

## Virtues Allied to Fortitude

*The Spiritual Life:*

*A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*

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§. 1082–1094

### § II. VIRTUES ALLIED TO FORTITUDE<sup>1</sup>

**1082.** There are four virtues connected with the virtue of fortitude. Two of them aid us in the accomplishment of things arduous: *magnanimity* and *munificence*. The other two help us to suffer in the right manner: *patience* and *constancy*. St. Thomas holds these four to be *integral* and *potential* parts of the virtue of fortitude.

#### I. *Magnanimity*

**1083.** 1° Its **Nature**. Magnanimity, which is also called greatness of soul or nobility of character, is the noble and generous *disposition to undertake great things for God and for our neighbor*. It is not the same as ambition, which is essentially egotistical and goads us on to surpass others by wielding authority, or receiving honors. The characteristic of magnanimity is disinterested service.

**a)** This virtue therefore presupposes a *noble soul*, possessed of high ideals and unselfish thoughts, a valiant spirit that does not hesitate to make its life accord with its convictions.

**b)** It is brought out not only by noble sentiments, but also by noble acts, and this in every sphere of action: in the army by brilliant exploits, in civil life by great reform movements, or great industrial commercial, economic enterprises etc.; in the realm of the supernatural, by the pursuit of a high ideal of perfection, by generous efforts to conquer self and to rise ever higher, by striving to acquire solid virtue and to exercise zeal in its various forms. All this is done without fear of risking fortune, health, reputation and life itself.

**1084.** 2° The **contrary defect** is called *pusillanimity*, which, through an excessive fear of failure, makes one hesitate and remain inactive. Seeking to avoid blunders the pusillanimous fall into the greatest mistakes; they do nothing or almost nothing, and thus waste their lives. Evidently, it is better to risk making mistakes than to do nothing.

#### II. *Munificence or Magnificence*

**1085.** 1° Its **Nature**. Persons with a great soul and a big heart practice magnificence or munificence, *which inclines us to do great works*, and at the same time to undergo the *great expenses* that such works entail.

**a)** At times it is pride or ambition rather than virtue that inspires these undertakings. But when it is *the glory of God* or *the welfare of our fellow-men* which one has in view, one supernaturalizes that natural desire for grandeur, and, instead of forever saving and investing, one generously employs wealth for the furtherance of great undertakings such as works of art, public monuments, erection of churches, hospitals, schools, universities, in a word of all

that promotes the common good. This virtue, then, makes one overcome the natural attachment one has for money and the thirst for further riches.

**1086. b)** This is an excellent virtue which must be urged upon the well-to-do by showing them that the best use they can make of the wealth Providence has entrusted to them is to imitate God's own liberality and His magnificence in all His works. There are Catholic institutions that languish because of lack of means. They offer an open field for the worthy employment of accumulated funds, and the best way of preparing for ourselves a glorious dwelling in Heaven. Then, there are numberless undertakings to initiate. Each new generation brings a host of new needs: churches to build, schools to found, a larger ministry to support; at times there are public calamities, to relieve, at others new agencies of welfare to inaugurate for youth, for old age, etc.; There is here a vast field, open to every activity and to every purse.

**e)** And there is no need of being rich in order to practice this virtue. St. Vincent de Paul was by no means rich, and yet, was there any other man who provided with such royal munificence for every misery of his day? Was there any who initiated such lasting and successful charitable enterprises? A noble soul always finds resources in public charity, and it seems as if Providence makes common cause with devoted service if one knows how to trust in God and to follow the dictates of prudence or the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

**1087. 2°** The contrary defects are *miserliness* and *extravagance*.

**a)** *Miserliness* or stinginess paralyzes the impulses of the heart, knows not how to make adequate provision for important enterprises, and does nothing but what is cheap or small,

**b)** *Extravagance*, on the contrary, impels one to make unnecessary expenditures, to be prodigal of money and at times to spend beyond one's means. This defect is also called *prodigality*. It is the part of prudence to hold a middle course between both extremes.

### III. *Patience*

1088. 1° Its **nature**. *Patience is a Christian virtue that makes us withstand with equanimity of soul, for the love of God, and in union with Jesus Christ, all physical and moral sufferings.* We all have an ample share of suffering sufficient to make us saints, if we would only suffer courageously and from supernatural motives. Many, however, suffer complainingly, in bitterness, of heart, at times even in a spirit of rebellion against Providence. Others, again, withstand suffering out of pride or ambition and thus forfeit the fruits of their endurance. The true motive that should inspire us is submission to the will of God (n. 487), and, the hope of the eternal reward that will crown our patience (n. 491). Still, the most potent stimulus, is the thought of *Christ suffering* and *dying* for us. If He, innocence itself, bore so heroically so many tortures, physical and moral, in order to redeem us and sanctify us, is it not meet that we, who are guilty and who by our sins are the cause of His sufferings, should consent to suffer with Him and with His intentions, in order to cooperate with Him in the work of our purification and sanctification, and to partake in His glory, by having shared in His sufferings? Noble, and generous souls add to these motives the motive of zeal. They suffer to fulfil what is wanting of the sufferings of Christ and thus work for the redemption of souls (n. 149). Herein lies the secret source of that heroic patience of the Saints and of their love of the Cross.

**1089. 2°** The *degrees* of patience correspond to the three stages of the spiritual life.

**a)** At the *beginning*, suffering is accepted as coming from God; without murmur, without resentment, in hope of heavenly rewards. It is accepted in order to atone for faults and to purify the heart; in order to control ill-regulated tendencies, especially sadness and dejection. It is accepted in spite of our natural repugnance, and, if a prayer goes up that the chalice pass away, it is followed by an act of submission to the holy Will of God.

**1090. b)** Patience, in its second degree, makes us eager to embrace suffering, in union with Jesus Christ, and in order to make us more like that Divine Model. Hence the soul is fond of following Him along the sorrowful road that He took from the Crib to the Cross; it contemplates Him, praises Him, and pours forth, its love upon Him in all His sorrowful mysteries: at His entrance into this world when He “emptied Himself”; in His resignation within the lowly crib that was His cradle and wherein He suffered even more from the insensibility of men than from the cold and the elements; amidst the sufferings of His exile, the menial labors of His hidden life, the work, the fatigue, and the humiliations of His public life; but, above all, in the physical and moral tortures of His, painful passion. Strengthened by the words of St. Peter, 1 “Christ, therefore, having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought,” the soul takes new courage in the face of pain and sadness; side by side with Jesus, it tenderly stretches itself forth on the Cross, for love of Him; “*With Christ I am nailed to the cross.*” When suffering increases, a loving, compassionate glance upon the Crucified Christ brings the response from His lips: “*Blessed are they that mourn... blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice’s sake.*” Then, the hope of sharing in His glory in the heavenly places renders more bearable the crucifixion undergone in union with Him: “If we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.” 4 Nay, the soul at times comes, like St. Paul, to the point where it rejoices in its miseries and tribulations, well knowing that to suffer with Christ means to comfort Him, that it means the completion of His passion, a more perfect love for Him here on earth, and a preparation for the further enjoyment of His love through all eternity: “Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me...*I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.*”

**1091. c)** This leads to the third degree of patience, the *desire* and the *love of suffering* for the sake of God Whom one wishes to glorify, and for the sake of souls, for whose sanctification one wants to labor. This is the degree proper to perfect souls and especially to apostolic souls, to religious, priests and devout men and women. Such was the disposition that animated Our Blessed, Lord when He offered Himself as victim . at His entrance into this world, and which He expressed in proclaiming His desire to suffer the baptism of His Passion. “*And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized. And how am I straitened until it be accomplished.*”

Out of love for Him and in order to become more like unto Him, perfect souls enter into the same sentiments: “For”, in the words of St. Ignatius, “just as men of the world who are attached to the things of earth, love and seek with great eagerness honors, good name, and display among men...so those who march ahead in the ways of the spirit and who earnestly follow Jesus Christ love and ardently desire whatever is opposed to the spirit of the world...so that were it possible with no offence to God and scandal to the neighbor, they would want to suffer insults, slanders, and injuries, be reckoned as fools, though having given no occasion therefor, such is their intense desire to be likened in some way to Our Lord Jesus Christ...so that with the help of His grace we strive to imitate Him as far as we can, and to follow Him in all things, since He is the true way which leads men to life.” Evidently, it is only love for God and for the Crucified Christ that can inspire a like love for the Cross and humiliations.

**1092.** Must a soul go further, and offer itself to God as a victim and formally ask God for extraordinary sufferings, in order either to offer reparation to God, or to obtain some signal favor? No doubt some of the Saints have done so and in our day there are still generous souls who are moved to do likewise. However, generally speaking, such requests cannot be prudently counselled. They may easily lead to illusions and are often the outcome of some ill-considered impulse of generosity which has its origin in presumption. "Such requests are made," says Father de Smedt, "in moments of emotional fervor, and once this is gone...one realizes one's weakness to accomplish the heroic acts of submission and resignation so energetically made in the imagination. Therefrom issue violent temptations to discouragement and even to complaints against God's Providence...It is a source of great annoyance and, perplexity to the spiritual directors of such souls." Hence, we must not take it upon ourselves to ask for extraordinary sufferings or trials. If one feels oneself drawn thereto, one must take counsel with a judicious director of souls and do nothing without his approval.

#### IV. *Constancy*

**1093.** *Constancy in effort consists in struggling and suffering to the end, without yielding to weariness, discouragement or indolence.*

1° Experience shows that after reiterated efforts one wearies of well-doing, one finds it irksome to be forever obliged to strain the will. St. Thomas remarks: "*A special difficulty is attached to long persistence in a difficult task.*" Yet, no virtue is solid 'that has not stood the test of time, that has not been strengthened by deeply rooted habits.

A sense of weariness often results in *discouragement* and *indolence*. The annoyance experienced at repeating efforts relaxes the energy of the will and produces a species of moral depression or discouragement; at this juncture, the love of pleasure and a sense of regret at being deprived of it gain the upper hand and one lets oneself be carried by the current of evil tendencies.

**1094.** 2° In order to react against this weakness, we must remember: 1) ,that perseverance is a gift of God (n. 127) obtained by prayer. Hence, we must ask insistently for it in union with Him Who persevered unto death, and through the intercession of Her Whom we rightly call *Virgin most faithful*.

2) We must, after that, renew our convictions as regards the shortness of life and the everlastingness of the reward that crowns our efforts. Having an eternal rest awaiting us we can well afford a measure of annoyance here on earth. If in spite of these considerations we still remain weak and hesitant, then we must beg insistently for that grace of perseverance the need of which we feel so keenly, by repeating the words of St. Augustine: "*Grant me O Lord what Thou commandest and then command whatever Thou wilt.*"

3) Finally we must go back courageously to our task, supported by the all-powerful grace of God, and work on despite the apparently small measure of success that attends our efforts, remembering that it is effort and not success that God demands. Besides, we must not forget that we need a certain amount of relaxation, of rest, and of diversion: *Man cannot live long without some consolation*. Constancy does not therefore exclude due rest: "*Enjoy thy leisure that thou mayest the better perform thy labor.*" The important thing is that we take our rest in submission to God's will, according to rule and the advice of our spiritual director.

1. A. Tanquerey: "The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology", Second, Revised Edition, 1951, pp. 509–515