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Dimensions of Prayer

Man must meet God with all that he is, for God is the Being of all; this is the meaning of the Biblical injunction to love God "with all our strength".

Now one of the dimensions characterizing man *de facto* is that he lives toward the exterior and furthermore tends toward pleasures; this is his outwardness and his concupiscence. He must renounce them before God, for in the first place God is present in us, and in the second place man must be able to find pleasure within himself and independently of sensorial phenomena.

But everything that brings one closer to God partakes of His beatitude for that very reason; to rise, by praying, above the images and noise of the soul is a liberation through the divine Void and Infinitude; it is the station of serenity.

It is true that outward phenomena, by their nobleness and their symbolism—their participation in the celestial Archetypes—can have an interiorizing virtue, and each thing can be good in its season. Nevertheless detachment must be realized; otherwise man would have no right to a legitimate outwardness, and otherwise he would fall into a seductive outwardness and concupiscence that are mortal for the soul. Just as the Creator by His transcendence is independent of creation, so man must be independent of the world in view of God. Free will is the endowment of man; only man is capable of resisting his instincts and desires. *Vacare Deo.*

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Another of man's endowments is reasonable thought and speech; this dimension must therefore be actualized during that encounter with God which is prayer. Man is saved not only by abstaining from evil, but also, and *a fortiori*, by accomplishing the Good; now the best of works is that which has God as its object and our heart as its agent, and this is the "remembrance of God".

The essence of prayer is faith, hence certitude; man manifests it precisely by speech, or appeal, addressed to the Sovereign Good. Prayer, or invocation, equals certitude of God and of our spiritual vocation.

Action is valid according to its intention; it is obvious that in prayer there must be no intention tainted with ambition of any kind; it must be pure of all worldly vanity, on pain of provoking the Wrath of Heaven.

Wholehearted prayer not only benefits him who accomplishes it; it also radiates around him and in this respect is an act of charity.

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Every man is in search of happiness; this is another dimension of human nature. Now there is no perfect happiness outside God; any earthly happiness has need of Heaven's blessing. Prayer places us in the presence of God, who is pure Beatitude; if we are aware of this, we will find Peace in it. Happy is the man who has the sense of the Sacred and who thus opens his heart to this mystery.

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Another dimension of prayer stems from the fact that on the one hand man is mortal and on the other he has an immortal soul; he must pass through death, and above all he must be concerned with Eternity, which is in God's hands.

In this context, prayer will be at once an appeal to Mercy and an act of faith and trust.

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Man's fundamental endowment is an intelligence capable of metaphysical knowledge; as a consequence, this capacity necessarily determines a dimension of prayer, which then coincides with meditation; its subject is first the absolute reality of the Supreme Principle, and then the non-reality—or the relative reality—of the world, which manifests that Principle.

However, man must not make use of intentions that surpass his nature; if he is not a metaphysician, he must not believe himself

obliged to be one. God loves children just as He loves sages; and He loves the sincerity of the child who knows how to remain a child.

This means that in prayer there are dimensions that are imperative for every man, and others that he may greet from afar as it were; for what matters in this confrontation is not that man be great or small, but that he stand sincerely before God. On the one hand, man is always small before his Creator; on the other hand, there is always greatness in man when he addresses God; and in the final analysis, every quality and every merit belong to the Sovereign Good.

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We have said that there is a dimension of meditative prayer whose content is the absolute reality of the Principle and then, correlatively, the non-reality—or the lesser reality—of the world, which manifests that Principle.

But it is not enough to know that "*Brahma* is Reality; the world is appearance"; it is also necessary to know that "the soul is not other than *Brahma*". This second truth reminds us that we are able, if our nature allows it, to tend toward the Supreme Principle not only in an intellectual mode, but also in an existential mode; this results from the fact that we possess not only an intelligence capable of objective knowledge, but also a consciousness of the "I", which in principle is capable of subjective union. On the one hand, the ego is separated from the immanent Divinity because it is manifestation, not Principle; on the other hand, it is not other than the Principle inasmuch as the Principle manifests itself, just as the reflection of the sun in a mirror is not the sun, but is nevertheless "not other than it" inasmuch as the reflection is solar light and nothing else.

Aware of this, man does not cease to stand before God, who is at once transcendent and immanent; and it is He, not we, who decides the scope of our contemplative awareness and the mystery of our spiritual destiny. We are aware that to know God unitively means that God knows Himself in us; but we cannot know to what extent He intends to realize in us this divine Self-Consciousness; and it is of no importance whether we know it or not. We are what we are, and everything is in the hands of Providence.

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Selected and Edited by James S. Cutsinger,
Foreword by Philip Zaleski
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