

Conference on Father Adolphe Tanquerey's
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“MYSTICISM in its noblest sense is not an exceptionally dark and secret thing, but an exceptionally luminous and open thing. It is in reality too clear for most of us to comprehend, and too obvious for most of us to see. Such an utterance as the utterance that “God is Love” does not in reality overwhelm us like an immeasurable landscape on a clear day, like the light of an intolerable summer sun. We may call it a dark saying; but we have an inward knowledge all the time that it is we who are dark...”

“Asceticism is a thing which in its very nature, we tend in these days to misunderstand. Asceticism, in the religious sense, is the repudiation of the great mass of human joys because of the supreme joyfulness of the one joy, the religious joy.”

G.K. Chesterton

All the great minds of the past would have a book which they held dear to themselves. We think of St. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, travelling with his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, or we think of other more recent saints making constant reference to the *Imitation of Christ*. Since the dawn of Spiritual Theology in the 1910 and 1920s, we have seen the effort to condense voluminous works like the *Summa Theologiae* into more readily available texts which would have value for the spiritual life. Such a “pocket” version of a manual that is also spiritually useful, succinct, and profound we see in Adolphe Tanquerey's *Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology* from 1923. This lecture will give some of its highlights and try to show its use in contemporary society for religious, priests, and laity alike.

The knowledge I have of art is not too profound, being specialized as I am in theology and the spiritual life, but as an amateur I find it really fascinating to observe the greatest examples of a country's painting, literature, etc. because usually they show the inner dynamics of the soul of the culture.

In the case of the Netherlands it is not an easy task to choose only one author, but after thinking of Rubens and Van Gogh, I must say that I am personally really fascinated by Rembrandt. He is an artist who shows the battles of the human soul in its encounter with God much like what we see in some of the Caravaggio paintings in my country. I have found that the appearance between the two artists is not casual. From the point of view of this struggle, we see that pieces such as “The prodigal son” also known as “The father of mercy” reveal a part of the soul of the Netherlands, both of priests and of laymen.

If this intuition is correct, we could define the grandeur of the soul of your nation, precisely by the means of the inner spiritual battle of the man who recognizes himself as sinner and in a sublime moment of grace throws himself into the light of the throne of mercy, i.e. the beginning of the path of spiritual life.

The argument that we are now going to develop, the *Treatise of Mystic and Ascetic Theology* of Adolphe Tanquerey, is precisely that: a radiography of the faithful soul that strongly desires to get introduced into the sublime mysteries of the spiritual life; in this sense its teachings have a privileged connaturality with the soul of the Netherlands.

Maybe it is precisely the people of the Netherlands, if rooted in the more excellent movements of its history as the aesthetical-spiritual experience of Rembrandt, that prepare well the terrain in which to spread the teachings of the Rev. Father Adolphe Tanquerey, i.e. desiring by nature to get introduced into the mystical life through ascetism.

What is our scope today? It is to touch and to discover the secrets—and the word is the proper one since the causes are hidden to the spirit of the world—which this precious book contains.

I will feel that this simple encounter has had fruit: 1) if you make the proposal of reading—at least partially—this compendium of the Christian path; 2) if truly desiring to advance in the spiritual life you make yourself the gift of charity of listening to the teachings of one of the great spiritual teachers of recent times.

I think that such a task has three necessary moments that will constitute the stages of this conference: 1) the excellence of the treatise and the person of the author, 2) the exposition of the parts of its masterpiece and 3) its inner logic and principle of unity.

So, where does Father Adolphe Tanquerey fall in the context of recent theology? His text is written in 1923, and this is not far removed from Saint Pius X's *motu proprio Sacrorum antistitum* (Sept. 1, 1910), a text that called for the discipline of spiritual theology to be in all seminaries because at the time it was principally a Carmelite and Franciscan affair. In this *motu proprio*, Ascetics is called the *scientia pietatis*. From this emerged a great interest in the field, so between 1910 and 1920 we witness the development of this last discipline of theology in many institutions. I think of my university, the Pontifical University of St. Thomas, where the discipline began in 1917. One can also think of the Pontifical Gregorian University, where the discipline began in 1918. At the Angelicum, the discipline developed in unison with Dogmatic Theology, my own discipline. We see great figures like Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP. He combined the thinking and structure of great minds like that of St. Thomas Aquinas with that of St. John of the Cross and St. Catherine of Siena in many of his spiritual works. This shows that the discipline is not about spiritual sentimentalism. It is rather about seeing how the doctrine of the Church can truly help someone in the process of encounter and of communication between

the human being and God, i.e. like the development of the life that begins with Baptism and finds its fulfilment in the joys of Heaven.

Since we celebrated Pentecost recently, I feel obliged to mention an article published the week prior to Pentecost in Crisis Magazine.¹ In it, the brilliant Father Georg Rutler of the Archdiocese of New York recounts how the “**The amiable classicist, John Bird Sumner...Protestant archbishop of Canterbury from 1848 to 1862...**” was said “...to have blessed missionaries to India in the imperial radiance of the Raj with the counsel that they were to “convert the heathen and discourage Enthusiasm.”

Rutler continues by explaining that

“Our Lord promised that the Holy Spirit would lead into all truth. This activates the intellect and does not replace it. Enthusiasm is not spiritual zeal if it asks reason to move over so that emotion might take its place. The Enthusiasm that Dr. Sumner abjured displaced the Logos with the Ego. That of course is an old story, elegantly and eloquently documented in the masterwork of Monsignor Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm*. While not unsympathetic toward the noble integrity of John Wesley, he holds up the spiritist movements from the second century Montanists to the latter day Quakers, Jansenists, and Quietists as examples of how people go to extremes to confuse themselves emotionally with the Holy Spirit.”

In like manner, Spiritual Theology is not so much about enthusiasm and emotion but rather about the spiritual life. We recall that St. Thomas Aquinas considered Revelation itself *cognitione*, knowledge. For instance, when he talks about prophecy, he writes, “*prophetia primo et principaliter consistit in cognitione*. (prophecy first and chiefly consists in knowledge).² This knowledge is what saves and perfects man. Revelation is a cognitive act that requires the *acceptio cognitorum* (i.e. the receiving of the content of knowledge) and the *iudicium de acceptis* (the judgment and interpretation of that content).³ The problem Pope St. Pius X and other popes noticed was precisely the division between the intellectual life and the spiritual life, a division fostered by the Enlightenment. Such division is not proper to Catholicism. A well-ordered intellectual life fosters spiritual well-being. Clearly, what orders it has to be Divine Revelation and Tradition, both transmitted to us in the Church diachronically and synchronically through her saints and perennial Magisterium. Without such order, we risk all sorts of erroneous teachings to prop up. With this in mind, we recall the words of Benedict XV to the Gregorian in 1919 encouraging the university to teach spiritual theology in order to avoid such false mysticism to harm the souls of the flocks given to their care. The Church has been founded, after all, for the *salus animarum*, the salvation of souls.

¹ Father George Rutler, “Pentecost Was Not An Occasion for Enthusiasm.” Crisis Magazine, June 1st, 2017.

² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae (ST) II-II q. 171, a. 1.*

³ For further reading on this subject, read Per Erik Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas* (translated by Ross MacKenzie), Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1969, chapter 1.

It is for this reason that St. Paul reminds St. Timothy of the importance of preaching the Gospel always. He writes:

“I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at^[a] His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Tim 4, 1-5)

This reading is used for a reason in the Common of Doctors of the Church. After all, it is the Doctors who teach the perennial teachings that never go out of season. Pius XI wrote the Apostolic Constitution *Deus scientiarum Dominus* on May 25th, 1931 precisely with the idea of clarifying the role of Ascetic Theology and that of Mystical Theology. The first would be inserted among the auxiliary disciplines, and the second among the optional disciplines. Ascetic theology would be dedicated to the study of the principles of the spiritual life in its most ordinary development, and Mystical Theology would be dedicated to the special questions of the supernatural life, especially those of mystical states. Today we are desperately in need of such discernment as we face the growing problem of preternatural phenomena. By this we mean that which deals with exorcisms. On March 11th, 2017, Patti Armstrong wrote a very good synthesis on the *National Catholic Register* entitled *US Exorcists: Demonic Activities on the Rise*⁴. In the article, Father Vincent Lampert of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, USA, explains that with the rise of paganism and the rampant sinfulness therein, it should be no surprise that there is a rise in demonic activity. If people do not follow God, they follow other gods because people are naturally religious. Idolatry is rampant today because of the immanentism that has entered the scene. What is important to note is that while the Church in the 19th-Century had to fight against obstinate naturalism and defend supernaturalism, today the Church has to defend natural law against what is against natural law. The words of St. Paul to St. Timothy ring very true for us today, so we must turn to good, clear doctrine remembering that we can trust *sacra doctrina* to make truths known more quickly, more clearly, and without error. From this one can truly live the spiritual life to which St. Paul refers in Romans 8,9. It is the life according to the Spirit. It is the life that is in touch with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. While Tanquerey follows the distinction between the Ascetical and the Mystical life, the tendency after the Second Vatican Council is to unite the two into the Spiritual Life. In fact, while the discipline is mentioned in the Dogmatic Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 16, it is not mentioned in the Decree *Optatam Totius*, the decree that specifically treats theological studies. This is clearly not out of forgetfulness, but it shows that the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar treatises do not stress this distinction because of the desire to stress the wholeness of the spiritual life. Personally, I still find value in the distinction because it is not a separation but a way to distinguish

⁴ <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/us-exorcists-demonic-activity-on-the-rise>

the areas of one's spiritual life, and it is a distinction which we see in Father Adolphe Tanquerey's work.

Father Adolphe Tanquerey makes many divisions which can seem daunting at first sight. His work is very much in the manualist tradition, much like what we see with the more recent work by Father Antonio Royo Marin, OP, *Teología de la perfección cristiana*. Originally written in 1960, with the eleventh edition published in 2003, we see that this work was written immediately prior to the Second Vatican Council, but it has stood the test of time for its clarity, one very similar to that written by Father Adolphe Tanquerey. So, though the distinctions may seem daunting, clearly there is an interest in the work for people who seek to order their spiritual lives.

Father Tanquerey is basically thinking of the Cardinal Virtues as he develops the part on the Unitive Way. As you are aware, Dionysius the Areopagite who wrote on Mystical Theology in his *Celestial Hierarchies*, was very influential with St. Thomas Aquinas and other major figures in the history of theology. In this book Dionysius divides the spiritual life into three parts: the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way, and the Unitive Way. The Purgative Way is the Ascetic Life and the Unitive Way is the Mystical Life. The Illuminative Way falls in between the two, and this is where Father Tanquerey divides the Cardinal Virtues.

§Prudence:

Here we see the speculative and practical wisdom required to give precise rules in the spiritual life. As St. Thomas reminds us, the principle act of prudence is the command because three are the acts of practical reason: to deliberate, to judge, and to command. The command, therefore, is the application in act that upon which one deliberated and judged.⁵ One can think that such a virtue is necessary for all of us as we tend to the life of perfection, so Father Tanquerey distinguishes how this is possible for the laity, for religious, and for clergy.⁶ It is a moral virtue that inclines our intellect to choose the best means to obtain the ends which are subordinated to our final end.⁷ It is not bodily, nor merely human, but it is supernatural. It is Christian. Its end defines it. Faith defines it, especially as it is explained in the Sermon on the Mount.

As Father Servais Pinckaers, OP, makes abundantly clear, the Sermon on the Mount is key to Christian Moral Life.⁸ It is here that Our Lord completes or perfects the Old Law. The New Law which begins on the Cross is an Interior Law. It is not in competition with the conscience, as some Moral theologians today would make it out to be. Rather, it instructs the conscience, and this works hand-in-hand with the other virtues and passions in the person. We are not like a lego with different parts put together. There is a flow between the

⁵ Cf. *ST* II-II q. 47, a. 8. Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique*, Desclée, Paris 1923, p. 642.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 234-271.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 640.

⁸ Servais Pinckaers, OP, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 1995 (translated by Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, OP), Chapter 6, pp. 134-167.

Interior Law of God, the conscience, the passions, and the virtues. These parts are *distinguished* but *not separated*. Rather, when reading certain moral theologians today, one gets the impression that these parts are separate and voluntarily used or not used.⁹

Prudence is fundamentally about choosing what is good and avoiding what is evil in a particular case. It is the application of the moral law. Father Tanquerey lists how incredibly helpful this is in making one decisive, for instance.¹⁰ Today we find too much indecisiveness and immaturity among people. This is what Father Tanquerey refers to as *légèreté d'esprit*, levity of spirit which makes quick decisions without reflection about most of what one does while simultaneously and paradoxically being unable to make the big decisions in life. This is typical of a context in which relativism is queen. There is no more Truth to which to turn, so serious decisions become more difficult to make. This is in complete contrast to Our Lord Jesus Christ, His life and teaching, Father Tanquerey elaborates. It is due to the decisiveness of His Mission as the Apostle of the Father, that Christ taught His Apostles to be peaceful, modest, merciful, and not hasty in judgement, as St. James elaborates.¹¹ With this He willingly took up the Cross to conquer Evil, and the virtues flowed together in that one salutary and exemplary act: prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, and Charity.

While Our Lord did not need Faith to distinguish between Good and Evil, for us it is often from our experience of Evil that we hopefully willingly turn to

⁹ Here, we are thinking of Father Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R. (1912-1998). Reading his *Free and Faithful in Christ*, one gets the impression that his criticism of previous moral theology is unfounded. Looking at the Law as something rigid and external, it is clear that he would refuse it, but if that Law is supposed to become interiorized to transform the person from within, then he cannot say what he said. He fundamentally begins by denying the existence of an absolute and immutable natural law. From this, it is no wonder that in terms of the New Law he does not understand how this Law can be truly beneficial to man. It is like a Lutheran approach. It does not see the Law as a grace, nor does it see grace as an accidental quality that can truly transform the person as it resides in the essence of the soul (cf. *ST I-II* q. 110, a. 4), and the essence of the soul is a living essence. It is not static, but the very *actus essendi* of the soul. It is the form of the form of the soul, the *formalius* (cf. *De potentia* q. 7, a. 2 ad 9 “Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum, et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum. Nec intelligendum est, quod ei quod dico esse, **aliquid addatur quod sit eo formalius, ipsum determinans, sicut actus potentiam: esse enim quod huiusmodi est, est aliud secundum essentiam ab eo cui additur determinandum. Nihil autem potest addi ad esse quod sit extraneum ab ipso, cum ab eo nihil sit extraneum nisi non-ens, quod non potest esse nec forma nec materia**”; *ST I* q. 3, a. 4 “Secundo, quia esse est actualitas omnis formae vel naturae, non enim bonitas vel humanitas significatur in actu, nisi prout significamus eam esse. Oportet igitur quod **ipsum esse comparetur ad essentiam quae est aliud ab ipso, sicut actus ad potentiam**” ; *ST I* q. 5, a. 1 “Intantum est autem perfectum unumquodque, inquantum est actu, unde manifestum est quod intantum est aliquid bonum, inquantum est ens, esse enim est **actualitas omnis rei**, ut ex superioribus patet”; *ST I* q. 8, a. 1 “Esse autem est illud quod est magis intimum cuilibet, et **quod profundius omnibus inest, cum sit formale respectu omnium quae in re sunt**, ut ex supra dictis patet. **Unde oportet quod Deus sit in omnibus rebus, et intime**”). Only supernatural acts can perfect the *actus essendi* of man. Maybe Häring is really attacking a static, essentialist understanding of being, and he fails to see being as a living reality.

¹⁰ Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie...*p. 649.

¹¹ Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie...*p. 651. Cf. James 3, 13-18.

God. After all, it is from his experience of evil that St. Augustine turned to the Manicheans thinking that there were two gods, one of good and one of evil. Then, reading Plotinus, he realized that there could only be one God, the God of goodness. Further on, he realized that this god could not be pantheistic, so St. Augustine slowly grew to understand God, the One and only God, from an initial emptiness he felt. This emptiness was filled with God, with Being Himself. From an existential emptiness he came to understand the root of existence, Being Himself, a Being who is Goodness Himself. What an example of a successor of the apostles he is for us!

According to Father Servais Pinckaers, O.P., the *synderesis* of reason is “the primordial perception of the good proper to man.”¹² This is a perception that allows one to make a choice to do what is good and to avoid what is evil. If one does what is good and avoids what is evil, he has to know the difference between what is good and what is evil. Therefore, since the choice between the two has to come with the formation of a conscience, which is “nothing else than the application of knowledge to some action,”¹³ we reaffirm the importance of knowledge in the moral life.

We also see how prudence is the mother of the cardinal virtues, very close to the heart of the conscience and the *synderesis* that seeks what is good and virtuous and avoids what is evil and sinful.¹⁴ However, how is one to know the distinction between good and evil if so many goods and apparent goods are made present? St. Thomas stresses in the very beginning of Moral section of the *Summa Theologiae* how happiness is key to the Moral Life. St. Thomas lists how happiness is not to be found in riches, honors, fame, power, bodily health, pleasures, or any other created good.¹⁵ Rather, it is to be found in the Beatitude.¹⁶ Father Servais Pinckaers, OP reminds us that for St. Augustine, his interpretation of the Beatitudes represent “seven degrees or stages leading the Christian from humility or poverty in spirit to wisdom and the vision of God.”¹⁷ Coming to the knowledge of what is good from what is evil more quickly, more clearly, and without error, one needs God’s intervention. One needs Divine Revelation. The Beatitude, St. Thomas stresses, consists in the vision of the divine essence.¹⁸ In terms of our knowledge of God, we can go from knowing of His existence on a philosophical level, to knowing His essence on a theological level, but we can never know Him comprehensively.¹⁹ After all, we are dealing with God, “He who is.” Our discursive and analogical knowledge may grow in intuition through the years, but it shall never be as intuitive and comprehensive as that of God, even with the *lumen gloriae* to assist us in Heaven. God’s knowledge is intuitive and all-comprehensive because He is the Creator, so not

¹² Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources...*, cit., p. 384.

¹³ cf. *STI* q. 79, a. 13 and I-II, q. 19, a. 5

¹⁴ Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie...*, p. 645.

¹⁵ Cf. *STI-II* q. 2.

¹⁶ Cf. *STI-II* q. 3.

¹⁷ Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources...*, cit., p. 145.

¹⁸ Cf. *STI-II* q. 3, a. 8.

¹⁹ Cf. *STI* q. 12, aa. 10-13.

only we, but the angels themselves, rely on Him.²⁰ It is about the proper order between creature and Creator, after all. It is about Justice, the next virtue to which we turn.

§Justice:

Overall, Father Tanquerey has a deep consciousness of the spiritual life as a duty, the duty that Christians have of looking toward perfection. It means that the spiritual life is an answer of justice to God's calling. It is the virtue of Faith lived out with the virtues of Hope and Charity. More properly speaking, it is an act of the virtue of religion,²¹ but it shows us what St. Thomas writes at the very beginning of the *Summa Theologiae* when he stresses that the Faith presupposes natural knowledge, just as grace presupposes nature and perfection presupposes that which needs to be perfected.²² Here we also must keep in mind the importance of the distinction typical in St. Thomas' thought and Catholic Theology thereafter: potency and act. Only God is perfectly in act. He is Pure Act. Everything else is either in movement to or away from Him. Only pride and non-consideration of God can move free agents like the angels or man away from God their Creator. Such was the case with Lucifer's fall.²³ Without the possibility of such growth, as we see in modern metaphysics with Leibniz' perfect and isolated, hell-like monads, then there really is no hope. Religion is a virtue that provides the hope we need to move on so that life is not vain but has a purpose. With this I think of Peter Kreeft's great book, *Three Philosophies of Life*²⁴, in which the philosopher and apologist explains that there are three philosophies in three Books in Holy Scripture. The first is from *Ecclesiastes*, life as Vanity. This is like modern philosophy and the modern epoch. It is likened to hell. The second is from *Job*, life as Suffering. It is likened to Christian philosophy, the Middle Ages, and Purgatory. The third is from *Song of Songs*, life as Love. It is likened to Heaven. Clearly, where there is God, there is meaning, and suffering is embraced. At one point Kreeft aptly writes:

“We willingly, even happily, run through the rain to the store to get there before it closes to buy a cup of coffee for the one we love. Our tired muscles and sweating body are offered up as loving martyrdom. But let an insensitive boss command the same act from us, and we will curse him at every step of the way.”²⁵

²⁰ Cf. *ST I* qq. 13 and 14.

²¹ cf. *ST II-II* q.81. In fact, Father Tanquerey is very clear that he is looking at *ST II-II* qq. 56-122 in this section. Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie...*, p. 652. More specifically, Father Tanquerey stresses the virtue of religion between p. 657 and 675, addressing obedience in particular. Here, we think that there needs to be more emphasis on the reasonableness of obedience because unfortunately in the name of obedience there continues to be a lot of abuse to this day. Obedience cannot be voluntaristic. It has to be reasonable. It has to be rooted in the intellect, not the will. It needs to look for both the individual and the common good.

²² *ST I* q. 2, a. 2, ad 1: “*Fides praesupponit cognitionem naturalem, sicut gratia naturam, et ut perfectio perfectibile.*” For more reading on this, read Father Serge-Thomas Bonino, OP, *Dieu, “Celui Qui Est” (De Deo ut uno)*, Parole et Silence, Paris, 16.vi.2016, chapter 2.

²³ Cf. *ST I* q. 63, aa. 5-7.

²⁴ Peter Kreeft, *Three Philosophies of Life*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1989.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

When there is meaning, we are willing to suffer. In a recent article in Mercatornet, Barry Brownstein makes the point that it is not about finding one's passion in life but about being good at something that helps people move forward.²⁶ When someone has a talent and works on it well, he will later develop the passion for it. He will be willing to go the extra mile for it. In like manner, if someone has a justly ordered life in which he is aware of and focused on God and his own end, he will be at peace and truly happy and successful. It is about purpose, *telos*, and not merely an empty end, a *finis*.²⁷ Such just ordering is what everyone seeks. We are reminded by Russell Kirk, "Order is the first need of the soul."²⁸ St. Thomas explains: "Order is that state of things where everything functions according to its nature and end. When everything is doing what it is supposed to be doing, there is order "because nature is the cause of order" and "whatever does not possess order is not according to nature".²⁹ If we want to perfect something, we begin with the right order, so the virtue of religion, of True Religion at that, is not something to be put aside.

Father Tanquerey does us a very good service in defining just what this entails by explaining the role of God in the Christian life. This is not merely a notion of God's existence as a good philosopher can come to know, but it is about knowledge of God's essence as one delves into the interior life, of how the Holy Trinity lives in him or her. What are our obligations to such a gift? How do Our Lord and Our Lady cause and move us to a more perfect understanding of this salutary knowledge? How are the saints not only examples but helpers for us in such a life much like the Angels? Who are our enemies in this struggle for order? The classic distinction of concupiscence, the worldly spirit, and the demons and helpful advice in how we are to live the sacramental life not only as *gratia coadiuvante* but as *gratia perficiens* is clearly laid out for us by Father Tanquerey. Such is at the core of the virtue of religion, of the true virtue of justice.

With this I am reminded of something St. Thomas teaches. As he describes the wonder of the Eucharist in his composition of the Feast of Corpus Domini, St. Thomas writes in a homily:

"O pretiosum et admirandum convivium, *salutiferum* et omni suavitate repletum!...Nullum etiam sacramentum est isto salubrius, quo *purgantur peccata, virtutes augentur*, et mens omnium spiritualium *charismatum abundantia impinguatur*."³⁰

A few words and expressions stand out. The first is *salutiferum*. Here we see that the sacrament is a "bearer of salvation," i.e. that it "carries" one to salvation.

²⁶ Barry Brownstein, "Is passion all you need for a great career?" Mercatornet, 31.v.2017. <https://www.mercatornet.com/features/view/is-passion-all-you-need-for-a-great-career/19893>

²⁷ Peter Kreeft, *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁸ Russell Kirk, *Roots of American Order*, ISI Books, Wilmington, DE, 1974 with 2003 reprint, pg. 6.

²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Physic.*, lib. 8, lect. 3, n. 3.

³⁰ *Sermo sancti Thomae Aquinatis in Opusc.* 57.

How? First, it purges one of his sins, i.e. “*purgantur peccata*” in what would be seen as *gratia sanans*. Then, it helps one to grow in personal sanctity, increasing his virtues, “*virtutes augentur*.” We can assume that he means infused virtues and that this is a sort of *gratia gratum faciens*. Finally, this grace is used for the good of the Church as charisma—or *gratia gratis datae*—which produces good effects for others. It is thus that we read “*omnium spiritualium charismatum abundantia impinguatur*.” Clearly, the grace comes from the Passion of Christ, and mortal sins are purged in the sacrament of penance, but if one is in the state of grace—and not in mortal sin—his venial sins are purged by the Eucharist so as to grow in sanctifying grace and to strengthen one’s charisms for the good of the Church. As one can see, there is a proper order to the way everything functions. The works come as a result of grace, i.e. of the union one has with Christ. While there is merit in our works, the origin of merit is the grace of Christ.³¹

§Fortitude:

Here we see the virtues of patience and perseverance. The colossal monument of this book is already a proof of them, but the slow and exigent process of spiritual life that Father Tanquerey teaches is an argument *a fortiori*. It is clear that its most perfect expression is martyrdom, a grace from God to know, to love, and serve Him perfectly. However, one does not usually reach such heights without a lot of practice in the meantime in confronting difficulties *ardua aggredi et sustinere*.³² We see this in many other virtues, like magnanimity and munificence, the first making us be serviceable to others and the latter that brings us to great works. This is all clearly well-ordered charity. Without order it becomes mere prodigality, Father Tanquerey stresses.³³

Other virtues tied to Fortitude are patience and constancy. Here, we see the natural dimension at work of someone who is able to suffer, but it is not a meaningless suffering, so we understand more fully how someone like Job can suffer because of the meaning that is deeply within him. Without such meaning, suffering becomes too heavy to bear. It is therefore of no surprise what Xavier Symons reports of a recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that existential stress, not pain, drives Euthanasia.³⁴

§Temperance:

As one fights against the *fomes peccati* of concupiscence, the first enemy of the soul, we are reminded of the cardinal virtue of Temperance, clearly related to prudence but more specifically related to chastity and purity. The adjective of the title “ascetic” already reflects, in effect, an effort of temperance. Here we are also reminded of the great work which the great philosopher of

³¹ Cf. *ST* I-II q. 114, a. 9.

³² Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie...*, p. 676.

³³ Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie...*, p. 682.

³⁴ Cf. Father Xavier Symons, “Existential distress, not pain, drives euthanasia,” Mercatornet, 31 May 2017. <https://www.bioedge.org/bioethics/existential-distress-drives-maid-requests-canadian-study/12321>

virtue, Josef Pieper, wrote on the four cardinal virtues, especially on Temperance, in 1955.³⁵

This virtue is particularly important today as we face a culture very far from it. Just recently, we learned of the story of 18-year-old Maddie Runkles, who became pregnant and was punished by her Evangelical school for breaking the morality clause she signed when becoming a student. What many people are unfortunately not seeing is that at the root of the case is temperance. Yes, we are certainly happy that she did not perform an abortion, and the school principal made that abundantly clear. However, before we address abortion, we must address the root of the problem: not being chaste.

Austin Ruse summarizes the situation well: “Maddi is now a national celebrity and her story has something for both the pro-abort left and the pro-life right. For the pro-aborts, they have the specter of a Christian school punishing a teen girl for “immorality,” a scene right out of *Handmaid’s Tale*. For pro-lifers, there is an Evangelical school that in its clumsy moralizing practically forced a girl to kill her unborn child...Except the number one reason she has chosen not to abort is not that she has no choice, that those around her have abandoned her; it is because she has chosen to mimic the marital act with someone she’s not married to. Overwhelmingly abortions are committed on single women. There is a predicate to pregnancy and that is intercourse and the predicate to intercourse is marriage. Like so many young women, Maddi chose to forgo that predicate. She chose to participate in that act that is reserved to married couples alone. And the brutal news is we have left her alone in that decision. Society seems fine with that decision. Even the Christian world seems fine with that decision just so long as she doesn’t kill the issue. Then she is a heroine.”³⁶

Where does marriage come in? Where does the proper, just, and prudent place of the sexual act come in? Marriage protects the mother, the father, and the children. It also forms the virtue of *prudicitia*, of modesty, which is at the root of chastity.³⁷ All of these barriers that protect us from concupiscence are being eliminated from society, so we cannot marvel at the results. If we permit the state to interfere with marriage and nullify the marriage contract, and if we permit contraceptive sex which permits for promiscuous behavior, how can we be surprised if the issue of abortion comes to the fore?

If everyone were virtuous and expected to be so by society, thereby encouraging such behavior, then we would not have to worry about the murder of children through abortion. The more virtuous people are, the fewer problems we face individually and as a society. However, virtue not only needs to be taught well, it needs to be explained well as the result of metaphysical truths.

³⁵ Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend (IN), 1966.

³⁶ Cf. Austin Ruse, “Let Us Now Consider Maddi’s Baby,” *Crisis Magazine*, June 2, 2017. <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2017/let-us-now-consider-maddis-baby>

³⁷ Cf. *ST II-II* q. 151, a. 4.

One cannot expect the mere Kantian categorical imperative to solve our problems. There needs to be a *reason* why we ought to behave a certain way. While Father Tanquerey is not ideal in explaining this, he certainly sets the path to make one seek more profound answers on his or her own.

Before proceeding to the unitive way, Father Tanquerey goes through the theological virtues. As he looks at Faith, for instance, we see what is really at the heart of his book. His book shows a spirit that gets truly involved in the “Bonum certamen...” with the hope of arriving into the mystical life. It shows how his own spiritual experience of the true Good-God moved him to the charity of teaching spiritual life through his book, i.e. to lead others into this path, reminding us of the cause “*bonum est diffusivum sui et subiecti*,” as Thomas Aquinas said.

Such an excellent personality, this coherent and virtuous priest, has produced a book that is a resemblance of the life of its author. We can assure you that, when reading the pages of this treatise, they speak to the reader the name Tanquerey. They communicate the anguish, the pain and the joy of this privileged soul. It is not a book but the biography of a virtuous spirit that lives not only in heaven but also in ink.

The treatise was the school of the spiritual life of most of the seminaries until the Second Vatican Council. The so-called “spirit of the Council” did not recognize itself in the treatise because it was considered abstract, too scholastic. Some of the limits of the treatise can be such essentialist scholasticism criticized by the *nouvelle théologie* but at least it provides indications that help one to investigate further if one chooses. As Cornelio Fabro shows in his work, the being of Thomistic metaphysics is really and profoundly a living being, the *actus essendi*. However, one does not see such profound life in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas or in the works of spiritual masters like Father Tanquerey or Father Garrigou-Lagrange until one reads them and reflects upon them, especially with a reflection that is the fruit of a life that tries to adopt these criteria. When we read comments like that of Hugh Behan who criticize Father Tanquerey because of a negative influence on friendship among priests,³⁸ we ask ourselves, “Did we really have to throw the baby out with the bath water?” When we read that section on friendship in Tanquerey, we thought about it, and we developed it with works by St. Thomas More and others on the same subject. We do not have to limit ourselves to Tanquerey, but we also do not need to throw him out entirely. While Behan may be correct in saying that God did not become a text book or an idea, we do not see in Tanquerey’s text a mere idea but

³⁸ Hugh Behan, “Whatever Became of Adolphe Tanquerey?” *The Furrow*, vol. 28, no. 3, March 1977, pp. 168-170. He writes: “I read Father Jerome Twomey’s “Whatever Became of Adolphe Tanquerey?” (*The Furrow*, September 1976), with great expectation and was disappointed. I found that Father Twomey’s book list did not even have a section on friendship, a subject which Tanquerey handled so badly to the detriment of several generations of clerics and religious...The debate about celibacy must be conducted in this context...In short, the problem was not one of virtue and spirituality but more one of personality growth where grace could not build because nature was blocking it.”

a man trying to transmit a rich spiritual life in as concrete, thematic, and organized way as possible. No words can capture God, but given that we are poor creatures with limited discursive intellects, we have to begin somewhere. Maybe the evident crisis of spiritual life in priests nowadays, not only in the Netherlands but all around the world, could be directly related to the abandon of this masterpieces of Christian spirituality, to have abandoned writers like Tanquerey in their early formative years. Many of the spiritual issues we confront in the “field” today we have at least touched upon at one point when we read Tanquerey, Garrigou-Lagrange, Royo Marin, and other such manuals. They are indicative, clear, concise, and without error on many points that come up in life. Of course, one enriches them with more, as we do when we read other academic texts or even newspaper articles, on top of our pastoral experiences.

In this sense we find the declarations made by Sulpicians themselves, the congregation of Father Tanquerey, quite useful as they speak about the treatise:

After the Council, Tanquerey’s works fell into disuse, as the manual tradition of theology was seen as too apologetic for the openness of the post-Vatican II era. Nevertheless, his publications remain useful for the breadth and depth of their vision that provided a solid theological foundation for generations of seminarians and priests... (<https://sulpiciens.org/spip.php?article119>).³⁹

To confirm our thesis there is also the example of the other masterpiece of spirituality *The exercise of perfection and christian virtues* by Father Alonso Rodríguez, SJ. This book, written in the seventeenth-century, was a synthesis of the spiritual life used in the novitiates of the Jesuits for more than 300 years with great fruits of sainthood. After the Second Vatican Council they abandoned this key source of spirituality. To judge the fruits of such abandonment one has only to be baffled upon reading the current Superior General of the Jesuits, Father Arturo Sosa, SJ, claiming that there is no devil, i.e. that “We have created symbolic figures such as the devil to express evil.” Father Sosa continues by explaining that “Social conditioning can also represent this figure, since there are people who act like this because they are in an environment where it is difficult to act to the contrary.”⁴⁰

Many are forgetting the teachings of Tanquerey, of Father Rodríguez, of St. Francis de Sales, and so many others, and what is the new spirituality with which we are exchanging them? What are the masterpieces of spiritual experience that have substituted them? What is the splendor of this “new age” of spiritual teachings? In addition, what were the fruits of those heroic centuries in which sainthood flourished in the Mystical Body of Christ? What are the

³⁹ <http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n85297871/>

⁴⁰ <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2017/06/02/jesuit-leader-the-devil-is-not-real-just-a-symbolic-figure-we-invented/>. Original interview in *El Mundo*: <http://www.elmundo.es/papel/lideres/2017/05/31/592d806d268e3e1a7c8b476c.html>.

powerful arguments used to make the decision of abandoning a fruitful tradition?

Our scope, however, is not to become more aware of the historical moment in which we are living, nor is it our task to search the deepest roots of the spiritual crisis that weighs not only over the Netherlands but over the entire Church. Such a crisis is now quite evident to us all, otherwise we would not be here trying to bring to light that which those who have tried to condemn and hide from fervent souls have so successfully done in recent decades. This is our end: to advertise such a manual as a useful tool in one's spiritual life because of the ordered thinking entailed. If one "communicates" with it by bringing in other sources, other texts and experiences, all the better. That is what we have tried to demonstrate here today.

Our scope is to delight our souls, to enlighten our spirit, with the consideration of the harmonious project, *Précis de Théologie Ascétique et Mystique*. Part of the charm of the text is the order it proposes, so we now have to speak of the organization of its parts.

Father Tanquerey, like all good Thomists, sought to root his project in the true spirit of Saint Thomas Aquinas. For this reason, the practical proposals for the spiritual life are preceded by the principles of the supernatural life; the practical doctrine is preceded by speculative and Dogmatic Theology. He speaks at first of the "Principles," i.e. the nature *in statu innocentiae*, the sin and the status of the *natura lapsa*, the redemption and the gift of supernatural life, its excellence and obligation, and the general means to reach perfection. In a second moment he speaks of the "Application of the principles", signifying the concrete development of the supernatural life in the soul through the three classical stages that Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium have constantly recognized as the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way and the Unitive Way.

We can still use the image of the "Prodigal Son" of Rembrandt to understand this outline. The soul before sin is like the son who lives in the chambers of his beloved father's house, one replete with luxury and sweetness. The son, as the soul and as our first parents, is surrounded not only with the privileges of his nature as son, but he is also covered with the special details and precious vestments that the Father has lovingly offered to him. We are reminded of the soul of Adam that was enriched not only with the gifts of nature but with preternatural graces as well.

The soul that is in a *raptus insaniae* turns away from his father, destroying his vestments and asking the spurious inheritance of a so-called "freedom." That is the soul of Adam, the soul of Eve, that fell into the darkness of sin and got deprived of all sanctifying grace, losing its many preternatural gifts. The renewed bride, crowned with jewels that excel the treasures of many kingdoms, fixes her gaze in the eyes of the beloved that can be also the Father. That is our soul, i.e. the soul redeemed by Christ, the prodigal son that kneeled in front of his father warmed by the hug and kiss that discloses the secrets of Heaven. The image of the bride vested with gold and crowned is truly the soul

because the redeemed soul participates in a treasure that excels infinitely its original possessions. It is no longer merely with preternatural gifts but with the supernatural life of God itself that she shines. Such is the reason for St. Ambrose's famous *O felix culpa* which we heard recently in the Easter Vigil *Exsultet*. The New Adam is far more than we could have expected or certainly deserved! It is in this sense that when St. Thomas distinguishes between *privatio* and *carentia*, we understand this supernatural gift.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, if it is theologically clear that God creates us out of love, not out of necessity—as the dogma *creatio ex nihilo* implies—it is also clear that God saves out of love, not out of necessity. It is in this light of love—and not necessity—that St. Thomas understands the principle *bonum diffusivum sui*. We see that the goodness of God—and how it is diffused in creation—is key to help us understand how God *creates* and *saves* freely and not necessarily. A cause does not have a necessary effect.

With the idea of freedom in mind, we note that it is the problem of thinking that everything is necessary which leads us to be shocked when we realize that Heaven is not a necessary conclusion of each person's life. In fact, as we see in St. Thomas' works, the absence of Heaven, i.e. the *carentia* of Heaven, is an absence much like the ability to run 50 mph is an absence in a person.⁴¹ Such an ability is *not due* to a person like eyesight would be due to him. So, while the absence of such an ability for a person would be a *carentia*, that same absence would be a *privatio* for a car. In other words, *privatio* is the *lacking of something that is due*. So, an absence of eyesight would be a *privatio* for a person, and it is this distinction in the idea of absence or lack which permits one to understand the distinction between natural happiness and supernatural happiness.⁴² Limbo, for example, is a place of natural happiness where souls are perfectly naturally content.⁴³ Heaven, on the other hand, brings the souls a joy that is not comparable to any natural joy.⁴⁴ Such is the gift of Heaven that must

⁴¹ Cf. *III Sent.* d. 22 q. 2 a. 1.; *II Sent.* d. 33, q. 2, a. 1. The only punishment due to original sin alone is the deprivation of grace, and consequently of the Beatific Vision. In other words, the only punishment is the lack (*carentia*) of these great gifts. Furthermore, St. Thomas' argument implies that Limbo must exist; otherwise, those who die only with original sin would be punished with pain of sense, even without personal fault, which is contrary to God's justice. St. Thomas argues here that original sin is not the removal of what is man's by right; God does not, by refusing to admit a man to Heaven, take away what is his by nature. Rather, he simply gives to that nature what is its due, depriving it only of grace, which is something which God Himself can add or not add over and above man's nature.

⁴² The distinction between *carentia* and *privatio* is found in *II Sent.* d. 30, q. 1, a. 2.

⁴³ Of course, this is a big theme because one has to consider the way man is understood. Would man desire to know God more profoundly in Limbo or would he be so content as not to ask further questions? Would his natural happiness, in other words, really make him happy?

⁴⁴ So, in both Hell and Limbo, men suffer from a *carentia* of grace and the Beatific Vision. This distinction is very important. God is not taking away from those in Limbo something which belongs to them, as he would be if he deprived them of sight. Rather, He is refusing to apply to them what He chooses to give to some as a free gift (Cf. *II Sent.* d. 33, q. 2, a. 2). So, in terms of the definition *per se*—and not in terms of the speculation about man asking further questions—those in Limbo are not saddened by their lack of Heaven, any more than a bird is saddened by its lack of reason. Neither has the capacity for it. Nor has any injustice been done to them; they have not been deprived of anything to which they are entitled, but only of a gift

be considered when thinking about soteriology. However, can we really compare the speed of a car to a supernatural happiness? Is it fair to make such a comparison? Is the lack of Heaven really simply a *caerentia*? Here we touch upon the thorny issue of the *desiderium naturale* for the vision of the divine essence, the distinction between what is natural and what is supernatural.

However, returning to the happy image of heaven as manifest in Rembrandt's famous *Return of the Prodigal Son*, we can see how it can also be applied to the triplex via:

The soul that fights to abandon sin, that gets involved in an intense life of penance and prayer, preparing himself for the love of Christ, is the soul going through the purgative way. That is the son who walks heavily but is filled with hopes, i.e. the roads that lead to the paternal house. The sweat, the tears, the reflections, hopes, ideas, desires...that are born, die, are reborn and burned reflect the soul purifying itself during the pilgrimage. This is the prodigal son directing all its efforts to reach the Father.

The soul that kneels is hugged by God, kissed with loving forgiveness. This is the son in the middle of that warm light full of silent words that Rembrandt knew how to capture. He finds again the Father and he is enlightened by affections. Each moment the encounter becomes easier, the feelings flow, and the tears spur with the happy touch of the beloved one. This is the soul in the illuminative way, not yet fully captured and elevated but already full with the warm light of the most sincere and intense affection.

At the very end, we have the image not captured by Rembrandt, hidden to the mortal senses. It is the soul covered by the gold of the purest contemplation. The gaze is totally fixed in the eyes of Christ. This precious soul is our vocation. It is the soul in the unitive way.

We have to distinguish between an active union and a passive union. The active union is a universal call open to the purified and enlightened soul. It is an excellent state in which the soul rests in the delights of love. There is also a passive union that is reserved on earth for only a few. It is the mystical union full of extraordinary phenomena and is like the ring and the vestments that the Father commands the soul with which to cover itself.

An image of this passive mystical union is the sculpture of Bernini that we have in Rome in the church of *Santa Maria delle Vittorie*, the Ecstasy of Saint Teresa. In this masterpiece the Saint is getting pierced by an angel with a gold arrow. Her heart is burning with divine motions, and she is completely outside of herself. She is literally in "*extasis*". This sculpture is not the fruit of the imagination of Bernini. It actually happened, and each year the Carmelitan nuns of *La Encarnación* in Avila remember this miracle. The heart, pierced by the divine arrow of fire and grace, is conserved uncorrupted in Alba de Tormés in Spain. The heart is actually miraculously pierced, and those who visit this

so incredibly generous, so completely beyond man's own capacity, that wise men must wonder why God chooses to give it to any men at all.

place in which Saint Teresa died are able to see this jewel that shows how the mystical life, as illustrated by our dear Father Tanquerey, is not an abstraction. Rather, it is the only truly concrete reality or at least the only one that is concrete enough to pass through the proof of time to survive eternally, both in stone and in heaven.

Father Tanquerey confesses that these triadic moments are fully based in the *Summa Theologiae*: the Principles in the Prima Pars and the Application of Principles in the II-II that speak of the virtues. The outline presented until now shows a deep intrinsic unity, but we still have the task of showing the most fundamental idea that unifies the project of Father Tanquerey which, we could also say, is the principle that explains the best spiritual life.

It is quite interesting that at the very beginning of the treatise Father Tanquerey speaks about the different spiritual schools throughout the centuries, i.e. the different ways in which the virtuosities of the Gospel have been expressed validly in the richness of different spiritual paths and proposals.

We have the Benedictine school centered in liturgy. We have the mystical Carmelite school of Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila. We have the Jesuits, the Dominicans, and the Franciscans. We have the Imitation of Christ, the Sulpician School, Salesian School, etc. In this list we also find the so-called “French school of spirituality” with renowned authors like the famous Cardinal de Berouille. Father Tanquerey writes that its spirituality stems from the dogmas of faith and especially the dogma of Incarnation. Being incorporated into Christ through Baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit who lives in our souls, in union with the Incarnate Word, we glorify God Who lives in us and reproduces the interior virtues of Jesus, fighting vigorously against the tendencies of the flesh and of the old man.⁴⁵

We already mentioned as part of this school the famous Cardinal de Berouille, but there is also Saint John Eudes, Saint Vincent of Paul, and J.J. Olier. Why am I mentioning especially J. J. Olier together with these other important figures? Olier was not only a spiritual author. He was also a Founder. He founded the Company of Saint Sulpice. Yes, probably you have already wondered why this particular detail is an important key in the logic of our topic: Father Tanquerey himself was a priest of the Company of Saint Sulpice.

This means that he was fully embedded in the spirit of the French school of spirituality. This was his specific call, his charism. So we can say that the principle of unity of his spiritual treatise can be founded in the brief description that he gives of the spiritual school of which he is a part. An ulterior proof of this thesis can be founded in the very introduction written by Father Tanquerey in which he writes that the proper object of the Ascetic and Mystical theology is the perfection of Christian life. He continues by explaining that as this life is given

⁴⁵ Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie...*, p. xlii.

to us by virtue of the infinite merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and He being the more perfect exemplar cause of it, we can justly call it the Christian life.⁴⁶

Let us return to the points we have exposed: firstly, he describes his own school as founded especially in the dogma of Incarnation and incorporation in Christ, then, having shown that the object of his book is the Christian life, he says that it is called Christian life because it has Christ as its exemplar and perfect cause. This sounds very much like the other great spiritual master of the twentieth-century, Bl. Colomba Marmion, OSB, who focused everything on Christ.

Dear friends, I think that the principle of unity for which we were looking is already clear: The mystery of the Incarnate Word that is the cause of the Christian life. I will develop a further step of theological speculation right now, asking the Holy Ghost the needed precision to enlighten the implications of these affirmations. I think that we should speak of Christ as a *causa exemplaris effectiva* of the supernatural life, of grace in our souls. This means that Christ is not only the image (exemplar) of this life, but He is the direct source. He is her wellspring.

The participation of the divine life in us through Christ both as exemplar and effective cause. This is not lived out separately but in unity. As *actus essendi* is called, the *formalius* in the *ens* giving both formal and effective perfection, so God is through the act of being limited by the essence of the exemplar effective cause of beings, and still Christ is through grace (exemplar effective participation of divine life) the exemplar effective cause of the supernatural life. Moreover, it is to be called not only divine or supernatural life but truly Christian life, cause it is participated. It is given to us through the instrument of the human nature of Christ which is our access into the life of the Most Holy Trinity.

Saint Thomas Aquinas was a brilliant exegete, but he did not limit his research on Holy Scripture to speak about the pronouns and commas in Hebrew or Greek. Thanks be to God he was a true theologian and not a modern expert in Holy Scripture. His exegesis was also speculative. For example when he explains why we have four Gospels (the will of God inspiring four different versions) his answer is that: a) The gospel of St. John speaks of Christ as God, being a divine person of divine nature b) The other three gospels speak about Christ as man: b.a) St. Matthew of Christ man as King b.b) St. Mark of Christ man as Prophet b.c) St. Luke of Christ as Priest. This interpretation is developed because of the *Initia* of the different gospels: a) St. John speaks of the divine person of the Verb b.a) St. Matthew the royal genealogy of Christ b.b) St. Mark the prophetic announcement by St. John b.c) St. Luke speaks of the priesthood of St. Zacharias.

Why this digression? It is because the humanity of the Incarnated Verb, as instrumental cause of the divine life in us, communicates into our souls not only the divine life (Christ as God/Word in the Gospel of St. John) but also the

⁴⁶ Cf. Adolphe Tanquerey, *Précis de Théologie...*, p. 1.

proper effect of the instrumental cause, the humanity of Christ. This indicates the three christ-conforming characters (as Charles Journet would allude in his work on ecclesiology): we are kings, prophets and priests by our participation in Christ. The power of this truth applied in the lecture of the treatise and its parts is truly enormous. The call to the perfection is a true vocation to develop in our soul the divine life of Christ incarnating his human characters: king, prophet, priest.

The process through the three ways (purgative, illuminative, unitive) is to be called, without metaphor, a christification. For example, through prayer we grow in divine life letting the participation of divine life become intensified in our soul by the exercise of the priestly christo-conforming character participated in us as an effect of the Priesthood of Christ. This priesthood is perfect in the measure we advance the more in the Christian life. The prayer of those in the purgative phase is not as perfect as that of those in the illuminative, and the apex is the unitive way in which prayer (an exercise also of priesthood) is more truly identified with the Priesthood of Christ. This double participation in Christ, both in His divinity and His humanity, reveals and explains the inner logic of the whole complex of the spiritual life. This is the profound intuition that governs the book of Father Tanqueray.

In the liturgy, we pass in Christ through the stages of spiritual life: The Introibo and the Confiteor are the purgative way in which we receive the purifying blood of the suffering humanity of Christ. The Epistle and the Gospel are the illumination (illuminative way) of the divine Master, which in His *munus propheticus*, is the new *Doctor Humanitatis* who enlightens our intellects with the divine mysteries. In the consecration and communion we reach the union (unitive way) and we get fully immersed in the divinity of the Word by the mediation of His humanity: *Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti et mirabilius reformasti, da nobis per huius aquae et vini mysterium EIUS DIVINITATIS ESSE CONSORTES QUI HUMANITATIS NOSTRAE FIERI DIGNATUS EST PARTICEPS*. We can be no more explicit because the meaning of the three classical ages of the spiritual life is: being cleansed from sin by the cross of the Savior, being enlightened by His preaching, being introduced into the divine life by His Resurrection.

Christ, true God and true Man, is truly the King who rules the entire creation, the Prophet who breaks the prison of our ignorance, and the Priest who sanctifies us, introducing us into the *Sancta Sanctorum* of the intratrinitarian life. The Christian life is primarily, simply and essentially following the path and living the life of the divine person of the Word, of Christ the Sovereign King and Priest in whom all prophecies are truly fulfilled. Our participation in Christ God and in Christ Man are always growing together. From my point of view this is truly the interpretative key that explains the unity of ascetical-mystical theology, i.e. that explains the treatise of Father Tanqueray.

Happily we can still use our already dear image of the painting of Rembrandt which has inspired more recent spiritual authors like Fr. Henri Nouwen to write spiritual treatises that have helped many in the spiritual life.

The prodigal son in the stages of his return to the house of the Father is truly the soul that is getting identified, that grows in the image of Christ the SON by effect of the effective action of Christ Himself in us. We are prodigal sons, yes; but we are sons, because we are sons in the SON. The Prodigal Son of Rembrandt is an excellent synthesis of the path proposed by Tanqueray. The genius of Father Tanqueray is more intense because he speaks of a wide range of artistic masterpieces. Yes, he does not speak only of "The Masterpiece-Christ," but he shows the participated masterpieces: the lives of the saints.

The study of Ascetical Mystical Theology also passes through the study of the participation of Christ, one specifically manifest in the saints whose lives brighten the splendor of the different dimensions of the existence that we want to come to live, i.e. of the path that we want to walk.

Christian Soul awake! Follow the sublime path of your Master, follow the heroic example of your older brothers who taught you to love God and to forget the world.

If the Holy Ghost wanted you to be here today and wanted me, in the measure of my limits, to speak of these tremendous mysteries, it is because we are called to the perfection of this life. We are called to be Christian, and we must be proud of this calling. What else can we say to make you desire this life? Which exhortations, which movements of the soul, could be added to guide you into the treasures that our benefactor, Father Tanqueray, has treasured for us? We have spoken of the excellence of the book and the life of the author. Hopefully, we also now better understand the causes of the problems that forgetting his teachings has brought into the modern Church. We have shown the pure and strong structure that can guide us into the secrets of the divine life. We have finally tried, the verb is the right one, to describe slightly the meaning of the Christian life. When considering such matters one ought to consider that heat of consuming desire called grace asking him or her in the silence of the word that cannot be articulated: be Christian!

Brothers in Christ, should an angel appear to move your wills, the will cannot rest until the more excellent of wishes, those of perfection, have so deeply penetrated your soul that at least your hearts are moved to the smallest act of devotion: opening your soul to the Word that wants to speak to you through the pages of this treatise. Now I am truly touching the reverence of the most precious of treasures.

Saint Francis de Sales used to say that it was better to show the beauty of virtue than the ugliness of vice. This is true, and we have to do so; we hope that we have truly explored the richness of this superb science called mystical-ascetic theology, i.e. the science of saints, the spiritual science, the art of perfection, briefly the *ars artium*. Nonetheless we shall disobey the advice of the great Saint Francis de Sales because the duty that impels us to prescribe to you the study of the most heavenly of arts moves us to use all possible tools to reach our scope. What could move us to fear, to tremble, to dispel in our will all laziness? We dare to say that if the historical catastrophes, the oblivion of virtue, the suffering

of our mother the Church—and why not also say of your Mother Church in the Netherlands—were not enough, at least the conscience of duty, the inner certainty that we are truly obliged to perfection, should determine us into action.

This is because in the very end, in the final judgement, we will be asked about the fulfilment of each duty. For laymen we could still forgive, or at least understand, that they have not consecrated more time to the mystical arts to which we are referring because they trust in their shepherds and truly believe that these shepherds will lead them as experienced guides they should be.

That for laymen, but for priests what should we say? Which duty are priests and religious to have? What are the bounds that bind priests and cause remorse of conscience if not followed? Is not the priest a sanctifier for himself and for others? Is he not the friend in whom devout souls trust the treasure of their spiritual life? Priests can hear each time during the Mass the voice of the Altar that calls for the selected souls that they should carefully bring to it for perfect religious oblations. They will hear in the so-called *Dies Irae* the voice of the Master ask us: You my dearest, the friend to whom I have entrusted my jewels, my brides, my chosen ones, where are they? Why have they not arrived to their divine mansion? Weren't you supposed to guide them to my mansion? What are you saying that you did not know the path, that you ignored the way that lead to perfection? Weren't you advised? Did you not you look it up? Why has my house remained empty?

There is not exaggeration in our words, and the thought makes us tremble, that the sadness, the deception of our Beloved, would be infinitely greater than we are able to describe with these poor images.

Let us hear the voice of Saint John of the Cross; let us hear his admonition:

Know well [so called spiritual masters] that he who fails because of ignorance, when his ministry imposes him the duty of acquiring the indispensable knowledge, he will not escape a punishment that will be equivalent to the damage produced.

These the words of Saint John of the Cross, but what could be that damage produced? The eternal damnation or even the loss of grades of glory of the souls that we should guide, and let us remember that these grades of glory are all of them out of measure, are all of them infinite, so would be our responsibility.

Now what we could have said was said. Now you know what you should know, or better we know and we understand what should not be in any way neglected. Now one thing remains, only to be added: Choose!

Appendix 1:

Structure of the book:

I. - Principles:

1. Origin of Christian life.
2. Nature of human life.
3. Perfection of this life.
4. Obligation of looking up perfection.
5. General means for living it.

II. - Application of the principles

1. Purgative way.
2. Illuminative.
3. Unitive.
 - a. Acquired
 - b. Infuse

Structure of the first part (Principles):

Ch. 1: The origins of the supernatural life: the elevation of man to supernatural state, the fall and redemption.

Ch. 2: Nature of the Christian life; role of God and the soul.

Ch. 3: Perfection of this life: the love of God and brethren until sacrifice.

Ch. 4: Obligation of looking up the Christian life for layman, priests and religious.

Ch. 5: General means, interior and exterior, to reach this perfection.

Structure of the second part (Application):

A) "The purification of the soul or the purgative way"

Ch. 1: Of the prayer of the beginners

Ch. 2: Of the penance to repair the old sins.

Ch. 3: The mortification to assure the future.

Ch. 4: The fight against capital sins.

Ch. 5: The fight against temptations.

B) "Of the illuminative way or the proficient souls":

Ch. 1: Of the affective prayer proper to this way.

Ch. 2: Of moral virtues.

Ch. 3: Of theological virtues.

Ch. 4: Of the fight against the assault of the enemy

C) "The unitive way":

Ch. 1: The unitive way simple or active.

Ch. 2: The unitive way mystic or passive.

Ch. 3: The mystical extraordinary phenomena.

Ch. 4: Dispute questions.

Appendix 2:

<https://gloria.tv/text/2chbqiVfHLA71yW382sW42f1t>

Questo Compendio di Teologia ascetica e mistica, che ebbe in cinque anni cinque edizioni e meritò il plauso di persone cospicue per dignità e dottrina, viene ora contemporaneamente tradotto, oltre la versione italiana, in sei lingue moderne; onde non ha più bisogno da parte nostra di presentazione.

È bene però che il lettore sappia che il venerando suo autore non è soltanto uomo di studio, che i due tanto diffusi Corsi Teologici, la Synopsis Theologiæ Dogmaticæ e la Synopsis Theologiæ Moralis et Pastoralis coi rispettivi Compendi, resero noto a tutto il mondo ecclesiastico; ma è anche uomo di esperienza, che, nella illustre e benemerita Congregazione di San Sulpizio, esercita da anni l'ufficio più delicato e importante di una Comunità religiosa, la direzione spirituale dei novizi.

FILIPPO TRUCCO,

Prete della Missione.

Cañco LUIGI GIUNTA

Appendix 3:

Need of ascetic theology:

A) For the priest: that have to sanctify himself and his brothers:

*It have not only to look up for perfection, but also to reach it in a higher degree that religious does, and the knowledge of Christian life its essential to this scope.

*The knowledge of the excellence of sainthood produce the desire of it.

*To be aware of the numerous stages to pass through to recognize the path to follow and its difficulties.

*To get free of the worldly spirit.

*For the sanctification of the souls that are entrusted to him:

-Helping them to get free of sin.

-Forming selected souls that will help him.

-For the direction of fervent souls.

B) For laymen: we speak of utility, cause they can be directed spiritually without having to know the precise distinctions of ascetical theology, but its still useful for:

*Strengthen the desire of perfection, and to know the path and means to reach it.

*To make easier and fulfil spiritual direction.

*To substitute the spiritual direction if they can't have it.