second Critical theory: the Fact of the Stigmata and uncertainty of their Origin: the early historians presented Francis’ Stigmata as a historical reality. A number of early witnesses have testified to have known them. The emphasis in this theory is that while the source of the wounds in the Saint’s flesh, it is the testimony of one who was with Francis in the days of the reception of this phenomenon – and it situates the stigmata in the context of a mystical appearance. Francis’ *Praise of God* are an act of thanksgiving for his two-fold favor: the seraph and conversation with him – and the imprint of the stigmata.

In some of the early Franciscans, there is a testimony of the mystical experience but silence regarding the stigmata. Nonetheless, in these early sources there is basic harmony regarding the fact of the Stigmata. There is, however, uncertainty regarding the Cause as indicated by these early witnesses. Some sources present the possibility that the stigmata’s appearance relies solely on conjectural factors. What is clear is that the witnesses all seem to agree that there were give Christ-like wounds on Francis’ body, and these witnesses seem to have been objectively trustworthy. One of these conjectures has been that the existence of the Stigmata relies on Francis’ own experience of this phenomenon which happened to him.

- Third Critical Theory: The Fact of the Stigmata, and the invention of the Seraph: all of the early witnesses come together on the consensus that Francis indeed had the five wounds on his body at the time of his death – therefore, it must be true. Other aspects of this phenomenon have been witnessed to, with less rejection of them as non-historical. The ‘Great Secret’ in Francis’ life is his constant effort to hide them from others. This testimony regarding Francis’ great reserve regarding the ‘miracle’ meant that he constantly hid them from his ‘own’ friends and followers. This would logically imply, then, that Francis

⁵⁸ Solanus M. Benfatti, cfr, *The Five Wounds of St. Francis*. Charlotte NC: TAN 2011, pp. 165-177, passim.

would not have made such a claim – while constantly still guarding so carefully his ‘Great Secret.’ Francis’ experience is compared almost naturally to the visit of the Prophet in Is 6, when his lips were purified by one of the Seraph with a burning coal of the altar.

It is stated that even Gregory IXth had some doubts about the authenticity of the wounds in Francis’ body. His Papal Bull makes some reference to the ‘marks’ on the Saint’s body, with using the formal term, *stigmata*. After reported mystical phenomena on the part of the Pope himself, he personally came to the delayed conclusion that to doubt the wound in the side would mean to doubt the divine origin of the wounds. The struggle was not the fact of the stigmata, but the claim of their divine origin.

- Fourth Critical Theory: the appearance of the ‘stigmata, is always False: it is no more than Self-Mutilation and the hiding of the Stigmata: some modern experts have interpreted the marks on Francis’ body merely as the result of his severe –self flagellation. There were some exaggerations in this year, as the reports on one monk who tried to make of his own life, a perpetual Good Friday. [Dominic Loricatus, + 1060]. Other exaggerated incidents speak of this not uncommon practice, even of impressing on one’s own body the imprint of the stigmata. [Some of these even received ecclesiastical condemnation at Oxford].

One of the authoritative Franciscan sources maintained that the phenomenon in St. Francis’ body was referred to as the *Miraculi Novitatem*. There was a two-fold miracle that was recorded: Christ appeared to Francis as he laid dying, and that after his death, his mutilated body was transformed into a glorious one. Elias communicates that Christ’s very own wounds appear on Francis: *vere sunt stigmata Christi*. There is no proof – only a ‘guess’ – claiming that Francis’ wounds were the result of his own severe self-flagellation. Francis often reminded his Friars to be reasonable regarding their self-inflicted mortifications – even though he truly was a ‘mortified’ saint⁵⁹.

3. The Stigmata of St. Francis in the Debates on the ‘Franciscan Question’ - ‘The Saint’s Great Secret’ – the ‘Paul Sabatier Question’ - of the 20th and 21st Centuries:⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Cf. also Octavian Schmucki, OFM Cap., *The Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi. A Critical Investigation in the light of Thirteenth Century Sources*. St. Bonaventure NY 1991. [An abundant and Helpful bibliography presented as Primary and Secondary Sources: pp. 327-380].

⁶⁰ Cf. Liviana Bortolussi, FFB, *Le Stigmate di San Francisco nei dibattiti del ‘900*. Pars Dissertationis. Pontificia Universitas Antonianum. Specializatio in Spiritualitate. Dissertatio ad Lauream, n. 425 - [with a Very helpful Bibliography, organized Chronologically: Prior to Centenary (1854-1880); From the Centenary to the end of the century (1882-1899); From the beginning of 1900 to the centenary of the Stigmata (1900-1923); from the 7th Centenary of the Stigmata (1924); From the 7th Centenary of Death 1925-1926); Paul Sabatier’s biography of the Saint (a critical reversal in 1894); Miscellanea (1853-1926); Periodicals; Franciscans (1800-1900); Paul Sabatier and the ‘Franciscan Question; Historical, Socio-Political and Cultural Context; Modernism and its

the admirable bibliography here might be from before the 7th centenary of the receiving of the stigmata by St. Francis [1923] – and the 7th centenary of his death [1925-1926] – and from that era up to the present.

a. Paul Sabatier [1858- 1928]: was an assiduous promoter of Franciscan studies. He had been taught by Renan, but did not follow his outright rejection of the stigmata of Francis. He rejected the accusation of fraud leveled by the new wave of psychologists studying the source of the Stigmata with their neuroses, hypnotisms and the like. Sabatier held, almost *a priori*, that there were so many innocent early witnesses of the fact of the Stigmata that he felt they presented a harmonious listing of facts used to bolster the authenticity of the Stigmata. However, at the same time the Stigmata clearly illustrated a psychological method in trying to explain them. He introduced a new method of writing biographies of the ‘ancients’ - by applying the knowledge of mysticism with the tenets of the then raging Modernism. IN his times there took place the birth and rapid development of the medical-psychiatric studies, with the discovery of hypnosis, and psycho-somatic explanations for all matters of mysticism – largely rejected by the new wave. One unfortunate result of these ‘new times’ was that the Stigmata themselves were studied less and less – whereas the application of the new data uncovered in psychology and its allied medical sciences. These took center stage using the phenomenon [and all miracles in general] – were seen at the most, as mere manifestations of some mental, or psychological disorder, delicacy or wound.

b. Damaging Results of this new data: snap judgments were proliferated in this era: the stigmata were considered to be due solely to the imagination - the psycho-physical, psycho-somatic principles were considered the real (and only???) “proof”. A Belgian mystic [Lateau] much in the news at this time, was written off as her phenomena are the end result of her mental illnesses. Other factors in this matter was the exaggeration of the practice of hypnosis, developed in an age of fierce anti-clericalism, budding secularism – it was safely bandied about that modern science seeks to destroy the supernatural. Other experts dismissed the stigmata of Francis as a powerful and inflamed imagination – those who defended St .Francis were looked upon as among those who sought the release of the saint from the insane asylum!

c. Another ‘more moderated’ danger: the real danger from the broad-side and prevailing attacks from a kind of unbridled rationalism, would be the well intended, but perhaps equally as dangerous pietism, sentimentalism. There once was a world – now gone forever - that would betray the authentic, historical, figure of St. Francis and his genuine spirituality: mysticism cannot be without real

continuing asceticism! In the excessively poetic presentation of the great Mystic the Stigmata were simply believed and accepted and proved to be an inspiration of a very wide-spread devotion, far from any saccharine pietism. The Franciscan school has sought and much succeeded in re-writing the biographies of the saint – how his piety is presented in inspiring theology, lectures and sermons. The saint in his gentleness has found himself in the midst of two extremes: on the one hand he is a paradigm, a seminal personality, one to be studied and followed – and for many others, his wondrous life proves to be a real stumbling block.

d. Three areas of modern interest: the supernatural; some aspects of modern science; and wide-spread devotion to the saint:

- the Supernatural: this means to commit oneself to the stigmata of Francis as coming from a divine source. This is a position of faith, not required of the whole Church. As would be safely imagined, the Franciscan world reacted intelligently and strongly to the rejection of the rationalist approach to the supernatural, considering it non-existent. The attempt to ‘demolish the myth’ of the stigmata was wide spread in much of Europe – but, there have always been the strong adherents to this special gift of God, together with the mystical experience was the accompanying grace of La Verna. This all came to light in the modernism and rationalism of the mid 1850’s and on. Perhaps as the after-math of the 7th centenary celebrations in 1924, more and more scholars especially from the Franciscan world, and devotees of St. Francis, offers a stolid defense and propagation of the miracle.
- The ‘Science-Faith’ debates: these exploded perhaps in the second half of the 19th century – right up to the years just prior to World War I, these flood of objections to the authenticity of the Stigmata particularly raged. New discoveries and ever new and novel scientific discoveries, the advance of technology, and the canonization of positivism, rationalism through modernism were also the years of the debates on evolutionism, hypnosis, and concerns with public health. The happenings of Lourdes in these times during the years of the definition of the Immaculate Conception, were subjected to the same objections. The well – known Italian, also a medical doctor, Fr. Augustine Gemelli, OFM, became one of its staunchest defenders.

The Franciscan world also studied these extraordinary phenomena in the medical fields, particularly in those regarding mental illnesses, and their resulting effects on the human body. Through the years, too, Franciscan theological periodicals took up the defense of the authentic holiness of their beloved founder, and also the Church recognition of the stigmata impressed on his body. As for the political aspects of the flood of negative criticism the

Jesuit journal, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, engaged an intelligent and consistent manner in behalf of the teachings of the Church.

- On the Devotional Level: with the concomitant and constant danger of mere sentimentalism, there appeared on the scene, just before the 7th centenary of the reception of the stigmata by Francis, the phenomenon reported regarding the body of Fr. Pio da Pietrelcina. He was canonized in 2002 - faith and devotion have continued in step even to our own day. Pope John Paul II at the time of the canonization spoke of not allowing the Church to give way to any deviation for any insatiable yearning for miracles.

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EXCURSUS III

FR. KARL RAHNER, SJ - THE MYSTERY OF THE "PIERCED ONE"

Presentation:

[I] Second Thoughts on the Visions of St. Margaret Mary ALACOQUE [???

Already in Sister Annice's Preface, statements are made that more than challenge traditional devotees to the Sacred Heart Devotion. While the devotion did have its imperfections, and was imperfect, it was widely practiced – a 'tip-off' of Fr. Rahner's change of heart [?] regarding visions and devotions, is present for some students in these words:

... The image of Jesus crucified with his side pierced by a soldier's lance and pouring forth blood and water has always captured the Christian imagination. The Fathers of the Church saw this out pouring the origin of the Church. Not until the Middle Ages, however, did Christians move from a general devotion to the Five Wounds of Jesus and a more particular devotion to His Wounded Side, an even more specific concentration on the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Such a concentration led to concrete practices which honored the Pierced Heart. In the 17th century, Margaret Mary Alacoque claimed to have received visions of the Heart of Jesus which led her to promote frequent Communion, Communion on the First Friday of every month, a Holy Hour on Thursdays, and the annual celebration of a Feast of the Sacred Heart. In the 19th century popes urged devotion to the Sacred Heart. In the 1950's, theologians felt it necessary to deal with the technical details about the material and formal object of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. But, in the 1960's, Vatican II was silent on the subject⁶¹.

Today, intelligent and sophisticated Roman Catholics⁶² have often seemed to be embarrassed by what seem to them sentimental and meaningless practices, such as pamphlets on the Apostleship of Prayer, Holy Hours on the eve of First Friday, and the consecration of families to Jesus Christ⁶³ before a picture of His bleeding heart⁶⁴. In fact some Catholics become outraged by

⁶¹ Devotees to the Sacred Heart might object: ... *with a human heart He loved* ... [GS 22]

⁶² A fair question might be: who are these 'intelligent and sophisticated Roman Catholics'. Surely, the implication is not meant to be that those who strive in all sincerity to find in this devotion refreshment for the journey

⁶³ And this in the very age of deep family crises – a fair question might be: can so many homes today truly a 'domestic sanctuaries'?

⁶⁴ It is a challenge when we realize the commitment Fr. Rahner made to the heart as *real Symbol* .

these external ‘devotions’⁶⁵ and fail to perceive the symbolism of the pierced Heart of Christ...’



[II] Challenges leveled at the Person of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque [1647-1690]:

1. The Saint claimed that in her vision of Paray-le-Monial, she saw a disembodied heart – with a wound in it, surrounded by a crown of thorns. On June 16, 1675, she received what she called the ‘Grand Apparition’ in which Jesus asked her to bring it about on the First Friday after the Octave of Corpus Christi be dedicated to honor His heart. Some interpreters have noted that all her thought and imagery can easily be found in early publications – a contemporary of St. Margaret Mary apparently had a similar vision 50 years earlier.

2. For Fr. Rahner, a great deal of uncertainty surrounds the content of her visions: from the visionary’s subjectivity, there can deeply imbue the content with historical inaccuracy, theological distortions, errors, partiality and down-right bad taste. Fr. Rahner sees a serious theological error in the ‘Great Promise’. For him, her mystical experience may be genuine, even though there is an error in its ‘imaginative content’. Fr. Rahner concludes that today’s Sacred Heart Devotion is based on her private revelations, and is not derived directly from Scripture and tradition.

[III] Fr. Karl Rahner’s Doctrinal Questions against the traditional Sacred Heart Devotion

1. He notes three characteristics of the Sacred Heart devotion of Paray: Inwardness – the presence of the Love of God – Reparation:

- Inwardness: this is the nurturing of an interior theological life without the support of a truly Christian society – and Fr. Rahner holds this in opposition of an individualistic luxury of a religious introversion;
- Faith in the Love of God that is pitted against a secularistic world that seems more and more to be becoming totally immersed in a time of darkness in society and in perhaps the majority of the contemporaries of this time;
- Expiation as a suffering to the bitter end of this godless situation – joined to the Christ of Gethsemane and Golgotha, and the abandonment expressed in

⁶⁵ With the fearsome drop in faith in the Real Presence, even traditionally this devotion was centered on the Eucharist – such a deep need in the Catholic heart today. In our age it is not only a lessening of devotion to the Eucharist – as well as how vocations to the priesthood and religious life?

the Cry of Calvary, as a share in the seemingly wasted life of Christ in behalf of sinners.

2. Has Fr. Rahner truly succeeded in ‘re-interpreting’ in a positive way, the traditional Devotion to the Sacred Heart – or, have his views ‘throne the baby out with the water’, by damaging the devotion seemingly beyond repair for the majority of students of his time?⁶⁶

a. Fr. Rahner treats of the question of the dependence of the Sacred Heart Devotion on its time:

- first, he observes in the 17th century form of this devotion the lack of a Trinitarian context, and a lack of emphasis on the mediation of Jesus;
- Fr. Rahner rightfully points out that the individual elements of this devotion are teachings of dogma and remain valid for all periods of Christianity;
- the Sacred Heart devotion has suffered a severe set-back in our time because it was not rightly preached – or, because rejection of it is a sign of ‘love grown cold’. [Rahner purports to defend the devotion, but not ‘its time conditioned elements’];
- he also rightfully admits that the Sacred Heart Devotion in its present state of near oblivion will last until the end of time. All need to surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and each one can become an apostle of the Sacred Heart devotion, without being fanatical for the definitive or to deny that not everything is unsurpassable. [However, several of the Popes considered this devotion as the ‘greatest of all’.]

b. Fr. Rahner’s Difficulties with Reparation and the ‘12 Promises’ of the Sacred Heart Devotion: he not only reflected on the visions of the Saint in general, but also has problems with particular aspects of it – such as reparation [which has been interpreted to mean: being conformed to Jesus Christ through the re-enactment of His redemptive love], ‘consoling’ the Lord by means of a Holy Hour, and the 12 Promises. Each aspect brought its challenges to the renowned theologian:

- Reparation: he interprets this as primarily and essentially that of trusting, obedient and loving acceptance of a share in the sufferings of Christ – that of taking on oneself even the appearance of sin in the world with a sharing in one’s body, darkness, persecution, distance from God, and death. The

⁶⁶ An excellent much up-dated and recent presentation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is offered by: Fr James KUBICKI, SJ, *Rediscovering Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus – a Heart on Fire*. Notre Dame Press 2012

expiatory significance of every good work need not explicitly be intended, nor taught – especially toward those who have a tendency toward religious introversion and to becoming ‘sacrificial souls.’⁶⁷

- ‘To console’ the Lord: there is great efficacy in contemplating the sufferings of Jesus, as to make them present to oneself. God is not some abstraction – the mystery of the Heart of Christ enables one to enter into the sacramental identity the Baptized enjoy with Christ – in adoptive filiation, all become His ‘heirs’. Admittedly, Christ is now in glory – but, in the Concept of the Communion of Saints there is the idea of handing over one’s merits won through life and entrust them all to the intentions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The support is the eternal ‘now’ of the afterlife.

Admittedly, this is a poor choice of words but it does not deny that Jesus could know centuries ago in His Passion by means of His infused knowledge and direct vision of God⁶⁸, the co-suffering of people throughout the ages. By this knowledge Jesus could draw from his loving share in His suffering consolation for His human heart.

Fr. Rahner takes great exception to the wording to ‘console’ the Lord – and adds perhaps pessimistically that ‘for an infinite love, is it not in a certain sense a disappointment [??] even to be accepted and reciprocated in a very finite way.’ This hardly seems tenable. Fr. Rahner also notes that all we do in the Name of the Lord are unto are salvation, not just those consciously so directed - again, the ordinary ‘Morning Offering’ would still hold that all our works and deeds are offered. Fr. Rahner then takes exception that it would require ‘mental gymnastics to ‘console the Lord then, but our good deeds now – is there any such distinction in the risen Lord?

- The 12 Promises of the Sacred Heart: Fr. Rahner maintained that these Promises are subject to the usual rules of interpretation of private

⁶⁷ Many theologians and believers would today find great difficulty with this list: as far as ‘intentions’ are concerned, there is the classical distinction: previous, concomitant and subsequent, and never withdrawn [e.g. the widely approved DeMontfort Devotion, the intention of which is to be repeated, commemorated through life and never to be withdrawn, remains valid and valuable. This is present in the traditional ‘Morning Offering’, still a valid principle for the spiritual life. Pope Benedict recently made the suggestion that we might return to the old Christian practice of ‘offering it up’, dating from the Our Father, thy will be done! While there is much criticism of imagining oneself to be a ‘victim soul’, all the baptized invited to join our sufferings with those of Christ [cf. 1 P 2:3, ff.]. Reparation is viable when a believer enters into the sacrificial love of His heart obedient unto death – while for many this seems to be an injunction of ‘putting on the mind of Christ Jesus’ [cf. Ph 2:5, ff.]

⁶⁸ IN another context, Fr. Rahner takes exception to Pius XII’s idea in ‘Mediator Dei’ that Christ enjoyed the beatific vision from His existence into the womb of Mary, unto the Cross and into eternity – the great Jesuit theologian felt that this ‘smacked of mythology’. Contrary to this position, one might quote the CCC 478 quoting Pius XII [*Mystici Corporis*, # 75].

revelations – furthermore, they do not promise anything other than what was promised already by Jesus Himself. For him, the ‘new’ element is not the Promises made, specifying these as within the Sacred Heart devotion. These Promises do not ‘control’ God – but as gifts for those who hand themselves over through their Baptism in faith and love to the Will of God.

3. Fr. Rahner manifests a clear skepticism about private revelations in general, but it does seem that he has leveled his considerable theological bent against this one, so dear to the Jesuit Society:

a. Fr. Rahner is highly suspicious of private revelations which urge a devotion in such a way as to overestimate its significance in the spiritual life and growth of those in the Church – even though Pius XIth highly praised it. Fr. Rahner went on to maintain that ‘all St. Margaret Mary’s visions cannot be claimed to be genuine – nor can all aspects of hers be considered genuine. What she heard may have been the product of her subconscious.’ One cannot prove, he states, the authenticity of these visions – but only try to detect their appropriateness or inappropriateness.

b. Her mental health has been considered by some⁶⁹ - Louis Beirnaert, a French Jesuit psychiatrist, has written a note on the possible psychological connections of the symbol of the Heart of Jesus which the Saint described. He conjectures that she might have been attracted to this wound in the side out of which blood and water flowed from personal experiences of acute pain in her own side as a young girl, and possibly, too, from persistent hunger and thirst from which she suffered all her life. The ‘Sabbatine Privilege’ for Fr. Rahner is ‘presumption on God’s mercy by simply receiving Communion on nine First Fridays and then be assured of eternal salvation’ – a doctrine that would offend Church teaching. It could be, for Fr. Rahner, that she heard the first 11 Promises, and just made up the twelfth.

c. All is based on the anxiety of 17th century France for salvation. Aspect’s of this distorted and inaccurate ecclesiology, inaccurate eschatology came out of and still held tenaciously to an incorrect view of nulla salus extra ecclesiam. Therefore, Fr. Rahner severely questions how ‘essential are these visions’ to the devotion? Perhaps it can be said, as he does, that these visions condition one form of this devotion, the form that continually fosters Holy Hours and First Friday Holy Communion.

⁶⁹ Would such an analysis by today’s psychiatry of a person who lived almost 400 years ago, be a truly ‘scientific’ even acceptable to secularist standards?

[A] SACRED HEART and ICON of MERCY

Professor Stackpole's Thought

'Another Fresh Stream'

The Sacred Heart of Jesus and The Divine Mercy,
By Dr. Robert Stackpole, STD (Jun 12, 2012)

[June is dedicated to The Sacred Heart of Jesus. The following is a series of excerpts from Jesus, Mercy Incarnate, Marian Press, 2000 (currently out of print), by Dr. Robert Stackpole, STD, director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy. The series explores the relationship between The Sacred Heart and The Divine Mercy.]

According to the popes of the last 100 years, there is no devotion more important to the life of the Church than devotion to the Heart of Jesus. For example, in 1899 Pope Leo XIII, in what he called "the greatest act of my pontificate," consecrated the whole world to the Sacred Heart on the threshold of the new century, and he wrote of the Sacred Heart as "the symbol and sensible image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ."

In 1928⁷⁰, in his encyclical "*Miserentissimus Redemptor*," Pope Pius XI taught that devotion to the Heart of Jesus is "the summary of our religion," which, if practiced, "will most surely lead us to know intimately Jesus Christ, and will cause our hearts to love Him more tenderly and to imitate Him more generously." Then in 1956, in his famous encyclical on the Sacred Heart "*Haurietis Aquas*," Pope Pius XII was even more effusive than his predecessors in praise of this devotion:

It is altogether impossible to enumerate the heavenly gifts which devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has poured out on the souls of the faithful, purifying them, offering them heavenly strength, rousing them to the attainment of all virtues ...

Consequently, the honor paid to the Sacred Heart is such as to raise it to the rank — so far as external practice is concerned — of the highest expression of Christian piety. For this is the religion of Jesus, which is centered on the Mediator who is man and God, and in such a way that we cannot reach the Heart of God, save through the Heart of Christ ...

After the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI pleaded with the Church not to forget the devotion to the Sacred Heart. In his apostolic letter of 1965, "*Investigabiles Divitias Christi*," he wrote:

⁷⁰ cf. Pius XI, *Caritate Christi Compulsi*, May 3, 1932 – On Offering Prayer and Expiation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the present Distress of the Human Race.

This, therefore, seems to us to be the most suitable ideal: that devotion to the Sacred Heart — which, we are grieved to say, has suffered somewhat in the estimation of some persons — now re-flourish daily more and more. Let it be esteemed by all as an excellent and acceptable form of true piety ...

In a follow-up letter to the heads of the religious orders, Paul VI was even more emphatic:

Thus, it is absolutely necessary that the faithful venerate and honor this Heart, in the expression of their private piety as well as in the services of public cult, for of His fullness we have all received; and they must learn perfectly from Him how they are to live in order to answer the demands of our time.

Finally, in 1994, the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated by Pope John Paul II, contains the following remarkable statement about the importance of the symbol of the Heart of Jesus (no. 478):

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, "is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that ... love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings" without exception.

We need not belabor the point. Suffice it to say that for more than a century now, the successors of St. Peter have repeatedly exhorted the faithful to honor the Heart of Jesus, and to practice this devotion with love and zeal.

The popes have good reason for this recommendation, for the devotion to the Heart of Jesus has an impressive pedigree. It is rooted in the gospels, in our Lord's call: "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt 11: 28-29). Again, our Lord cried out on the Feast of Tabernacles: "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink ... as the scripture has said 'Out of His Heart shall flow rivers of living water' " (Jn 7:37-38). In the Heart of Jesus, therefore, we can find rest for our soul's weariness, and refreshment for our soul's thirst. All this was made manifest on the Cross, when His side was opened by the lance, and out of His Heart flowed streams of water and blood (Jn 19:34), symbolic of all the graces of Baptism and the Eucharist.

Many great saints have had a special devotion to the Heart of Jesus, including St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, St. Lutgard, St. Gertrude the Great, St. Peter Canisius, St. Francis De Sales, St. John Eudes, St. Claude De La Colombiere, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat and Bl. Dina Belanger. The greatest impetus toward the spread of this devotion, however,

came from the apparitions of our Lord Jesus Himself to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the 1670's. To her the glorified Jesus unveiled His tender, burning love for souls, and through her He asked for the establishment of the annual liturgical feast of the Sacred Heart, as well as devotional practices such as the Holy Hour, the First Friday Communion, and the veneration of the image of His loving Heart. By these means our Lord intended to rekindle the fire of love in the hearts of the faithful, in a modern world in which the hearts of many were growing cold.

Hence, rooted in scripture, the delight of many saints, and given the highest endorsement by the popes again and again, it is clear that *the devotion to the Heart of Jesus — especially to the living Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist — is vital to the life and spiritual health of the Catholic Church*. Simply put: A living body needs a living heart, and the Church, the Body of Christ, has its own living heart: we have been given the Heart of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body, as our Heart, too, the living source of all our spiritual refreshment and peace.

In the twentieth century, however, from out of the heart of the Polish nation, our Lord has poured another fresh stream of devotion into His Church. It began when a simple Polish nun, Sr. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), with barely a third-grade education, wrote her *Diary*, which has been recognized as worthy of being numbered among the outstanding works of mystical literature. Now declared "Saint" Faustina Kowalska, she has been called by Pope John Paul II "the great apostle of Divine Mercy in our time." In St. Faustina we find a holy soul completely devoted to the Heart of Jesus, but in a new way. As she recorded in her *Diary*:

He brought me into such close intimacy with Himself that my Heart was espoused to His Heart in a loving union, and I could feel the faintest stir of His Heart, and He of mine. The fire of my created love was joined with the ardor of His eternal love.

O my Jesus, each of your saints reflects one of your virtues; I desire to reflect Your compassionate Heart, full of mercy; I want to glorify it. Let Your Mercy, O Jesus, be impressed upon my heart and soul like a seal, and this will be my badge in this and the future life.

On several occasions Christ Himself emphasized that His Heart is the source of Divine Mercy for the world:

My daughter, know that My Heart is mercy itself. From this sea of mercy graces flow out upon the whole world. No soul that has approached Me has ever gone away unconsolated. All misery gets buried in the depths of My mercy, and every saving and sanctifying grace flows from this fountain.

In another passage in her *Diary*, St. Faustina poured out her soul in adoration of the living Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist:

O living Host, my one and only strength, fountain of love and mercy, embrace the whole world, and fortify faint souls. Oh, blessed be the instant and the moment when Jesus left us His most merciful Heart.

Clearly, for St. Faustina, *the center of her life, her first love, was the Merciful Heart of Jesus*. Her devotion was to the Sacred Heart, but focused on the merciful love that flows to us from His Heart.

Much like the traditional devotion to the Sacred Heart, our Lord gave to St. Faustina new forms in which His Merciful Heart was to be honored, and new vessels for a fresh outpouring of His grace: the Image of The Divine Mercy, new prayers such as the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy and the prayers for the three o'clock Hour of Mercy, and, of course, a new feast for the universal Church — the Feast of The Divine Mercy, intended for the Sunday after Easter.

In fact, all of this received the explicit endorsement and encouragement of Pope John Paul II in his address at the tomb of St. Faustina in Cracow in the summer of 1997. His remarks on that occasion largely echoed the words he spoke at the beatification of Sr. Faustina in Rome on April 18, 1993:

Her mission continues, and is yielding astonishing fruit. It is truly marvelous how her devotion to the merciful Jesus is spreading in our contemporary world and gaining so many human hearts! This is doubtless a sign of the times — a sign of our 20th century. The balance of this century, which is now ending presents a deep restlessness and fear of the future. Where, if not in the Divine Mercy, can the world find refuge and the light of hope? Believers understand that perfectly...

[B] Reflections on the Sacred Heart by 20th Century Popes

1. PAUL VI

Intestigabiles Dvities Christi – February 6, 1965

In this Apostolic letter for the second centenary of the institution of the liturgical Feast in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pope Paul VI teaches: ... the unfathomable riches of Christ [Ep 3:8], flowing forth from the pierced side of the Divine Redeemer in that moment as He was dying on the Cross, He reconciled the human race with the Heavenly Father. This has been placed in such fulgent light in these last times due to the progress of the worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and what most joyful fruits have been derived from this in behalf of the Church.

In fact, after our Merciful Savior, appearing, as has been related, to that chosen religious Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque in the town of Paray-le-Monial repeatedly asked that all human beings, as though in a public competition of prayer, might honor His Heart, wounded out of love for us – and in every manner possible - might offer reparation for offenses accumulated against It. This devotion to the Sacred Heart – already offered in different places by the work and the impulse brought to the devotion by St. John Eudes – it marvelously flourished among the clergy and the Christian people, and was diffused in all continents.

The Apostolic See brought a coronation to this veneration, when on February 6, 1765, Clement XIII, Our Predecessor of venerated memory, by acceding to the requests of the Bishops of Poland and in the Arch Confraternity, entitled in honor of the Heart of Jesus, granted to the Noble Polish nation and to the above mentioned Roman Sodality the authorization of celebrating the Liturgical Feast in Honor of the sacred Heart, with the proper Office and Mass, and so approved by means of a Decree relating to all this, that emanated from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, on January 26, of that year [cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Haurietis Aquas*: AAS 48 (1956), p. 341; A. Gardellini, *Decreta authentica* S.R.C., t. II, 1856, n. 4326; t. III, n. 4579, 3.

And so it happened that just about 75 years after the death of the humble Visitandine Sister, there would come into regular use and with its own rites in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: and this was welcomed and received not only by the King, and by the Bishops and by the faithful of Poland united now as members of the Roman Arch Confraternity, by this entire beloved City, by the Bishops and by the Queen of the French Nation, by the superiors and by the religious of the Company of Jesus, so that in a brief period of time the worship of the Sacred Heart was extended to practically the entire Church. This inspired in the Church outstanding fruits of holiness.

It is with great joy that we have come to understand that here and there, indeed there are some preparations for the solemn commemorations, for the second centenary of this joyous institution: and this is going to take place above all in the Diocese of Autun, in which the town of Paray-le-Monial is found, especially in that splendid temple which was built there, and to which flow from all parts of the world, pious crowds of pilgrims, who come to venerate that place where, as is believed, the secrets of the Heart of Jesus were so marvelously revealed and were then diffused all over the world.

This is why, that it is indeed our desires, indeed our Will: that on this occasion, the institution of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, placed opportunely under the light, that it be celebrated with all regard by all of you, Venerable Brothers, who are the Bishops of the Church of God, and by the populations entrusted to you. We desire that to all the categories of the faithful there be explained in the most suitable and complete manner the most profound and renowned doctrinal foundations, which illustrate the infinite treasures of the charity of the Sacred Heart; and that there be indicated those sacred functions that might enkindled ever more the devotion toward this worship, worthy of the most high consideration, for the scope of obtaining the result that all Christians, animated by new dispositions of spirit, might offer that due honor to that divine Heart. That they might make reparation for the numberless sins with manifestations of obsequious service, ever more fervent, and they might conform their entire lives to the precepts of charity which is *the fulfillment of the Law* [cf. Rm 13:10].

Since indeed the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, *that ardent furnace of charity*, and symbol and expressive image of that eternal love, in which *God has so loved the world, that He gave up His only-begotten Son* [Jn 3:16] – we are certain that the afore-mentioned commemorations will contribute a great deal to see to it that the riches of that divine love might be the more profoundly pondered and well understood. And further, we nourish the confidence that all the faithful might know how to draw inspiration ever more resolved to configure their own lives the more to the Gospel, and diligently to emend their ways, to put into practice the Law of the Lord.

But, in the first place we desire that by means of an ever more intense participation in the Sacrament of the Altar, the Heart of Jesus might be honored. Its greatest gift is precisely the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, in fact, there is immolated and there is received our Savior, *always alive to intercede for us* [Heb 7:25]. This Heart was pierced opened by the soldier's lance, and poured out over humanity that flood of His Most Precious Blood, mixed with water. In this sublime sacrament, furthermore, which is the culmination and the center of all the other sacraments, that spiritual sweetness is tasted from its very source, and there is remembered that outstanding charity, which Christ has shown in His Passion [St. Thomas Aquinas, *Opusculum* 57].

Therefore, it is necessary that – to use the very words of St. John Damascene – *let us draw near to Him with an ardent desire... so that the fire of our desire, receiving it as the ardor of the furnace... and this this must destroy, by burning them, our sins and enlighten our hearts, and in this manner, in the habitual contact with the divine fire, we might also become ardent, and also*

become more like God. [St. John Damascene, *De Fide Orthod.*, 4, 13: PG 94, 1150].

This idea seems to us as the most sublimely suitable so that the Worship of the Sacred Heart – and we say this with sorrow – that even should it be that in some this is somewhat weakened, might re-flourish every day the more, and that it be the more considered as a most noble form, and one that is worthy of that true piety, which in our time, especially by means of Vatican II, that it is insistently requested toward Christ Jesus, *the King and center of all hearts, Head of the Body, which is the Church ... the principle and first-born of those coming to life again, so that in Him might reside all the primacy ...* [Col 1:18].

And just as the most sacred Ecumenical Council greatly recommends those *pious practices be undertaken anew ... especially when these have been offered out of the express will of the Apostolic See [Vatican II, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, SC 13].* This form of devotion seems that it must be much insisted upon: in fact, as we have recalled above, this consists essentially in the adoration and reparation worthily offered to Christ. And this is based above all on the Eucharist, from which, as from all other liturgical actions, *there might be achieved that sanctification of human beings in Christ, and that glorification of God to which all the other works of the Church, tend as toward their ultimate end...* (Vatican II, SC 10)...

2. Pope John Paul II,

Address at Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Sunday, 6 June 1999

... 5. Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us contemplate the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is the source of life, since by means of it victory over death was achieved. It is also the source of holiness, since in it sin — the enemy of man's spiritual development — is defeated. The Heart of the Lord Jesus is the starting-point of the holiness of each one of us. From the Heart of the Lord Jesus let us learn the love of God and understanding of the mystery of sin — *mysterium iniquitatis*.

Let us make acts of reparation to the Divine Heart for the sins committed by us and by our fellow men. Let us make reparation for rejecting God's goodness and love.

Let us draw close each day to this fount from which flow springs of living water. Let us cry out with the Samaritan woman "Give us this water", for it wells up to eternal life.

A Brief word on the 'Absence' of St. Thomas Aquinas

1. In Fr. Rahner's study on symbols, particularly as regards the sacred side of Jesus, it would seem that St. Thomas might have been at least mentioned – but he is not in the bibliography.

a. The Angelic Doctor saw the parallels of the pierced side of Christ and that of only the Immolated Lamb can open the scrolls; the CCC # 112, quoting St. Thomas does note that:

“... The phrase 'Heart of Christ' can refer to Sacred Scripture which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discerning what way the prophecies must be interpreted...⁷¹.

Pope Pius XIIth developed this symbolism in an inspiring way in his beautiful Encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Haurietis Aquas*, of 1956 commemorating the centenary of St. Margaret Mary].

b. When Fr. Rahner reflects on the Middle Ages, there is no mention of St. Thomas⁷² - but there is a scattered referral to him throughout the pages of this thesis on the Pierced Heart, and a Re-interpretation of Devotion to the Sacred Heart. The title of the thesis has led to much discussion.

c. With Pius XII's *Haurietis Aquas*, there has been ample discussion on the symbolism of the Opened Side – the separating of the waters above and below, to the left and to the right; the birth of Eve from the side of the sleeping first Adam; the entrance to Noah's Ark; Ezechiel's Temple in the desert with the water flowing from the right; the gate of heaven; the Blood and Water of the Lord and the sacraments; the immolated Lamb alone can open the scrolls, etc. etc.



⁷¹ The CCC foot note here is: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expos. In Ps 21:1*. [cfr. Ps 22:15]

⁷² cf. Thesis by Annice Callahan, o.c. p. 11.

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EXCURSUS IV – St. Gemma Galgani

[A] General Principles

NB: It is necessary to add that theological knowledge, which is supported on the demands faith, while entitatively, it is mystical knowledge that knows its truths of faith by a certain con-naturality, penetrates them participates in their sweetness in a marvelous manner, one that is quite acute. The theologian explains these and strives to understand all this more also as the result of his study, that is both laborious and slow. Fr, Marin Sola, OP, who also ponders all this most sublimely with sagacity: these are two ways of dogmatic progress, that is homogeneous and point by point. Through both ways, he wrote, it is dogmatic knowledge that unfolds and develops, in its grasp of the supernatural life. To both of these ways of knowing the theologian must attend and he must appreciate in equal manner as would the genuine theologian. However, looking first of all so that one might not be distracted in his intellectual journey, the theologian must look to a kind of light-house, as it were, which illuminates both ways of grasping the truth, and this is nothing other than the authority of the Church, assisted by the Holy Spirit. He is the principal cause of true theological development. It is from this that the knowledge of the genuinely wise person as well as the authentic holiness of the soul are but the instruments.

Common Sense Principles in Authenticating Apparitions

1. From the outset, a word of caution is needed. There is needed a critical assessment of all particular events that seem extraordinary. For a believer, there should be recognized with a sense of gratitude, accepting God's freedom to speak and to manifest Himself as He pleases.
2. Uppermost in the believer's mind is the acceptance that Christianity is based on a certain 'epiphany', a manifestation of God: there has been a partial and even visual disclosure of the trinity in and through Jesus Christ, the spirit of the Church – as at Christ's Baptism, Transfiguration. All flows from the Divine initiative – apparitions can indeed be an expression of God's favor, His free and loving decision to make Himself visible to us in a mediated way, as in Mary.
3. We do not have to believe in these apparitions – they do not have a strongly binding character, not even those recognized already by the Church. Apparitions are not a part of God's Self-revelation to the whole people of God as we find it in Jesus Christ or in Sacred Scripture.

Apparitions are private revelations; a personal message, received and communicated in a personal way. Those apparitions which have already been recognized by the Church [perhaps in a particular way, those with a devotion attached to them: Czestochowa, Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima] – such as these offer special support and encouragement for our spiritual lives. We need these friends of God in our lives, as there is always a spiritual capital contained in their messages, signs and examples of prayer and life-long personal conversion.

4. In the Middle Ages many of the ‘popular miracles’ were Eucharistic centered – at the time, there was a struggle to understand the ‘real presence’. In our time, there has been a nearly incredible flood of Marian visitations: she is the ‘ultimate facilitator’ in the service of others. Mary is the Teacher of the Church expounding always on the Mystery of the Church.

5. The visionaries: are usually the down-trodden, oppressed and poor – most often, young girls and women. It is already a scriptural fact that God speaks with preference to the little and the poor, meaning those who readily accept His word and do not oppose it. A visionary is not infallible – his/her perception can be limited or partially erroneous.

6. Their purpose is made known through a dual function:

- a permanent function: to reawaken faith and to bring about a return to God, to prayer and to fasting. It is a return to the introductory chapters of the Gospel, to the preaching of John the Baptist for conversion and the baptism of temperance. These messages have been repetitive – despite the criticism of their banality, they do serve an educational function, and teaching always needs repetition.
- a prophetic impact: they teach us that the minorities, the poor, are equal to every believer – there is no reason to repeat the mistake of the Eucharist in Corinthians: the poor do not need to sit in a lower place – indeed, it might be the very opposite: Blessed are the poor...! The seers are usually lowly citizens, humble believers seeking to be Faithful. A desolate world needs to be reminded of the closeness of heaven – mercy is the fundamental, divine, relative attribute.

7. Criteria suggested in judging their authenticity:

- sufficiency of objective information;

- conformity to Church's teaching on faith and morals;
- transparency: do these phenomena lead one more to God, Jesus Christ, the Gospel, to the out-reach in service of God and humanity; to the promotion of faith and truth and justice?
- Serious objective reasons for believing in the presence of God, manifested by genuine cures, conversions and other wonders;
- Expert opinions, from experts in various disciplines: theologians; doctors, and especially psychiatrists;
- the good fruit garnered from the events;
- steady approval of the magisterium.

8. The Support Apparitions bring to the theological life:

a. Constant balance: these extraordinary phenomena are neither the classical ways to God's Self-communication – nor even remotely, the most important means. Every sacrament of the Church is a much safer conveyer of the supernatural.. Yet , apparitions do remind the believer that Christianity is a religious tradition based on meditation, serious mental prayer.

b. Approved Apparitions can offer a challenge: and this directly, through a head-on manner – God remains the invisible God manifesting Himself in and through believers in a visible manner. The very word of God, in all cases, is entrusted to very fragile carriers, bearers. Its efficacy is also like grace – with God's help - each one is based on receiving, assimilating, living this gift.

c. A review of Incarnation and Eschatology: the Church lives in the daily presence of God, and His presence is eternal. Apparitions can help to provide a living synthesis between the Incarnational dimensions of human life, and its eschatological goal – which already begins in the living of the theological life. A deeper appreciation of 'mystery' is shared that believers might indeed become Faithful.

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[B] St. Gemma Galgani – Theological Insights

General Summations

[1] In the treatment of mystics, the question surfaces: therefore, does the Man-God still suffer⁷³? As God, for many, many theologians there cannot be any question - [even though Origen and many modern theologians argue that as God is Love – all love implies some suffering – therefore, there is some suffering iOn God.]

[a] However as the Man-God, the Saints and Mystics see Him and experience Him suffering still for the sinners of the world, and they hear Him involving reparation and seeking to be comforted. Above all with the revelation of the Devotion of the Sacred Heart, through the Visions [recognized by the Church] of St. MARGARET MARY ALAOCOQUE [who, by the way, exercised a major influence on the vocation and spiritual growth of St. Gemma Galgani], this PRESENTIAL REALITY OF CHRIST in the History of Souls, seems to be beyond doubt.

[b] Is it excessive to theorize by thinking that here we have some kind of a NEW TIME and a NEW PRESENCE of Christ – in virtue of the new act, which human beings wantonly commit, either of sin or of love for God? Can the Church think of an EXISTENTIAL PRESENCE and the EXISTENTIAL TIME pertaining to the human reality and to His Presence to the Mystical Body of the Man-God? Is it not still true that He is the EMMANUEL, GOD [still] WITH US?

[c] One conclusion from all this could indeed be that the ongoing unfolding of human history and ever act of freedom perpetrated in this, whether of the saints or of the sinners. Is PRESENT TO CHRIST IN AN EXTENSIVE AND INTENSIVE MANNER. Thus it is that every human action is present to Him in its own proper quality of this MOMENT, this INSTANT, RIGHT NOW, this new TODAY, of its real perpetration. Each action reaches Jesus, touches Him yet, and will touch Him until the end of time with a new thorn of suffering presented by sinners and with a new drop of comfort offered by Saints.

[d] This seems to us to be THE BRILLIANT CHRISTOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIAL MESSAGE of the humble girl, 'poor Gemma', of Lucca.

⁷³ This whole matter comes to the fore again regarding Jesus Himself according to those [private] revelations made to a contemporary ecstatic: '... And in addition to His glory Jesus still suffers in His spirit of Love in seeing that Humanity continues to cast under its feet divine love and mercy. You may not understand for now ...' [cf. MARIA VALTORTA, *The Poem of the Man-God*. Pisani Editions 1970, Vol. VIII, p. 1399]. Those who are more expert in mystical literature could easily find other analogous testimonies.

[2] Does Gemma herself have any valid, clear message for the Church of today? Would a life like hers, always immersed in the 'extraordinary' be imitable – or merely meant to be admirable? Here was a life most exceptional, and one of total hiddenness in Christ. For many, in this post Vatican II era, St. Gemma's life, of such full involvement in her participation in the Passion of Christ seems so far removed from most people's lived experience.

[a] Many people today would hardly be moved or drawn to her life, with the pressing modern concerns with rampant secularism, ecumenism. With all this presented concern in modern problems, one by one the devotions of old are disappearing from fervent practice. There is a noticeable reduction in public worship of the Passion of Christ, the Eucharist, the BVM, the Angels, the saints, or brothers and sisters and models before God.

[b] It would suffice to thumb through modern journals of spirituality to note how little the Saints of old, or the once popular and fervent devotions have passed from the scene. Much of this older lore is simply by-passed and hardly considered. They are only brought up in the past tense, like renewing some local festival once fervently observed by God's people, associated with many past memories of a long time ago.

[c] Pope Paul VI was most worried about the world-wide loss of faith. If our models in the faith and in devotion continue to disappear, there disappears any concept such as choosing a Model for one's spiritual life – Christology was much enriched by this stratagem and today there is such a profound crisis surrounding anything to do with such a structure. The Holy Father was convinced that the Influence of the powers of darkness have permeated a bit everywhere, both regarding moral as well as dogma, the hierarchy as well as the faithful ... such a world-wide influence of the vague and erroneous has not been seen in church history perhaps since the days of Pelagius and Nestorius, since the struggle with Photius, during the reformation under Luther. These inner struggles took from catholic belief at least half of Christianity, as did end-result of all this was the world wide rise of Modernism in the early 20th century. It is hard to measure just how far this spiritual malaise will fall⁷⁴.

[3] So, where does St. Gemma fit in with all this? Hers was truly an exceptional life, one of total hiddenness in Christ. Gemma's Mystical Experience fits in with other extraordinary happenings – preceded by those of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena,, and the other stigmatists [and there might be included in this list, the extraordinary mystical intuition of B. Pascal on the Feast of St. Clement] -

⁷⁴ cf. Cornelio FABRO, *God in Exile. Modern Atheism*. Tr. By Arthur Gibson. Newman 1968; *La preghiera nel pensiero moderno*. Roma: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura 1983.

are indeed [as we believe they were] real experiences and pertain to the sphere of possibility.

[a] And there must be kept in mind the broad possibilities of human freedom of choice. The modern epoch rather reduces everything, the space and time of phenomena, assuming manifestations *a priori* become very varied as flowing from the broad possibilities of human sensibility. The present moment in history, however, would reduce all to affirming the total emptiness of being in which the life and history of human beings becomes quite agitated.

[b] The worst loss here is that one is unable to save primarily the reality of 'every-day-ness' [cf. Walker Percy's boredom], just reducing all time to the level of a phenomenon which remains on the outside of genuine truth, as has been the position of both Rationalism and Empiricism⁷⁵. There is no elevating this to any form, or to any constitutive principle of sensible unity of the phenomena, and to a platform of the dynamic of the categories as Kant proposes⁷⁶.

[c] The result of all this abstraction even though there was a studied attempt at coherence, one identifies time with concrete being, i.e., historical, of the human reality, has idealism has indeed done in a veiled manner, and then openly prepares the way for Post-Hegelian historicism and existentialism⁷⁷.

[d] On the contrary from all this, the 'Mystical Phenomena' are a testimony of reality, not only present within the Faith, but also as an object of observation of an objective phenomenological reflection: in the distinction and together with solidarity, the pertaining of this phenomena [as apparitions; – mystical experiences; extraordinary phenomena ...]. All this is not only real, but presents itself as pregnant and decisive in the reality of the life of the Mystic. This is true even though the ultimate judgment of the value of all this for the community of the faithful remains entrusted to the authority of the Church.

[e] The reality of such phenomena is all the more outstanding in the stigmatists, for their real [i.e., physical] conformity with the Passion of Christ. In the

⁷⁵ Rightly does Kant observe, in a style much like Leibniz, 'by removing the difference' and by constructing *an intellectual system of this world ... this has led to the intellectualization of all phenomena*. Locke, on the other hand, responds with a system of ideas, and has so sensified all concepts of the intellect. [*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Tranz. Analytik I, A 270; B 236. F. - ed. R Schmidt [2] Leipzig [1930, pp. 316, ff.].

⁷⁶ Kant expressly privileges time over space, since in an early reflection space is the form of the external senses and time is the form of the internal senses – thus, time embraces [i.e. in-forms] both... [ib. p. 77]

⁷⁷ Contemporary Philosophy in its varied directions [as Marxism came to understand] has eliminated the originality of the quality of being, as a quality, deriving from Hegel from quantity and quality, and allying itself with the dissolution of any Absolute and theological transcendence that was brought about by any coincidence of being and time as found in M. Heidegger, according to whom 'time is the horizon for the comprehension of being...' ['*ALs Horizont des Seinsverständnisses*', cf. *Sein und Zeit*, ed. cit., § 65, 68, 69 c, 80, 83 - pp. 323, f.. On the Hegeleian concept of time, 82, pp. 478. ff.]

objective sense this is a real and visible experience and PARTICIPATION, which becomes for the Church and for the Faithful and authentic testimony of the supernatural. The charism, or the various charisms of the REAL PARTICIPATION OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST makes of each stigmatist in a truly visible manner, another *Christus Patiens*.

4. The reality of earthly tie, or, of daily existence, in the Mystic seems at times to be practically dissolved, even though he/she is not yet in definitive possession of the firm presence of the divine reality. Hence, the Mystical Phenomenon is usually called *ec-static*. In fact, since the Mystic is found to experience the greatest closeness to the divine reality is therefore in the greatest tension of time that is coming and is almost already conformed to eternity: precisely for this the mystical experience is all the more distinguished, and at the same time, detaches itself from any sense of the extraordinary, or of phenomenon, and intensifies the truth of its own reality.

[a] The Stigmata, the wounds, the sweating of blood, and other mystical phenomena are facts: thus they are not only real, but they are even more than the ordinary wounds, and other like painful phenomena of which any human experience might recognize the harsh reality of clinical research that studies the causes of all this.

[b] The same comportment of the subjects of such mystical facts, with respect to the natural or pathological events that may be similar, follow the course of natural laws, and indicate in the mystical phenomenon a quality that is even more positive in reality, of the same phenomenon of natural causes that may be similar: one thinks immediately of the autonomous manner, and of the disappearing of the mystical phenomena of Gemma.

[c] The relationship of modern Idealism of both the external and internal variety, of phenomenon and *noumenon* [sheer intellectual intuition], of the clash between appearance and reality, and also that of an instant and all eternity ... in the sense of the elevation of the second of all these terms over the first, and of the declassification of the latter under the former, has no meaning in the mystical phenomena, rather this is totally not considered.

[d] The mystical phenomena while they may be surprising, are as real and on a superior level than another phenomenon, but also more than any other obvious reality and it is so, not only due to their singularity and rarity, but all the more so through their surplus of ontological [objective] intentionality [subjective] - if this expression may be tolerated - or also through their ever new 'splendor' in imposing itself and being manifested in it, of a Reality originating - not only through the possible spectator, but also for the mystic experiencing all this - from regions or

hemispheres of being that are totally other than the [every-day' variety. In other words, such phenomena are different from those of the phenomenal and sensible world.

5. Returning now to the dialectics of Time, Heidegger justly criticizes Hegel for the total 'leveling' to which he places the present NOW, of this present instant, which is thus destined only to disappear in the reality of all that is eternity⁷⁸.

[a] But also in Heidegger, overturning the situation and making of Time as a Succession Of Moments [*als Jetztfolge*], i.e. returning to the notion of Time in Aristotle, as a' movement [indefinite] succession' of the moment - Time if simply leveled in the unstoppable, flowing restlessness of the very moment. Thus, there would be a disqualification precisely for this very reason its continuous indifferent flowing.

[b] It is necessary, therefore, that Human time, since this is what we are considering here, connects with eternity, but is not identified with it, as Hegel held - since otherwise, time in so far as it is 'human' ['our time'] disappears in pure phenomenology. And this is inadmissible, since time should for human beings become that real space of working out each one's freedom, as has already been hinted at justly in the Christian existentialism of Kierkegaard⁷⁹.

6. However – and it seems to me that the discussion here is precisely the consequence of all that has been noted thus far – also of eternity, not that of the One Triune God in His absolute transcendence over time [before-during-following] creation and redemption] – but that of the Man-God Who has lived and worked in Time and Who is the Savior of all those who struggle through time to reach eternal life, has [must have] to be able to save us – this requires a real relationship of Time to the Historical time where human beings run the risk and work through those trials of salvation.

7. This 'real relationship' [perhaps- does not touch] the reality of Christ in so far as He is God, and in so far as He is a divine Person [disjunctive Christology here????], as though these phenomena might lose something of the Divinity according to some modern anthropological theologies].

⁷⁸ *Die wahrhafte Gegenwart ist somit die Ewigkeit.* [Hegel, *Enzyklop d. philos. Wiss.* 259, Zuzast.

⁷⁹ For the Christian it is 'in time' that human beings are to make their choice which will decide their eternity' [this is the problem of Lessing discussed also in K.'s *Crumbs* and in his *Postilla* of J. Climacus. This is resolved in the *Moral Sickness* and in his *exercise of Christianity* of his Anti-Climacus]. Therefore, each believer who is in harmony with his time and hopes for eternity has to know how to pick 'the Moment of Grace'. [Diary, X (2) A 121] – and never allow oneself to be swamped in finiteness by abandoning the Christian reality, as has Protestantism' [Diary XI (2) A. 121.

[a] However, these surely could have touched and interested the Person of Christ in His humanity, i.e., as endowed with an authentic human nature, still sensible. There is no doubt that Jesus Christ presently is glorified and glorious and is no longer passible⁸⁰ in a direct and indicative manner.

[b] It seems [to respect the style of St Gemma noted above] that His holy Humanity, even though He is glorified and glorious, would maintain Himself still as a PARTICIPANT in all the existential tension of the Human History of Salvation – and even more so, would be somehow involved in the awful struggle of some individual souls as in the events of both good and evil in the Church and in the world.

[c] Christ, therefore would surely not be indifferent to the comportment of the freedom of human beings, but in some manner, the counter-blows in His humanity and sensibility is still there, and so could also manifest, just as it seems to happen precisely in those states and phenomena of Mystics.

[d] In these extraordinary phenomena of the sorrowful apparitions of Christ which appear still under His Cross, with His bleeding wounds ... and of the Crucifixes and sacred images of the Passion, and the corresponding PARTICIPATIONS of the suffering of Christ on the part of mystics – such as the stigmata, the crown of thorns, and the like.⁸¹

[e] Christ asks of believers their PARTICIPATION in the sufferings of His Passion, under the title of COMPASSION towards Him and one of EXPIATION for the sins of humanity which continue to be committed. The invitation of Jesus Christ to those specially called by Him is communicated to them by word, or with some expressed declaration of His real suffering, but above all by His manifesting Himself to them as visible. this is done in various and changing ways but He indicates to them his ACTUAL sufferings [at this instant] accepted and lived by Him for the present sins which human beings continue even TODAY – on THIS DAY to commit. And this is done in order to excite the fervor and the compassion of the Mystic, and therefore [as this has already been claimed] there is SOME SHARE IN HIS REAL SUFFERING AND A PARTICIPATION, CONFORMITY WITH THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST – the Mystics are challenged to alleviate His sufferings.

⁸⁰ Translator's note: this word derives from the passion, and means: capable of suffering.

⁸¹ In Italy, following the phenomena of St. Gemma and St. Fr. Pio [who seems to have been a devotee of St. Gemma] other similar cases have been claimed:

- M. AIELLO [cf. F. Spadafora, *Sr. Elena Aiello*. II ed. Roma 1964;

- TERESA MUSCO, who died on August 19, 1976 [cf. G. Roschini, *Teresa Musco. Crocifissa col Crocifisso* - Caserta 1979 - P. Gino BUURRESI, OMV, in our own times.

[A word of serious caution is merited here: not all of these situations were ever approved by the Vatican – in recent years, a number of such claims have been rejected as inauthentic]. [Translator's Note].

[8] There is one final ontic-phenomenological observation which is founded on classical theology. It is true that the humanity of Christ, with His Resurrection and Ascension, has taken Him from the sight of all human beings [Ac 1:10]. But one should not allow being exaggerated by the empirical phantasy in conceiving in some static manner the relationship between TIME and ETERNITY, and therefore, between God and creatures. Already St. Paul recalled to the Aeropagites of Athens God is not far from human beings, but in Him we all live, and move and have our being [cf. Ac 17:28]. Therefore, if we are with Him, and in Him God is not, nor does He remain outside of us.

A SUMMARY

It should not be surprising that today there is a phenomenological extension – at this very moment – of the sufferings of Christ. While He is present in His eternity of glory acquired through the terrible sufferings of His Passion and Death, caused by the sins that weak human beings commit through the weakness of passions and their pride of mind – they continue and will continue to commit. Therefore, every time that a human being in the passing of time renews with his/her own sin, the cause of all His Sufferings, mystically there are re-lived, and returned in Christ the effects that are His penalties and His sorrows and sufferings. Merciful as He remains eternally, He has chosen to show all this to his specially chosen souls who would compassionate, i.e., who would love Him to the point that they would suffer as He did, and that they are united to His sufferings. It is helpful to remember here His words to the Pious Women on His way of the Cross: *Do not weep over Me, but for yourselves and your children...* [Lk 23:28].

[C] A THOUGHT FROM ST. THOMAS

Divine Presence

I, 8, aa. 1 & 2; I Sent d. 27, q. 1, a. 1, spec. ad 4]

The Essence of God in Things

On the contrary, A thing is wherever it operates. But God operates in all things, according to Is. 26:12, "Lord . . . Thou hast wrought all our works in [Vulg.: 'for'] us." Therefore God is in all things.

answer that, God is in all things; not, indeed, as part of their essence, nor as an accident, but as an agent is present to that upon which it works.

For an agent must be joined to that wherein it acts immediately and touch it by its power; hence it is proved in Phys. vii that the thing moved and the mover must be joined together.

Now since God is very being by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect; as to ignite is the proper effect of fire. Now God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being; as light is caused in the air by the sun as long as the air remains illuminated.

Therefore as long as a thing has being, God must be present to it, according to its mode of being. But being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally inherent in all things since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing, as was shown above (Question [7], Article [1]). Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermost.

Reply to Objection 1: God is above all things by the excellence of His nature; nevertheless, He is in all things as the cause of the being of all things; as was shown above in this article.

Reply to Objection 2: Although corporeal things are said to be in another as in that which contains them, nevertheless, spiritual things contain those things in which they are; as the soul contains the body. Hence also God is in things containing them; nevertheless, by a certain similitude to corporeal things, it is said that all things are in God; inasmuch as they are contained by Him.

Reply to Objection 3: No action of an agent, however powerful it may be, acts at a distance, except through a medium. But it belongs to the great power of God that He acts immediately in all things. Hence nothing is distant from Him, as if it could be without God in itself.

But things are said to be distant from God by the unlikeness to Him in nature or grace; as also He is above all by the excellence of His own nature

Reply to Objection 4: In the demons there is their nature which is from God, and also the deformity of sin which is not from Him; therefore, it is not to be absolutely conceded that God is in the demons, except with the addition, "inasmuch as they are beings." But in things not deformed in their nature, we must say absolute.

Article 2

On the contrary, It is written, "I fill heaven and earth." (Jer. 23:24).

answer that, Since place is a thing, to be in place can be understood in a twofold sense; either by way of other things—i.e. as one thing is said to be in another no matter how; and thus the accidents of a place are in place; or by a way proper to place; and thus things placed are in a place.

Now in both these senses, in some way God is in every place; and this is to be everywhere.

First, as He is in all things giving them being, power and operation; so He is in every place as giving it existence and locative power. Again, things placed are in place, inasmuch as they fill place; and God fills every place; not, indeed, like a body, for a body is said to fill place inasmuch as it excludes the co-presence of another body; whereas by God being in a place, others are not thereby excluded from it; indeed, by the very fact that He gives being to the things that fill every place, He Himself fills every place.

Article 3

On the contrary, A gloss on the Canticle of Canticles (5) says that, "God by a common mode is in all things by His presence, power and substance; still He is said to be present more familiarly in some by grace" [*The quotation is from St. Gregory, (Hom. viii in Ezech.)].

I answer that, God is said to be in a thing in two ways; in one way after the manner of an efficient cause; and thus He is in all things created by Him;

in another way he is in things as the object of operation is in the operator; and this is proper to the operations of the soul, according as the thing known is in the one who knows; and the thing desired in the one desiring.

In this second way God is especially in the rational creature which knows and loves Him actually or habitually. And because the rational creature possesses this prerogative by grace, as will be shown later (Question [12]). He is said to be thus in the saints by grace

But how He is in other things created by Him, may be considered from human affairs. A king, for example, is said to be in the whole kingdom by his power, although he is not everywhere present.

Again a thing is said to be by its presence in other things which are subject to its inspection; as things in a house are said to be present to anyone, who nevertheless may not be in substance in every part of the house.

Lastly, a thing is said to be by way of substance or essence in that place in which its substance may be. Now there were some (the Manichees) who said that spiritual and incorporeal things were subject to the divine power; but that visible and corporeal things were subject to the power of a contrary principle. Therefore against these it is necessary to say that God is in all things by His power.

Further, others said that, although all things are subject to God's providence, still all things are not immediately created by God; but that He immediately created the first creatures, and these created the others. Against these it is necessary to say that He is in all things by His essence.

Therefore, God is in all things by His power, inasmuch as all things are subject to His power; He is by His presence in all things, as all things are bare and open to His eyes; He is in all things by His essence, inasmuch as He is present to all as the cause of their being.

Reply to Objection 1: God is said to be in all things by essence, not indeed by the essence of the things themselves, as if He were of their essence; but by His own essence; because His substance is present to all things as the cause of their being.

Reply to Objection 2: A thing can be said to be present to another, when in its sight, though the thing may be distant in substance, as was shown in this article; and therefore two modes of presence are necessary; viz. by esse and by presence.

Reply to Objection 3: Knowledge and will require that the thing known should be in the one who knows, and the thing willed in the one who wills. Hence by knowledge and will things are more truly in God than God in things. But power is the principle of acting on another; hence by power the agent is related and applied to an external thing; thus by power an agent may be said to be present to another.

Reply to Objection 4: No other perfection, except grace, added to substance, renders God present in anything as the object known and loved; therefore only grace constitutes a special mode of God's existence in things. There is, however, another special mode of God's existence in man by union, which will be treated of in its own place (TP) ...

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[D] St. GEMMA GALGANI⁸²

Official “Votes” for her Cause of Canonization
requested by Pope Pius XI [1929]

[Due To The Particular Challenges presented by this Cause of Canonization, Pope Pius XIth requested the Official Opinions of two additional experts to add their official opinion on her Cause: Fr. Marco Sales, OP, ‘Master Of The Sacred Palace’ [‘Papal Theologian’] – and Abbot Ildefonso Schuster, OSB⁸³ – later Cardinal Archbishop of Milano].

⁸² Cf. Cornelio FABRO, CSS, *Gemma Galgani. Testimone del Sopranaturale*. Roma: Passionisti 1989, pp. 459-481

⁸³ These two authoritative ‘Votes’ are referred to by Msgr. S. Natucci, the General Promoter of the Faith in his Presentation, dated June 8, 1957. This was presented in the monumental study of Fr. Zoffoli, in these words: *The judgment of two other theologians to whom the completed Cause process had been completed, is here*

1. Fr. Marco SALES, OP

[Papal Theologian]

Your Eminence,

I have attentively read and re-read and studied with great commitment all those reflections sent to me, comprised of thousands and thousands of pages, concerning the Cause of Gemma Galgani. And even though, at the beginning I found myself almost overcome by a certain diffidence regarding it all, nonetheless I continued on to the completion of this task after nearly two years of study. And now I am happy to be able, with firm conviction, to offer my positive response to the questions presented to me. However, in this, I am entirely submitting my judgment to my higher superiors, those individuals who in addition to their superior wisdom, they also have the grace of office that has not been bestowed on the humble author of these lines.

1. *In the many extraordinary facts that are verified in the Cause of Gemma Galgani, would it be possible for us to admit that there could have been some illusion on her part?* My response:

a. I maintain that in the overall view of these proceedings there is no delusion, but that the extraordinary facts recorded there: such as ecstasies, revelations, and the like - but that these truly correspond to the reality within limits of the statements recorded of the Servant of God. In this, we have withdrawn from the interpretations, or explanations offered by her admirers – and sometimes even perhaps, from those comments of some of her directors.

b. The reasons upon which there is based this judgment of mine are the following:

- first of all, because there is nothing extraordinary in the statements of Gemma that would not be found in the lives of a few of other canonized Saints, especially like those of St. Catherine of Siena St. Rose of Lima, St. Catherine Ricci, St. Mary Magdalene dei Pazzi, and the like. And I say this without reference to the more ancient mystics such as St. Gertrude and St. Brigid. This clearly shows that one simply cannot adduce any *a priori* argument against the possibility and objective reality of those facts alluded to these graced persons. There is nothing in any of this that would be opposed to the teachings of the Faith, of Sacred Theology, and more generally, to the teachings of the Church.

offered following a further examination of the entire Process. And their view as well as that of many others, is most positive. This present, un-edited text was forwarded to Fr. Fabro by Msgr. A. Fruttaz, the late Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

- in the second place, the very fact that Gemma herself seems to be most hesitant in her own regard, and attributes her visions and appearances to her own imagination [cf. p.77, of Doc. # 453]. There is an indubitable proof of the sincerity of her statements. Yet, each experience must respond to very careful and circumspect reflection in admitting the reality of these facts, which are not guaranteed by herself. It might even be that sometimes she speaks out of humility, but since authentic humility is never contrary to the truth, I consider it preferable to take her words in their most obvious sense. This is all the more to be accepted in that the Prophets themselves sometimes are deceived and they presented as the word of God that which really is not always so. This is evidently the case of Nathan, who said to David that God wanted the construction of the Temple from him, and that David was obliged to do this by the order of God's word.

c. The preceding observation holds also for certain explanations in which the Servant of God tried to offer some insight into some of the mysteries. However, these explanations do not come from God, but as she herself often expressly stated that these views were simply the fruit of her own thought. As a result there can be no wonder that some of her expressed views are not really in full accord with precise theological language. . One example of this might be noted on p. 888 of the manuscript on the Trinity.

d. And yet it should be pointed out that these instances often involved most difficult and very subtle matters. The fact is that she did not have a formal theological education, and so would use manners of expression that are not theologically precise. As a result of all this we are not always sure if such views and other expressed opinions presented by Gemma might have been poorly recorded, or even badly transcribed, even without any fault of her own. There also appear some comments that seem vague or inadvertent. One example of this, might be on p. 871 of the manuscript. There is an evident confusion between the work of the Holy Spirit and that of the Divine Son, within the most Blessed Mary. This erroneous view might be attributed either to those who wrote down what she said, as some of her views seem in opposition to other statements of hers, as on p. 870 of this Document of the Cause.

e. It is to her sublime simplicity and lack of formal instruction that certain of her statements ought to be attributed in which she offers some hints several times in her writings. Some of these concern the [universal] knowledge of Jesus Christ – in that some of the views attributed to her differ from other texts of hers. Thus, e.g., there is read on p. 62 of the official document: *'... so, the Angel while laughing, taught me that when Jesus came he would not have me admit that I had this mania of seeing my saintly Passionist confrere, Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother.*

Yet I knew that the Angel was joking, because I already know that Jesus cannot hide anything. In this statement there seems to be expressly affirmed that Jesus knows everything, and that this affirmation must not be understood only of Jesus as God, of which no believer would doubt – but that she included Jesus in His humanity, Who is full of truth: *in Whom there are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* This same teaching of the universal knowledge of Jesus Christ Gemma would be repeated various times in her Letters. Therefore, her expressions that would seem to be contrary to these, are to be attributed more than to anything else, to her lack of any profound instructor on the part of Gemma. Or rather, such statements need to be understood in a good sense, paying more attention to the Saint's intention rather than to her very words.

f. In the mind and heart of each and everyone there could come to the fore real difficulties regarding some of the extraordinary phenomena in the life of the Servant of God. Some instances would be that she speaks a little too frequently of the kisses, embraces, of holding hands, caressing - on the part of Jesus and of Mary, as well as on the part of that extraordinary intimacy she claims to have had with her Guardian Angel. However, these facts find their explanation in the psychology of women of that background and in a particular manner, in that of Gemma. Hers was a human nature with a rather affective character, but totally afar from the slightest shadow of impurity. Furthermore, some of these expressions are not unlike those revealed in the Sacred Canticles regarding God: *That He might kiss me with the kiss of His mouth... His left hand under my head, and His right embraces me...*[cf. Sgs 8:3] There should be no wonder, then, that Jesus Christ, Mary most holy, and the holy Angels in the description of their appearances to her might be adapted to this feminine psychology of the time. In the life of Gemma she often speaks of kisses and embraces from Heavenly Dwellers, and in this connection, it might be remembered that the Apostle, St. John had reclined on the breast of Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus Himself had said to His Apostles: *touch and see.* Then it is written of the pious women that they embraced and held on to His feet and they adored him. The point is that such appearances are therefore possible and there is no reason to reject them simply out of hand, even though some of the descriptions might lend themselves to serious doubts regarding their reality. This is particularly true of those statements which refer to Angels who are described as sending letters back and forth, Regarding such experiences the Servant of God shows herself to be somewhat wavering in her statements. In all of such expressions, however, the Saint shows herself to be really far from any sentiment that might be considered impure and dishonest. In this regard, one might confer the Summary of the Document on p. 646, where it is stated that she refused a kiss that the Guardian Angel wished to give her. The Saint states: I have nothing other to offer to God than my virginity. This was her attitude regarding her own father.

g. Having stated all this, if one were to consider the massive documentation of Gemma's Life as this appears in the Acts of the entire Process of her Cause – and, in particular, regarding her horror for any offense against God, along with her most profound humility, the great fear she had and the utmost diffidence that she had regarding her own self, and of these many extraordinary phenomena that she describes as having experienced. She was endowed with the utmost simplicity and it is with this that she exposes her entire life to her spiritual directors. She furthermore obeyed these blindly, and all their orders and counsels. Then, it is necessary to combine all of this with her most intense love for Jesus Christ and His Passion. She was furthermore endowed with a most ardent devotion to the most holy Eucharist and to Mary most holy – along with her very ardent zeal for the conversion of sinners and for the spread of the Reign of God.

h. All of this together might provide the most convincing argument in order to make the certain judgment that this Servant of God, Gemma Galgani, in the totality of her recorded life, was not a victim of delusion. Finding herself unable to direct herself in so many extraordinary happenings, she simply obeyed. And if in this she made mistakes or referred to illusions in some particular matter, these are not always imputable to her – but are even more so to her Spiritual Directors. They need to bear some of the burden as well as perhaps the lived environment in which she experienced all this, and those special circumstances in which her days unfolded.

2. In the possibility that she had indeed undergone some delusion, could it be that this possibility might have penetrated the majority of her life, to such an extent as to weaken the conviction of the lived heroicity of the virtues she lived?

The response to this question is Negative for the reasons already noted above. St. Gemma only fully obeyed; she had observed with frankness that something was objectively certain, when it appeared to her that it was, and as doubtful whatever she doubted. No one can have any responsibility on that which others thought, nor on the manner with which they interpreted her deeds, her words or her writings. She manifested all this solely through obedience to others and not for any vainglory of her own. Some of these writings of hers were rather delicate because they treated of matters of confession, and were divulged while these matters had been recommended by her to be burned. In all this, Gemma is not so much to blame, but her Directors were. The heroicity of the virtues of this Servant of God does not remain, therefore, in any manner in the shadows but it can even be said that her virtue shines forth with all the more light and seems even more manifest.

3. How did the Servant of God conduct herself in the face of these extraordinary matters, whatever their true origin might have been?

a. This Servant of God, in all cases, conducted herself according to the norms that the most accredited spiritual masters suggest, and always in harmony with the orders and counsels of her confessors and Directors. It is simply beyond all doubt that she personally sought the special gifts she received from God so regularly. This was not only because she feared the deceptions of the devil, but also because she sincerely considered herself totally unworthy of any special consideration. She understood very well that extraordinary gifts do not constitute holiness but they are graces *gratis datae*, and that of themselves, such divine interventions could also be granted to the worst sinners. For these reasons she prayed many times that the Lord should cover over her stigmata and all her other gifts as external appearances be shielded so that these would not appear in public. She took on for her own conduct anything and everything which she thought might hide such gifts so that they remain hidden. Her decision to write these matters down in her diary was done out of obedience to her directors and Confessors.

b. Further, let us look at the fact that at every appearance that she experienced, from the very outset, very profoundly disturbed her. She so often called upon God Himself, the Most Blessed Virgin, and her Guardian Angel to help her. She made the sign of the Cross, she was disdained and rejected even harshly by a number persons who came to meet her. There are records of some unruly behavior, such as spitting in another's face! She had been directed to do this as a safeguard of her own person, her Directors had suggested that she should do this in self defense. She attended scrupulously to all the orders received with whatever regarded regarding her time and manner of prayer – regarding what food she should eat – what rest she should grant to her body, on not taking up any affliction, any bodily of penance without first seeking counsel and approval. Furthermore, so many of these appearances and these extraordinary phenomena were intended to stimulate her toward good in her life and to an ever greater union with God, and to the most perfect imitation of Christ and to that complete abandonment to the will of God.

c. There never developed in her any adverse spirit of pride, even the slightest. She never showed personal interest in the extraordinary, out of vanity nor ever sought any worldly glory: Her one unsatisfied yearning was that of becoming a penitential and austere religious. Every appearance of each extraordinary phenomenon came to term by leaving this Servant of God in peace, in tranquility of spirit. All her special and often clamorous gifts brought to her new vigor in her thrust toward Paradise. It would be only there that her deepest yearnings would be satisfied in the eternal vision and possession of God.

d. From a very careful study of all the abundant material possible to me, I can state with all security that Gemma. In the presence of these many extraordinary

phenomena, conducted herself in a manner such as only a holy soul could have mustered.

4. *Is there not some danger that once the virtues of Gemma have been approved, the public might retain that also her extraordinary gifts were likewise approved?*

a. Such a possibility in my own humble opinion simply does not exist, and then such a conclusion would not be able to restrict itself only to the Cause of Gemma Galgani. As has been made clear from the outset, that there is no single extraordinary happening in the life of Gemma that would not be verified in the lives of other canonized saints to a greater or lesser degree. Furthermore, it is the common teaching that the Church, even while approving the virtues of the saints, she had never wanted to, or intended to approve also all their writings and all their affirmations, or their visions and revelations which these saints were convinced had favored them, or those extraordinary phenomena that might have been verified by them [It might be good to remember here the words of St. Bonaventure regarding St. Francis of Assisi: his great wonder was not the marks of the stigmata on his body, but rather his extraordinary union with God in the depths of his heart (translator's personal addition)]. Believers are led to understand that all of these extraordinary phenomena, in every case, are unique graces, *gratis datae*. They are not necessarily connected with holiness and that all public revelation intended for the entire Church came to an end in the Apostolic age. Each and every subsequent private revelation can only be endowed with a relative value, in so far as the Church is always able to declare that these 'private' revelations are in no way in contrast with the publicly revealed matter of faith.

b. The same must be held regarding all her other extraordinary phenomena: as the bestowal of the stigmata, the favor of ecstasies and all such realities. Since these are in no way necessarily conducted with holiness, the fact of approving the heroicity of the virtues of a saint does not of itself imply that this official judgment of approval would also be extended to approving as authentic, any and all supernatural phenomena that came to be verified in the life of these saints. While the Church does not pronounce herself officially regarding these phenomena, while she presents no objection to the use of terms, such as: 'the saint bore, there were handed over to the saint' – and like expressions. The Church safeguards jealously the faithful in their purity of faith and manners and that none of these recorded phenomena could ever serve the purposes of superstition. In some cases, because of special circumstances, the Church might intervene with her judgment regarding them. However, in all instances, her general practice requires much antecedent study and careful investigations – and these are often protracted and tedious.

c. At any rate, I do not see any problem in this area, in the unfolding of the Cause of Gemma Galgani. The Church can indeed declare explicitly that in her approval of the heroicity of Gemma's virtues the Church does not intend to make any pronouncement on the extraordinary but such favors are not necessarily a part of authentic holiness. This is the decision made in the Causes of other canonized Saints, such as St. Catherine dei Ricci with regard to her appearances from Savonarola. Regarding the events which she did experience, the Church has rendered no judgment as to their authenticity. The Church studied the matter and only stated that there was nothing in these in any way contrary to Church teaching. The opportunity and the fittingness for such a declaration in the Cause of Gemma Galgani was motivated also by the fact that her frequent visions, her ecstasies and the many, many other marvels that are narrated concerning her. The fact of these phenomena are much diffused among Christian people at this later time in history – these have been bandied about more and more in recent times – so often the reputation for holiness becomes accompanied ['encrusted?'] with the reputation for miracles and wondrous happenings. One good feature of this is that this fact seems to depend on prayer for the gifted one's intercession.

5. Would it not seem, with the restricted approval [involving solely the heroicity of the virtues] that the authority of the Church would be compromised and the very nature of these gifts would be held to be suspect?

a. Also here the response to this further question does not present any real difficulty whenever the declaration that is made would high-light the idea just explained. If in fact the Church affirms that she does not wish to pronounce herself regarding the extraordinary happenings recorded in the Cause of Gemma Galgani. The Church's role is solely to provide a judgment on the virtues she practiced. It is clear that in all such proceedings the Church would not want to be compromised – even in the case in which the above noted phenomena were suspect in themselves, and for all practical purposes, impossible. All that would be needed from the Church would not be some further supernatural intervention on the part of God, or of the Devil, or that it is all a subjective delusion, or would imply something like a *hysterical mystification*, without objective substance. What is important is that there would be clearly established the over-riding good faith of Gemma, as results from the official Acts of the Process.

b. Furthermore, should the Church come to believe that the above 'restrictive condition' i.e., only the heroicity of the virtues lived] need not be explicitly posited each and every time, but the Church might choose to proceed to the approval of the candidate's virtues without making any mention of his/ her extraordinary happenings. Still the authority of the Church would not be compromised. In the Cause at hand in the life of St. Gemma, there can still be

added to the authentic and already much discussed Acts of the Cause over the course of the years further legends or whisperings have been inserted regarding miracles that really never happened.

d. The fundamental principle the Church observes in all this is:

THE CHURCH CANONIZES VIRTUES AND NOT THE MIRACLES ASCRIBED IN THE LIFE
OF THE SAINTS.

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Summary

[1] To conclude this opinion, I maintain that the extraordinary facts of the life of Gemma Galgani in their totality, are genuine, but in the manner and within the limits as exposed by Gemma herself. I further maintain that the Servant of God, in the totality of her life, was not the victim of delusion, and that the heroism of her virtues shines forth in all their necessary light and that the Church may proceed to the official Decree of her canonization.

[2] It might be prudent to offer an explicit declaration that even while approving her virtues, the Church does not intend to make any pronouncement on the existence and the nature of the extraordinary facts that are recounted. In this manner, the authority of the Church would not in any manner whatsoever be compromised even on the part of the incredulous.

However, I submit entirely these judgments of mine to the superior Authority.

Fr. Marco SALES, OP

Consultor

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2. Abbot Ildefonse SCHUSTER, OSB

[Benedictine Abbot of St. Paul's, Outside the Walls –
future, Cardinal Archbishop of Milano]

Your Eminence,

The Very Reverend Promoter of the Faith has proposed to me certain questions regarding the heroic virtues of the Servant of God, Gemma Galgani. I will try to respond before God, all that these documents instruct me, of which I have the Cause in its entirety, and following my own conscience.

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Quaesita

1. In the many extraordinary facts that are verified in the Cause of Gemma Galgani, would it be possible for us to admit that there could have been some illusion on her part?
2. In the possibility that she had indeed undergone some delusion, could it be that this possibility might have penetrated the majority of her life, to such an extent as to weaken the conviction of the lived heroicity of the virtues she lived.
3. Just how did this Servant of God conduct herself in facing these extraordinary facts, whatever their origin and nature?
4. Is there not some danger that after having approved the lived virtues of Gemma Galgani that it might be concluded by the public that even these extraordinary happenings in her life are also in some clear manner officially approved by the church?
5. And would it not seem with this limited approval of the authority of the Church that in some way the origin and nature of these special gifts might in some way be suspect?

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1. The extraordinary facts to which allusion has been made, are principally her ecstasies, and generally the frequent exchange she conducted with the invisible world of the spirits, as well as her physical participation in the sufferings of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Regarding all these, I observe that the life of Gemma does not offer anything new than from what has already been encountered in many other lives of the saints.

a. There is well known the exchange between St. Francis of Rome with her angels, that she saw and treated with them on familiar terms. And it is also well known also how St. Camillus de Lellis made use of the angelic ministry to get back a letter that had been written. And it is also well-known that God admitted many saints, among them St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine, the Blessed Ida of Louvain, and others, into the corporeal and suffered participation in the pains of the Lord's Passion.

b. Therefore, with regards to the extraordinary facts attributed to Gemma Galgani, of themselves, they do not contain anything that would seem untrue. Nor is there anything in all these, any repugnance for the teaching and the hagiographical tradition of the Catholic Church.

c. And father questions come to the fore: - whether such facts are indeed historically demonstrated, and further, whether in all these could there have been on the part of Gemma some illusion. Quite wisely in the Official Processes of Saints the law established by Benedict XIII with regard to St. Catherine dei Ricci and regarding a vision of hers with regard to Savonarola led to the disregard of such visions, and the Cause is directed to deal formally with the heroic virtues of anyone proposed as a candidate for the honors of the altar. That Pontiff in fact teaches that THE CHURCH DOES NOT CANONIZE VISIONS BUT THE VIRTUES OF HER SAINTS.

d. The reason why the Church does not intend to formulate a direct and formal judgment on the visions and on the other wondrous happenings attributed to the Servants of God, is to be sought after in the consideration that while she does treat of these situations as private revelations, these are not intended for the required faith of the entire Church. There are many instances when there are lacking to the Church those elements necessary to be able to judge the origin, the limits and the objective fidelity in which are presented similar visions and other happenings of the saints.

e. In the revelations of St. Brigit on the Passion, just how many discordances are there not found in the revelations attributed to St. Gertrude, St. Mechtilde, St. Frances of Rome and others. How are we to understand such disagreements? By observing that perhaps the reports that reached us are not always exact, and that these same souls in ecstasies would not have always been able to discern in their meditations, how much would be the fruit of the charismatic illumination – from that which was the result of their own intelligence, on whatever level they had reached in the development of their understanding. And let it be remembered that at times even the Prophets themselves, who claimed to be speaking in the name of the Lord, in making their statements, while God, in correcting their own pronouncements makes clear that in making their statements, they often spoke from their own personal convictions.

f. However, in the diligent study for the discernment of their spirits, there re-enters here the role of prudence, a cardinal virtue, which is therefore demanded that anyone who is proposed for the honors of the altar. The Cause needs to show that there have employed every caution and diligence in order not leave any space for illusions, in the face of the many possible authentic charismatic gifts. The following are some of these cautions and diligence to be brought to his delicate matter:

- never desire such gifts in a disorderly manner;
- not to trust one's own judgment, but to submit all special gifts to the control of the spiritual Director;
- to humble oneself ever more, to subject everything to the responsibility of such extraordinary similar graces;
- in the acceptance and the use of such gifts, depend entirely on Holy Obedience;
- to make sure that similar illustrations are totally in accord with Catholic doctrine;
- do not attach one's spirit to such gifts, but to make use of them all as a means to augment one's recognition of his/her nothingness.

g. In making use of such criteria and cautions there is not excluded the possibility that the human soul might at times confuse with the divine spirit, that which is the simple effect of one's own spirit – which may have happened to Paul when he announced to the priest of Mileto that he would no longer see him again in this life – however, illusions are visible for the most part as improbable. Whatever they are, they cannot any longer be considered as something voluntary and imputable to the weak human soul. And thus the Church is challenged to do all in its limited power, not to be deceived.

h. Gemma Galgani, as the varied aspects of the Process of her Cause unfolded, provide any evidence of glorying in her gifts, nor did she love her charismatic gifts for their own sake. She always subjected them, blindly and entirely to the judgment of her spiritual directors. She hid them as much as she could, manifesting the utmost diffidence regarding her own spirit. She thought of her extraordinary gifts as another means of coming to grips with what she felt was her basic unworthiness. She made use of her gifts solely to be the more united to the uncreated Goodness, God Himself. This is what the Theologian assigned to her Cause as the Censor of her writings stated as did her spiritual Directors.

So, to respond simply in the negative to the first question – as to whether through any fault of Gemma, she could have been subject to illusion.

2. Since the rules of Mystical Theology and the tradition of the Church do not allow any deception, then it is necessary to agree that Gemma Galgani was, so to speak, totally immunized from illusions. She was also protected by her own sense of fidelity with which, under the wise direction of her Spiritual Directors, she made use of those rules and criteria that were assigned to the matter, for the discernment of spirits.

a. But let us make the supposition that perhaps at times out of the weakness of her human nature, could she have become subjected to illusion, it could be said that this would have involved her entire life, to the extent of weakening the official conviction of the heroicity of her virtues? I note that Msgr. Volpi in particular, in guiding her, would have paid no attention at all to her charismatic gifts, toward which he thought of them with diffidence and austerity.

b. Under their guidance, the Servant of God consecrated herself to the heroic practice of the cardinal and theological virtues, even without giving much sway to her many revelations. From all these phenomena, the spiritual Directors wisely disregarded them. It was in response to their orders that Gemma had to implore from the Lord to hide her stigmata; that her sweating of blood be stopped, and so on.

c. How little the most perfect life as lived by Gemma shows clearly that she would ever depend on the array of her favors and gifts, all of which were gratuitously bestowed upon her. One might continue these lines of questioning and find other arguments, in addition to those of her perfect, specific and universal obedience, there was in her a profound sense of diffidence that would penetrate the lights she received, as might be noted in this passage written to her Confessor:

... My extraordinary encounters do not come from God, but all comes from the devil - as she confessed to a Religious man – ‘please pray to Jesus for light, light, my beloved grand-father. It is all a false devotion, as I can see so clearly – it is all my hypocrisy [cf. *Positio* on Revision, p. 32].

d. Therefore, having noted that the entire gamut of her extraordinary charismatic gifts attributed to Gemma, whether it might seem possible to imply, without any fault of her own, some illusions – even if such a possibility of this could be established - this would not involve her entire life. She was directly minutely by obedience to her Directors. Nor could such a hint even in any way weaken the heroicity of her virtues already demonstrated in the official Processes of her Cause with direct proofs capable of standing by themselves.

3. In addition to the criteria of prudence noted above, and due to her vivid sense of the need in which she suffered of spiritual direction – Gemma in the face

of these extraordinary phenomena, lowered herself ever more in the disdain of herself, being convinced that God had deigned to become involved with such 'refuse' that she considered herself to be.

a. Her humility was so profound that it brought her to some drastic hyperbolic statements, as when she stated that her spiritual directors should totally reject her out of hand. If it is true that the tree is known particularly by its fruits, it would be fitting to consider as authentic the extraordinary facts of the Servant of God. Gemma made use of her great gifts as means to offer to the Lord in the holocaust of her obedience, humility and hatred that she nurtured in her own regard.

b. Throughout her entire life and throughout the Processes of her Cause there was never verified that the frequent facts and illustrations of Gemma were anything less and connected in her as the exercise of the most perfect virtues. Long from aggrandizing her own 'corrupted' nature such charisms served as a martyrdom for this angelic Child, by consecrating her as the Spouse of the Crucified Spouse.

c. On the contrary, false mysticism sooner or later would bring one to make known its corrupt nature. Consistently, Gemma remained humble – even all the more so in her own consideration of her evident gifts, thinking that these were more due to the deceptions of the devil and that she truly was evil. Therefore, she was just unable to be deceived, in that she saw all to be an error and sinfulness in herself.

4. The danger of pride in extraordinary gifts is common in the lives of many other saints, such as the Blessed Angela da Foligno, Brigit, Gertrude and others. Authentic ecstasies and revelations are grasped by the faithful only with ecclesiastical approval they are still read with a sense of some diffidence, but also edification.

a. However, the teaching of the Church with regard to such gifts is explicit, nor is it unknown to the faithful. Ecclesiastical approval granted to the revelations of St. Gertrude, or of St. Brigit, in no way guarantees the objective truth of those encounters, but simply declares that in those writings there has been discovered nothing that would be alien to the teaching of the Catholic Church. In our present Cause, this identical declaration was emanated by the Censor who, in the name of the S. Congregation, had examined the writings of Gemma Galgani.

b. His Eminence, the late Cardinal Billot, SJ, said one day that also among the writings of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, there had been something erroneous and false. And yet the holiness of the Saint led to her being canonized, being one who had at the foundation of the Cause her virtues, and not the true or

supposed charismatic gifts. And likewise, just as the Church in proposing to the faithful the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus had based her doctrine on very solid theological principles. These were far more solid than was the foundation of the declarations made by the Saint.

c. As all these revelations do not exceed the category of Private Revelations, ordained of their very nature toward the faith and the sanctification of the one who receives them. So, too, after the Beatification of Gemma Galgani, it is simply stated that the Church, in the face of these extraordinary charismatic gifts, nothing had ever been uncovered in her that was faulty nor alien to the integral teaching of the Church. One cannot say anything further in this way – nor should there be.

5. Suspicion might fall on the objectivity of the charismatic gifts – or, on the manner of the Saint's disposing herself.

a. As for the objectivity of the charismatic gifts, it was simply her duty to submit her experiences and to have them resolved by her spiritual directors, as she constantly did. And should there have been any deception or diabolic illusion, of which she would have been the victim again this was more up to her Directors than the humble girl of Lucca. And this is greatly improbable, having come to understand their prudence, experience of mystical theology, and the utmost reserve which they brought to their service.

b. Should any doubt emerge regarding the manner with which the Servant of God conducted herself with regard to these charismatic gifts, I point out that this doubt had already been excluded as we have noted above. There is no doubt, but it is certainly shown juridically in the various aspects of the Process of her Cause, that the holiness of Gemma Galgani did not have its origin or motive fixed on these ecstasies or revelations, to which she herself had brought such a very low level credence. Her holiness is based much more solidly on her humble obedience, her out and out humility and mortification.

c. The approval bestowed by the Church of the heroic virtues of the Servant of God, would in no way compromise at all the authority of the Apostolic See, just as soon as one could manifest some suspicion regarding the origin and character of the charismatic experiences with which her life was abundantly adorned. The ultimate decision of the Church turns directly on the heroic virtues, well established and juridically presented. As the Church handles the authenticity of her supernatural visions, so, too, her judgment regarding the Saint's psychological weaknesses, to which also a canonized saint can indeed be subject without any fault of the holy individual.

d. In accord with the example of the Divine Redeemer, who was conducted by the Devil to the pinnacle of the temple, and even previously – with an unreal panoramic vision of the kingdoms of the world – He had seen them all in their glory. So, too, even the saints would be able without any fault of their own, to undergo exteriorly the influence of the Father of Lies. Hagiography is full of examples and it would suffice to cite that of St. Benedict who with the Sign of the Cross dissipated the fantastic illusion of the fire in the kitchen that the devil had set among his monks.

e. It is already known that the holy person, St. Eustochius, was obsessed during an entire life – and it is likewise known that several prophecies of the saints, e.g., St. Peter Damian, St. Brigit, and others, are in no way verified. Therefore, also in this Cause – it is highly improbable – that there would be shown that neither the origin nor the character of the charismatic happenings of Gemma Galgani, the Holy Church suffers no danger of being compromised. The reason is that the entire Cause centers more around the heroic holiness of her life than the marvels which she experienced. One might say, then, that Gemma, notwithstanding her temperament ever more and more hysterical, of which the Devil could easily profit in order to draw her deeply into deception – but by means of her holy obedience and her humility, she totally confused the evil one, and she overcame the infirmity of her body and the weakness of her sex, providing proofs even more wondrous of Christian virtues. It is this alone that led the Church to approve her Cause by beatifying her.

f. Further, the accusations of a rather illegitimate series of revelations and other extraordinary phenomena of Gemma Galgani, compared to the principles of mystical theology, all fail when one considers the truly wonderful and total obedience of Gemma rendered to the wisdom of her spiritual directors. Should anyone encounter in the conduct of the Saint from Lucca, the responsibility for this would fall not only on her directors but also on the time-honored principles of authentic mystical theology. The fact is that Gemma's spiritual life was led under the continual control of her superiors in her spiritual journey. In such a case one might make the claim: *O Lord, if there is any error in this, we have been deceived by You!* However, in our faith, there simply cannot be such error where there is authentic Christian obedience and when one continues to humble him/ herself as the saints teach us by their lives.

One last question:

Was this Servant of God simply an imbalanced hysterical young woman?

In my response, let me offer as a Premise that such an accusation, with enormous scientific apparatus, has been leveled also against St. Teresa of Avila, and

against St. Therese of the Child Jesus - [as against the early Christian teen-aged martyrs of Eucharistic Prayer (translator's personal addition)]

a. Furthermore, since 'hysterical' individuals are generally considered to be an ill, and this fact rather attenuates, but does not take away entirely the free judgment of both intellect and will in anyone so afflicted. As a result, it does not suppress one's responsibility in human actions. It can even be accompanied in the same person with heroic holiness, each and every time [as in Gemma's case] it was overcome due to her ever faithful use of that grace infused into her by God. In this way, she was able to surpass her hysterical nature. Among the experts, a serious question arose, whether or not authentic holiness would be possible even when one is afflicted with habitual obsession, or obsessive behavior. If this is so, then is it ever possible that one could overcome a natural pathologic state with the assistance of God's healing grace? However, even after having admitted that among the other miracles of divine power, authentic holiness can overcome and conquer the hysterical temperament. This clearly represents a further victory of elevating human nature, and effect of grace that is all the more glorious.

b. While this is true this does not seem to be the case of Gemma Galgani. The diagnostic signs of hysterical temperaments in individuals are very well known. Some are liars, self-centered, easily sensual, with a high dosage of egotism – in a word, such individuals so afflicted are weak persons, all bent over into themselves.

c. Gemma Galgani throughout her entire life offered continuing and constant proofs of so many qualities, totally contrary to those traits which indicate hysterical temperaments. In her letters she always comes across like most limpid crystal, and nothing was more abhorrent to her than deception. In her contacts with her spiritual directors, with her benefactors, in her family relationships. She comes across as continuously concerned with appearing to them anything other than they considered her to be: a poor creature, a degenerate being, absolutely worthless. She begged continuously for light for herself and for her much challenged spiritual directors.

d. Gemma Galgani, in her long journey of spiritual ascent toward holiness and toward the state of complete immolation, remained constant throughout, notwithstanding all the artifices and attacks of the Evil One, accepting all the contradictions and criticisms of people who met her or who knew her. Along with all this, she suffered perpetual and atrocious sufferings. Her heroic virtue did not allow unruly highs and lows, certain truces only to be followed by consequent fierce opposition, periods of fervor that would succeed one another and indicate always her truly weak human nature. Gemma was always fervent, and she desired nothing other and always sought the Virginal Bridal Chamber, the wood of the Cross.

e. This unique Servant of God, far from being egotistical and ego-centric, loved to follow for herself the hidden path and that of outright disdain and rejection. Her indications were of a troubled life, but one full of zeal and charity for others. The insignificant gifts of edibles that she might receive on occasion, she would always pass over to members of the Giannini family. Even though she was often ill, being of such a delicate health, she served as the baby-sitter of the children of her benefactress. Also in her ecstasies and prayer, she seemed continuously concerned about the good of others, for whose salvation and even temporary health, never hesitate even to the making an oblation of her own life.

f. Gemma never brought the slightest shadow of her innate state of purity. On the contrary for her entire life, especially after having had received the gift of the stigmata and a deep participation in the Passion of the Redeemer, was really a prolonged martyrdom that she endured even to the extremes of pained agony. She would die in the image of her Savior, desolate, but serene. She seemed to pass away from sheer suffering – she is recorded as having sighed: *My Jesus! I cannot take any more.* After having said this she extended her arms, and inclined her head, and expired out of love and suffering, as Jesus Christ did on the Cross.

g. The fortitude of Gemma shines through her entire life. Her fortitude was evident not only in her sustaining it all not only fearlessly, but rather she seemed to love the effects of her mystical suffering which ravished her delicate body and immolated her on the Cross in the early blooming of her young life. However, her true courage is shown above all in her enduring strongly but serenely, all the material sufferings of her family, the terrible discomforts of her many illnesses, she lived in utmost poverty, the fury and obsession of the Evil One. She put up with all this without lamentation, without complaining, without compromise and without the slightest giving in to her nature, to this world, to the hell she lived.

h. Evidently anyone who could sustain onslaughts could not only be written off as ‘hysterical’, one of was totally on the level of an easy life, and being always ill. On the contrary, such quiet courage leads believers to think of St. Angela da Foligno, St. Rose of Lima, St. Catherine of Siena. Her life truly surpasses by far the ordinary possibilities of our poor human nature. She truly lived this biblical encomium: *...For love is strong as Death, passion as relentless as Sheol. The flash of it is a flash of fire – a flame of the Lord God Himself...* [Sgs 8:6].

[All of the above is written under Oath]

Monte Cassino, March 7, 1929

+ Ildefonse Abbot of St. Paul and Ordinary

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V. EXCURSUS: The Carmelite Spirituality:

[A] The Authoritative Teaching of St. John of the Cross

Doctor of the Church

The Ascent, Book II, 22, 4-7

“This is the meaning of that passage where St. Paul tries to persuade the Hebrews to turn from communion with God through the old ways of the Mosaic Law and instead fix their eyes on Christ: That which God formerly spoke to our Fathers through the prophets in many ways and manners, now, finally, in these days, he has spoken to us all at once in His Son [Heb 1:1-2]. The Apostle indicates that God was as it were mute, with no more to say, because what He spoke before to the prophets in parts, He has now spoken all at once by giving us the all who is His Son.

“Any person questioning God, or desiring some vision or revelation would not only be guilty of foolish behavior but also of offending Him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

“God could only respond as follows: If I have already told you all things in My Word, My Son, and if I have no other word, what answer or revelation can I now make that would surpass this? Fasten your eyes on Him alone, because in Him I have spoken and revealed all, and in Him you shall discover even more than you ask for and desire. You are making an appeal for locutions and revelations that are incomplete, but if you turn your eyes to Him, you will find them complete. For He is My entire locution and response, vision and revelation, which I have already spoken, answered, manifested, and revealed to you, by giving Him to you as bother, companion, master, ransom, and reward.

Since that day when I descended upon Him with My Spirit on Mount Tabor proclaiming: *This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him.* [Mt 17:5], I have relinquished these methods of answering and teaching and presented them to him. Hear Him because I have no more faith to reveal no truths to manifest. If I spoke before, it was to promise Christ; if they questioned Me, their inquiries were related to their petitions and longings for Christ in Whom they were to obtain every good [as is evidenced in all the doctrine of the Evangelists and Apostles].

But now anyone asking Me in that way and desiring that I speak and reveal something to him, would somehow be requesting Christ again, and more faith,

yet he would be failing in faith, because Christ has already been given. Accordingly, he would offend My Beloved Son deeply, because he would not merely be lacking faith in Him, but obliging Him to become incarnate and undergo His life and death again. You shall not find anything to ask or desire through revelations and visions; behold Him well, for in Him you will uncover all these revelations already made, and many more.

“If you desire Me to answer with a word of comfort, behold My Son, subject to Me and to others out of love for Me, and you will see how much He answers. If you desire Me to declare some secret truths or events to you, fix your eyes on Him, and you will discern hidden in Him the most secret mysteries, and wisdom, and the wonders of God, as My Apostle proclaims: *In the Son of God are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.* [Col 2:3].

These treasures of wisdom and knowledge will be far more than what you want to know. The Apostle, therefore, gloried, affirming that he had acted as though he knew no other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified [1 Co 2:2]. And if you should seek other divine or corporal visions and revelations, behold Him, become human and you will encounter more than you imagine, because the Apostle also says: *In Christ, all the fullness of the divinity dwells bodily* [Col 2:9].

“One should not, then, inquire of God in this manner, nor is it necessary for God to speak any more. For, since He has finished revealing the faith through Christ, there is no more faith to reveal, nor will there ever be. Anyone wanting to get something in a supernatural way, as we stated, would as it were be accusing God of not having given us in His son all that is required. Although in such endeavors one presupposes the faith and believes in it, still one’s curiosity displays a lack of faith. Hence, there is no reason to hope for doctrine or anything else through supernatural means.

“ When Christ, dying on the Cross exclaimed: *It is consummated* [Jn 19:30], He consummated not these ways alone, but all the other ceremonies and rites of the Old Law. we must be guided humanly and visibly in all by the law of Christ the man and that of His church, and of His ministers..

b. By the express will of the Father, and by the very nature of things, Jesus Christ occupies the core in the Divine Plan of Salvation, and of the way of humanity toward God. The system will take care to respect this and to place it in its proper emphasis.

1.] The prayer of the soul in love makes of Jesus Christ the point toward which three fundamental religious movements converge:

- that of grace and mercy which I ask of the Father in His Son;
- You will not leave me, my God, which You once said to me in Your Son, Jesus Christ, in Whom You have said to me all that I need. It is my great joy that You will not delay if I hope.
- All things are mine, and God Himself is mine, and for me because Christ is mine and all has been done for me.

2.] The services which Christ fulfills are revealed to the Christian gradually, so that each one is capable of assimilating them. All this is summarized in the word “Mediator”, a word that is quite broad, even though not that expressive.

3.] In Christ, God has given Himself. From his fundamental being, to the most qualified supernatural gifts, human beings receive all through Jesus Christ. In addition to being the Father’s revelation, He is proposed to us as “the way” of return to the Father, the Path through which we go back to the Heavenly Father. In an ascending direction, three services might be noted - none of which is independent of the other - each one lived intensely leads to the successive stage, where the previous stage is conserved:

[B] Basic Principles

- IMITATION: this would include all of Jesus’ recorded, revealed life, His gestures, virtue. For this level, the Gospel needs to be read attentively, profiting by all the illuminations and details that are conserved therein regarding His character, His life. The Life of Christ is then grasped as similar to what is believed in the Church would strive to live today. One needs as the basic principle to try to respond to each even as the Lord Himself would respond.

This form of Imitation is quite concrete and somewhat detailed and tends more and more to be simplified and interiorized. The tested Christian lives the life and the sentiments of Jesus Christ, without any necessity of placing side by side the various episodes of His life. Such imitation enjoys permanent value. If it would just be a following of His moral example, or a material copying of the Lord’s life, over time, this would diminish in value and in interest. What occurs in this life of grace is that it is converted into inspiration and an interior similarity. The norm, nonetheless, is permanent: to follow the most sweet Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to make ourselves like unto Him in our lives, conditions of living and virtues.

The attention of even the best intentioned believer could very easily become dispersed in concentrating on the multitude of gestures, conditions and virtues, which would represent the initial following of the Lord. The central mystery, of course, is always to take up one's Cross. It is not so much just talking about it as it would be the living of it in total, austere simplicity. Each person will interpret the Master's life as might seem to him/her to be the most fruitful. The Saint offers his own description:

"Because I have said that Christ is the way and that this way is a death to our natural selves in the sensory and spiritual parts of the soul, I would like to demonstrate how this death is patterned on Christ's. For He is our model and light.

"First, during His life He died spiritually to the sensitive part, and at His death He died naturally. He proclaimed during His life that He had no place to lay His head [Mt 8:20]. And at His death, He had less...

"...So that the spiritual person might understand the mystery of the door and way [which is Christ] leading to union with God, and that he might realize that this union with God and the greatness of the work he accomplishes will be measured by his annihilation for God in the sensory and spiritual parts of his soul. When he is brought to nothing, the highest degree of humility, the spiritual union between his soul and God will be effected...

"I will not enlarge upon this, though I would like to continue discussing the matter, because from my observations, Christ is to a great extent unknown by those who consider themselves His friends. Because of their extreme self-love they go about seeking in Him their own consolations and satisfactions. But they do not seek, out of great love for Him, His bitter trials and doubts..."

- UNION OF LOVE : this above chapter of the *Ascent* [2nd Bk, c. 22] is broadly cited by many interpreters. It reaffirms in the most radical manner the necessity of recurring to Jesus Christ in order to orientate one's life. This is not some simple devotion. God has ordered reality placing Jesus Christ in the center. In an "ecstatic" manner, the Word takes the faithful believer outside of him/herself, leading each to Jesus, through on-going dialogue. The form of this spiritual experience is rooted in dialogue, culminating in union. When two beings have their cause in common, they become committed to establish deeper relationships in life: whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him [cf. 1 Co 6:17]. The spiritual life is a constant struggle between closeness and distance with the Lord.

Simply by referring to Jesus as the "Beloved", there is communicated some idea of the permanent and unlimited commitment that is being challenged here. The

Saint assiduously sought the Beloved, felt wounded by the Beloved, sought union with the Beloved. The Father remained mute throughout the saint's quest, all his dialogue was directed to Jesus Christ. Thus understood, his Christocentrism is the heart of the Saint's entire theological "system." The union of love, which would be the key point, is directed toward Him. The whole process advances in the means as he described it, as "intimate." For the presentation made to his *Dark Night*, the poem and the commentary for his *Spiritual Canticle*, we see that Jesus Christ constitutes for him a holy "obsession."

Even in the long period before actually meeting Him, the Saint lived totally polarized toward Him, in intimate presence with His absence! This primary union in solitude draws the other into immediate presence:

"... Since she wished to live in solitude, apart from every satisfaction, comfort and support of creatures, in order to reach companionship and union with her Beloved, she deserved to discover the possession of peaceful solitude in her Beloved, in Whom she rests, alone and isolated from all these disturbances..."

The friendship of Jesus Christ explains the solitude in which the Saint lived all those years. With the images and the realities of the Cross and of solitude, St. John of the Cross insists on what the "union" can never be. There are friendships that do not require serious compromise. In exchange, friendship with Jesus Christ introduces into the human life a germ of restlessness and renovation which only inauthentic holiness provides balance. In this perspective of union, Jesus appears as the ultimate goal, even more than the Path to get there. With the union there is provided to the fervent believer the most sublime state of his earthly condition. And yet, the spiritual itinerary traced out by the great Spanish Mystic does not end here. This would be violence, unnatural, to close off the Christian ideal in simple union with Jesus Christ. This union, by its very nature, demands one more step, which is:

- FILIATION: such profound conformity, configuration to Jesus Christ makes us even more intense sharers in His own Divine Filiation. Union to Christ is converted into union along with Him, with His Heavenly Father. It is curious to note that in his *Spiritual Canticle*, that the relations with the Beloved, fomented over a long period of time apparently without any other perspective, are subordinated to the Most Blessed Trinity, in the final strophes. With Jesus Christ, and through Him, the Saint loves the Father, aspires toward the Holy Spirit. The entire work of salvation, operated by the Lord, forms a part of the divine plan of love and union with human beings" "... In her knowledge about the predestination of the just and the fore-knowledge of the damned, in which the Father predisposed the just with the blessings of sweetness [Ps 20:4], in His Son, Jesus Christ, the soul is most sublimely and intimately transformed in the love of God. And with unspeakable delight she thanks and loves the Father again through His Son Jesus. She does this united with

Christ, together with Christ. And the savor of this praise is so delicate as to be totally beyond words...”

The character of mediation is presented once more with insistence: Christ, the “Way”, Christ the revealer of the Father, the mysteries of Jesus Christ are the reflection of the divine attributes. There is here a tone that is markedly different from the first stages, where the function seemed prevalently external. In the present, the conformation holds sway in very intimate areas and in a more radical manner: “... Transform me into the beauty of divine Wisdom, and make me resemble it, which is the Word, the Son of God...The soul cannot see herself in the beauty of God unless she is transformed in the wisdom of God, in which she sees herself in possession of earthly and heavenly things...The soul always possesses the desire to have clear and pure understanding of the divine truths, and the greater her love, the more she longs to enter further into these truths...”

Summary

None of these stages lived earlier, are ever discarded. Imitation remains, as do the mystery of the Cross, and intimacy with his Beloved. But, more and more all is seen in the colors of the most Blessed Trinity. The saint is “Christocentric”, precisely because he is “Theocentric” - he was a great “Mystic of God”, a “Mystic of Jesus Christ.”

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