

PURITY

BY BEDE JARRETT O.P.

THE virtue of Purity, though so much at variance with human nature in its observance, is nevertheless a virtue which human nature justifies and human reason approves. In its exquisite refinements it is essentially Christian and revealed, but in the general appreciation of its beauty all cults and all culture have agreed. Its difficulty does not hurt its attractiveness; its idealism has never seemed wholly fantastic; its appeal has always been in an especial manner to youth—impulsive, impetuous, undisciplined, generous, furiously alive. Even the modern and sometimes maudlin love for childhood is a tribute to innocence and purity, or at least a reaction against the indecencies of art and printed page in which our generation finds itself submerged.

Man, to the follower of Christ, is the most wonderful of God's creation, compacted of admirable powers. To the followers of Christ, those who knew Him and had even handled Him, their fellow-men were so wonderful that to have missed loving them was to have missed loving God; God unseen was yet seen in man, for man's likeness to God was evident to those who loved God, and only to them. To the beloved disciple, man was God-like.

It does not seem possible that St John was thinking merely of the bodily frame of man, though that was present to his mind when he spoke of man as 'seen'; he must have been especially conscious of man's being God-like in his higher powers of intelligence and will. Certainly, there man touches the crown of creation, for by these powers man is able to love. Love means choice, and choice, again, means a mind that distinguishes this from that, and thereby offers a choice, and collects motives for choosing, and selects as dominant in its choosing the reasons that suit it. Thus, behind love is intelligence always; but love implies also a will that works on the intellect's collected material and actually chooses. The mind gives its list of motives—the will decides on the motives most compelling at the moment. The will chooses, and, having chosen, commands its choice. So love stands in man's life as the act that most nobly engages his greatest powers; the mind knowing, and the will choosing because of what the mind knows, and then loving its choice. Just as we are told that God is love, so, too, in a sense, is man love, or so, too, is love in man 'above all his works' and the noblest act of his soul: 'Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole soul . . . on this resteth the law and the prophets.' Even his relationship to his fellows and to himself seems to have no higher expression: 'Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself.' Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Man, then, in his duty to God, must be moved by love; or, again, man must fulfil his duty to God lovingly and freely. Freedom is of the essence of his life and gifts: he should only offer a free offering. It must be freely given to be worth the Father's acceptance: 'Whose service is perfect freedom.' Man has not only the obligation of serving God, but also, paradoxical as it sounds, he must love God freely, he cannot be constrained even by fear. Love must come and cast out fear.

That helps us to understand the importance of the Incarnation. Our Lord came, undoubtedly, to set us free, so that we might freely serve the God who made us: He came when the long discipline of fear had been passed and at last time's fullness had arrived, to set us out, erect and joyous, on the path of freedom and to inspire us to love God and to serve Him because we loved Him. It is of the essence of the new dispensation that love should lead us, and that 'anew and living way' should be made manifest, gentler and yet more consuming than the older: not so much the awfulness as the mercy of God, not so much the God who slew the sinner, but rather the God who willeth that he should be converted and live.

God redeemed us, therefore, and set us in 'the Kingdom of the Son of His love'; once within that Kingdom, He gave us the means to be able to serve Him nobly. He gave us the chance to have the means of service within our grasp. To more than this He would not compel us. He only compelled us to 'come in'. The grace of faith was His gift, sometimes, as with St. Paul, overwhelming and beyond discussion. But once within that Kingdom, we have our old freedom to act or not to act, to act thus and not the other way. Sacraments, prayer, the example of others, our correction by our elders or our friends, friendship itself, and ten thousand other means of help were now henceforth about us to enable us to serve God better: they did but enable us to do the better thing, they did not make the better thing itself, and of itself, be done. Thus, once again, we were left to ourselves to serve freely; everything to help, but nothing to compel. But the selves to which we were left, though they were ransomed selves, were not wholly repaired

or restored. We still have defects about us, not our own doing exactly, but inherited in the nature which is ours.

For the point which has never to be obscured is that human nature has suffered a hurt from which it is not wholly cured this side of death. Not an actual sin, but an inherited sin infects us all. We have succeeded to a nature the faculties and powers of which are all in revolt, and we suffer from their lack of co-ordination; they have broken loose from their proper hierarchy, and we have to deal with them, re-organize them, and gradually to tame them; and that is a life work. It never stops. This dislocation of our powers is not due to our personal fault, but is the trouble that befell our nature when the origins of the race went astray and bequeathed to us (as an original pair will almost necessarily bequeath to all their descendants) this tainted inheritance. It is not our fault; but it occasions our faults. It gives us an initial bias to evil, not the same in all, for all are not equally tempted, nor tempted to the same evil, but all are tempted to evil in some form or another. This has to be remembered. Man can be improved, of course; but he is never perfectly secure; he can always fail even after years of conscious rectitude. There is much talk now about the subconscious and its persistence despite the overlaying of consciousness and habits: certainly, here an initial defect survives in us and is always present. Baptism gives us a chance to use adequate means to correct this evil and to strengthen our beginnings of good (for we are certainly not wholly evil); but baptism does not of itself do much more than offer us means to correct ourselves. When it makes us children of God it does not automatically restore to order in us the disordered faculties of the soul. To do this is a lifelong work.

It is the existence of this persistent original 'flaw' or 'fault' which should make every one of us afraid for ourselves in the matter of purity. No one is ever perfectly secure; no one, even if he has passed by, unscathed, 'the ambush of young days', is in a position to think that he need no longer trouble about purity or the temptations against it. Trouble he must, though there are various ways of troubling, some which merely flurry him and do hurt to his cause, some which really help him in his struggle.

Before coming to these helps or hurts, we should do well to remember that in every case in which we are dealing with the soul the importance of habits should not be overlooked. Habits mean that once we have them, we do without thought or effort things which at the beginning may have been difficult and distasteful. It is habit that helps us now to recite easily the parts of some irregular verb, or the details of our multiplication tables, or the items of our weights and measures, or lists of battles, dates, and kings. We have acquired the habit of remembering them. Habits, however, are not merely in the way of memory, but in the mind, and in the way of act. We not only remember, but think and act, by habit. We can get into a habit of thinking of something or someone, and once we have got into that habit it is difficult to break ourselves of it. It has become a habit, and a habit is difficult to be rid of. We can have the same difficulty through habits of speech, the words we use, some particular word found for ever on our lips, some expletive, a story we delight in telling, some form of humour or topic of conversation. To begin with, of course, we have only instinctive tendencies; these we can develop or restrain.

Or, it may be that it is not mind and speech, but acts that have become habitual. Perhaps we are curious to see the folk about us, to gaze into their faces, and judge them to be good-looking or no. Again, in a quite different fashion, we can pick up tricks with our fingers, a gesture, a particular way of scratching ourselves, playing with a button on our coat, a jingling of the coins in our pocket, or some such hardly conscious movement of our limbs. All these are habits, picked up, deliberately or imitatively reproduced, or drifted into. They are ours.

But habits, however different in the faculties they have possessed, or in their value or encumbrance, are formed inevitably by the same means, by the repetition of acts. We go on doing a thing, or using a thing, or looking for it, or thinking of it, until we have at last formed the habit of acting or thinking or speaking in that particular way. Acts form habits, enough of them in number and time: fewer acts are needed, naturally, where there is already a tendency or bias, more where there is a natural bias or tendency to be overcome.

Another way of putting the same experience of psychology, and a way that sounds rather more ethical or sermonizing, is to say that to indulge a propensity is to strengthen it. This needs no further proof than that which our own character already must have afforded us. We know how natural propensities to games or lessons, or moral good or evil, are strengthened by indulgence: we watch the athlete tending to ignore all but his favourite and successful line of exploit, or the scholar growing more remote and aloof from other lives, the good man developing his goodness, the wayward becoming extravagant in waywardness, his unsteady career taking on a fixed character of deflection.

Of course, we also see instances of the contrary happening, of the scholar taking to politics, or the athlete to poetry, or the good man to evil courses, or the rake to righteousness. But the former habits required less determination to establish, the latter required painful and persistent efforts.

Moreover, there is another matter which soon becomes part of our natural and observed psychology—namely, that whatever is, has its own appropriate action; we learn quickly that everything is a tool or instrument, designed for a purpose and shaped exactly as it is to fulfil that purpose. We see that things have functions, and we realize that they succeed when they are able to function, are free to function, and function well. A man of genius is distressing to know when we see that he has no opportunity to display or use his genius, a ‘mute, inglorious Milton’, an artist with no chance to use his artistry, a man who stands idle merely because none will employ him. Or, again, we feel ourselves hurt by seeing a microscope in the possession of someone who never uses it, a library inherited by some dull descendant of learning, a horse ‘eating its head off’, an unfished river ‘infested with fish’, fruit rotting on the trees or lying on the grass beneath. We find that when we see these unfulfilled capacities, whether we are able quite to sort this out for ourselves or no, we are conscious of something gone awry; and we feel hurt or furious at the lack of use by one of what another would gladly and properly employ.

We can discover, too, another general principle of experience, that in the performing of the fitting function there is always some pleasure and nearly always some drudgery: the two complete the act, and the mere search for the pleasure and the avoiding of the drudgery, undoes the man. The musician who plays what he likes, but forbears to practise, fails in perfection; the writer who amuses, but without careful choice or accuracy of search for words and ideas, the historian who will not take pains, the slipshod linguist who makes no effort properly to master his foreign languages, the athlete who will not train: these seem to us not only—which is obvious—inferior at their particular hobby or department, but inferior as men. It seems that their character must suffer hurt as well as their proficiency, if they take the pleasures of it and not the pains, the fun and not the drudgery.

Now, let us apply these principles to the matter of purity, and we shall see where they lead us.

We can begin by taking it for granted that this nature of ours will have a tendency to the evil of impurity, less in some than others, but common in all. We may be simple enough to think that some folk are free of it: but we can be perfectly sure that, even if they are now free of it, they were not always free of it, and equally sure that even now they are not wholly free of it. Man holds the seeds of the tree of evil wherever he goes, till he be cleansed of them by death. Everyone is bothered with the recurrence of this temptation in thought and word and deed: some people have a larger dose of this particular trouble, because of the physical texture of the body, or its ‘humours’, or the physical development of it, but all suffer from it. It is the common curse of all.

Taking this, then, as the common curse of mankind, it is well to remember that, like every other tendency, it not only can be, but was meant to be, dealt with, and that because of it we have been given in the Kingdom of God remedies that can surely cure its evil. We shall not, on the one hand, as we have said, find that baptism has itself removed the trouble, nor, on the other hand, shall we find that the evil is ever past cure. Our nature is fallen; but Christ came to raise it, and the raising of it that He has made possible is a raising performed through the Sacraments—prayer, etc.—by the conscious and deliberate will of man. It may need severe and drastic treatment; or it may respond to the least effort. But it does need some effort. Indeed, the Kingdom of Heaven can only be duly possessed and appropriated by those who use violence to bear it away.

We must start, however, by recognizing the evil, and proceed by taking steps to deal with the evil: to recognize the evil is perhaps best done by trying to measure how deep a root it has already taken in us, or how it has most seized on us, in what particular form has it appeared in us, or where is its chief virulence, in thought or sight or speech or act? We must begin by a careful and thorough examination of our present trouble and its symptoms, and its apparent roots and causes. This is necessary, for until this is done we cannot properly or effectively deal with the evil.

Ordinarily, we can suppose that thoughts precede acts, and that we have to begin to deal with thoughts; but this is not always the case. Acts, looks, touches, are sometimes not voluntary, or no longer deliberate: habits can make the evil to be no longer consciously done. We may now have a habit which produces evil thoughts, and is not now, at any rate, actually produced by evil thoughts. Hence, it is absolutely necessary that we should have perfectly clear ideas about our own particular trouble (if we have any trouble) in the matter of this virtue. We are so very different, each

from each, that the disentanglement of our personal condition is most valuable; indeed, without this knowledge we can hardly tell where to begin.

When, however, we have discovered this, our own particular distress, we have to discover also not only what is wrong, but how that wrong came about; we have to discover the habit, or habits, which grew up and fastened this evil in us. The point to notice is that we began evil, and by habits have become possessed by evil: the value of remembering this is that we can see evil in its proper proportion as a definitely contracted habit. To remember this is to see some daylight. What has been made can be unmade: it is true that, as we have already noted, the weight of nature is to evil, and perhaps of our nature especially to this evil. That makes the habit harder to break; perhaps it might be impossible to break it ever, without the grace of God. But we have always to remember the extra force of the grace of God added to our own will as easily overweighting the pull of tainted nature.

This, at least, is clear. Habits drive out habits, and habits of evil can be broken as well as, though not as easily as, habits of good; but it is only by establishing a new habit that the old one can be removed.

Again, our preliminary principles will have shown us that it is imperfect (and, in dealing with moral obligations, wrong) to use a thing for a purpose other than that for which it was intended. Nature even cries out against such a misdirection of energy, and brings down its own inevitable punishments on such as disregard its laws. Hence, the word 'unnatural' is applied to certain forms of impurity where the true function is frustrated, by using to no purpose what was given for a definite purpose.

Again, on the principles we have laid down it is evidently wrong to take the pleasure and deliberately to escape the purpose that justifies the pleasure, to enjoy and then prevent the fulfilment of that towards which the enjoyment is directed. It must produce a weakened character where the drudgery is dodged and the fun alone accepted: this is part, at least, of the justification of the Catholic argument against 'birth-control', though that is not the reason why it is here adduced.

We may presume that sexual tendencies are ordained to matrimony, and that matrimony is necessary for the propagation of the race. We conclude that these inclinations of our nature are part of our very flesh and blood, and are not wrong, but right and, for some, even dutiful. Of themselves they are not sinful, nor are they even an imperfection. Indeed, there may be perfection in the fulfilment of them, and imperfection in the refusal of them. Matrimony, therefore, finds not so much an outlet for them as their proper purpose. We must not conceive of Christ as having designed matrimony as a way in which these feelings may be legitimized, but of these feelings as having in the scheme of Divine Providence been designed to lead to matrimony. We do not, therefore, think of matrimony as having been introduced in order to justify them, but of them as being introduced in order to lead on to matrimony.

Even in matrimony it is possible for either partner to go to excess, for it is always possible for us to exceed in what is lawful. It is possible to eat too much or drink too much (even without intoxication being dreamed of): it is possible, therefore, to give way to excess in matrimonial acts. Hence, as in all else, so in this, the Christian must be governed by right reason. He must beware of over-indulgence to the hurt of his own soul and body and to the hurt of his partner's soul and body. Their health as well as the health of the children-to-be will be influenced by this. Again, on the way towards the act of marriage itself, much will be allowed to those who are married; for it must not be forgotten that the marriage-act itself is not merely for purposes of procreation, but is the expression of human love, and for that reason also is justified. This is especially evident where age or other circumstances certainly prevent child-bearing, for even there the marriage-act is allowed. It is (when viewed in its own way as the fulfilment of a Divine Command) a just expression of the love between man and woman, though not the only one, for there is also that nobler expression of it—namely, the interchange of life (mind, interests, love, and service) between them. 'Then', says St Paul, 'they two shall be one flesh.' Not as an evil thing, but as something mysteriously beautiful does the Apostle contemplate this great mystery, a Sacrament or sacred thing, the very image of the union between Christ and His Church. St John also saw the Church as 'a bride adorned for her husband.' To those whose eyes are pure, this is no condescension of Christ to human weakness, but His spiritual 'justification of the works of God to man.'

Here let us enter a warning to parents, lest they should miss the beauty of their married life, and rather be ashamed of it, so that they dare not talk to their children of what married life implies. Children have delicate minds, easily bruised and hurt; for that very reason it is better for them to learn what one day they are bound to learn, rather from

lips that will speak gravely and with honour, than ribaldry and by way of unclean jest. Knowledge in itself is honourable; this knowledge is necessary; it is also inevitable. It should, then, be imparted to the child as early as possible. No parent can ever guess what his child's mind has already absorbed: not even by questioning will he ever find out. Its roads to knowledge are as many as are the people it meets: guardians, child-friends, acquaintances, servants, and others chance-met. By the most fortuitous ways is it invited to evil; even by the chance movements of the body and limbs themselves, by a chance posture asleep, by a constrained attitude in bed, by dreams.

Hence, as early as possible, and as its mind becomes capable of understanding each new unfolding of knowledge, the child should be taught how it came into the world. This is to diminish not innocence, but only ignorance. It may even preserve innocence which else will not be preserved. Ignorance is not in the long run a defence of innocence. Ignorance is more often the foe of innocence. It is in ignorance that most ill-habits against the virtue of purity are come by. The record of impurity is a record of souls that have not been taught the truth when they were capable of seeing it as a divinely given thing; it was twisted into a secret of knowledge withheld, instead of being given as an instalment of knowledge of the things of God.

All this is applicable to both sexes, for here we stand on an equality; sex will make very little difference here. What chiefly matters is the capacity of the child to understand. This capacity will differ greatly in the individual. That, and not the difference of sex, is chiefly to be considered in telling them of this matter.

Of course, as the whole of these pages will have shown, all that has been said will have been a constant argument in favour of Catholic education: it is a blessed thing for a child to go where purity is looked upon as a virtue most beloved of Christ. 'Blessed are the clean of heart' must be the finest of the beatitudes, for it has the finest reward, 'for they shall see God.' Now, cleanliness of heart is to be learnt, especially in a Catholic school. We say this not because non-Catholic boys and girls cannot be pure-minded, nor because in a Catholic school there is never impurity or unnatural vice; but because in non-Catholic schools there is hardly ever the same public opinion in favour of the beauty of purity as there is in Catholic schools. This is the universal testimony of those who know both. Those parents, therefore, who are contemplating sending their children to non-Catholic schools should realize what are the particular temptations they are compelling their children to face; and they should also realize how very little public feeling in the school will support their children in their fight against impurity. No doubt, a Catholic child should be able to avoid evil because it is evil, independently of public opinion: yet which of us is not conscious that a good public opinion has had a powerful influence, even when we are grown up, in preserving us from evil, or a bad public opinion in finding excuses for us when we have fallen? Is it fair to expose a child to these dangers? Dangers to faith are far less to be feared for a child going to a non-Catholic school than are dangers to purity.

Now, in dealing with the remedies against impurity, let us first take the matter of dangerous occasions of sin. We are told in the Catechism that we are under obligation to avoid these, because by entering into them we make it more likely that we shall fall into sin by them, and since by our neglect in avoiding them we are revealing our own slipshodness in virtue, or our presumption in it. We must, therefore, avoid occasions of sin, and especially so in the pursuit of purity; for purity needs pursuing. It does not come of itself to 'fallen nature'. Here, then, we should notice what have been the causes of our sins in the past or the occasions of our sins: whatever they be, these, as far as we can, we must avoid. Experience is a guide to the wise. Our experience can be a guide to our wisdom. We can learn, at least, from our mistakes. And, even if we have not yet fallen into sin, we can still, by the exercise of common sense, guess what things, or places, or people, or practices are likely to provoke us to sin. These, then, if we can, we must avoid. We add deliberately, if we can, for it stands to reason that we cannot avoid all occasions of sin, else we should perhaps have to give up social life altogether. Indeed, even away from society, we should not be wholly safe. We should still have with us ourselves as a seed-plot of temptation. Ourselves we can never escape.

If, however, I find that there are occasions of sin which I cannot avoid, I should at least go down to them prepared: a Sign of the Cross, unobserved by others, as I enter house or room, or go to my meeting, will have some power to remind me that grace is with me, that Our Lord died to save me from myself, and that His presence will go with me in fear and love. It will remind us, since the Cross purchased it for us, that we are ourselves 'living temples' of God: and 'he that profaneth the temple of God, him shall God destroy.'

But, again, in settling which are dangerous occasions, a great deal will depend upon personal temperament, for all

are not alike. What inflames one, will leave another cold. Dances, books, pictures, entertainments, signs of affection, imaginings, memories revived, have to be considered by each out of his or her experience and nature. What one can do with impunity, another cannot. What you find dangerous, you must avoid where you can; where you cannot, you must go into it forearmed.

In preserving ourselves from sins and temptations to sin against this virtue, we shall all find the eye to be an 'unruly member'. That is to say, it must be ruled. If you are careful of what you let yourself look at, you will better avoid what is probably the most frequent cause of what happens to your hurt. It is not so much what you see as what you look at. Things looked at bite deeply into the imagination and memory. They cut deeply. They are never effaced.

Where, oh where is fancy bred?

Or in the heart, or in the head?

How begot? how nourished?

Reply, reply.

It is engendered in the eyes,

By gazing fed; fancy dies

In the cradle where it lies.

Again, a word is needed as to that impurity which goes by the name of 'unnatural' sin, needing to be mentioned especially at this time, because for the moment it has again become fashionable: like in everything else, so in evil, fashions ebb and flow. First, then, it is unmistakable that some people (whether this is to be explained from accidents of childhood or from some other cause) have a preference for their own sex, even in their very early days: this preference is not in itself wrong. It is a mere fact of psychology, world-wide and world-old, known in history to be peculiar to no one race, type, culture, or class. This mere preference, therefore, is not of itself unnatural. But the sin begotten of this preference is unnatural; for we are certainly justified in using the word 'unnatural' of an action which is not the unlawful use of natural powers, but the unlawful use of powers which have no natural relation.

Other sins of impurity are usually the ill-regulated use of nature; this is the ill-regulated abuse of nature. That many great men and women have been subject to it should not lessen our abhorrence for it, any more than the fact that great people have been subject to other evil causes (such as lying, meanness, ingratitude, selfishness, or hypocrisy) would lessen our distaste for these ills, either.

What is the remedy for all these things? It will be remembered that when the Apostles learnt from Our Lord His more severe marriage law which, as against the milder law of Moses, thenceforth wholly banned divorce, they were aghast at His hardness. 'It were better,' said they, 'never to marry,' than to marry and have to observe such self-control. His answer was to agree, yet to insist that it was possible for a man to keep himself chaste 'for the sake of the Kingdom.' 'For the sake of the Kingdom,' then, men can observe the law of Christ-not as though Our Lord was urging them to remember the reward of Heaven as a sufficient motive for chaste lives. Rather He was bidding them come now at once into His Kingdom, 'the Kingdom of Heaven' already here begun. What He is urging is that, since His Kingdom is one of love, if men will come into it they will be led to love God, and this love of God will keep men true to God and be the fulfilling of the law. Men should fulfil the law of God 'on earth as it is done in Heaven.' The law is observed in Heaven lovingly because the beauty of God is made visible, and, out of love for that beauty made visible, men obey it absolutely. Here on earth also this law has to be observed lovingly, even though the beauty of God be seen only in a mirror, as it were darkly. The beauty of God here is not visible, but believed in; especially will it be believed in by the clean of heart more strongly than by their fellows, for it is their blessedness in some exceptional way to see God.

Let us here add by way of parenthesis that the social evil of prostitution is not to be accepted as inevitable for all men. It may be true that it will always exist; this does not mean that we are to take it for granted:

Their sin is all our sin, ours is their shame,

And while a single woman earns her bread

By blasphemy committed in love's name,

Not only she, but all our world is dead.

The remedy of impurity is, therefore, a strong personal love of Our Lord, developed especially through Mass, Holy

Communion, and a daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament, for love must be driven out by love. We can only drive out foul-love by fair-love. We must have some centre for our love: let it be Christ.

Folk easily tempted are usually affectionate and sometimes lonely people: to save themselves from sin they should not try to suppress their nature, but give it its true object, not others or self primarily, but God. Let them make Our Blessed Lord a third in all their friendships, let Him be the principal friend they have. Let them talk to Him in the Blessed Sacrament, let them worship His generosity in the Sacrifice of the Mass, let Him come to them in Holy Communion, walking on their unstable affections, rebuking the fury of the winds of passion and giving them a great calm. It is undoubted that we get less help from the negative policy of merely repelling temptations, than from the positive policy of turning directly towards whatsoever things are noble, comely, and excellent. Fear even may move us for a time, but this direct love of Christ alone will hold the soul to the end. Thus we can almost reverse the beatitude of purity, and say: 'Blessed are those who see God in His beauty, for they shall be clean of heart.'

It is, then, obvious that to secure for ourselves the fullness of the virtue of purity we need, indeed, the grace of God. Man of himself tends more often to its opposite: he has the weight of his body against him in his efforts to aim high. He has perhaps added to his evil nature the further weight of an evil habit, in thought, word, or deed. He must break from this, use every means in his power to break from it, and deal sternly and drastically with himself. Thus, he may have at night to shift his position, or leave the warmth of his bed, or distract his thoughts, or in the daylight rigorously keep his eyes under constant control.

The long hours of anguish that some must endure in defence of this virtue are a tribute, not to their misery, but to their courage. To give in is to escape further temptation for the time, perhaps; to refuse to give in is to pile up a series of temptations. Yet refuse we must. Still, it is not in refusing, but in substituting that we find our final remedy, sublimating, putting Christ for man. O wondrous barter that sets Him as the centre of our affections in the place of other loves, and then brings them in again to be reconsidered in the new light of His blessed presence. Under the glow of His comeliness and the light of His love, they are now made more dear.

'Give me, O Lord God, an ever-watchful heart which no subtle speculation may ever lure from Thee. Give me a noble heart that no unworthy affection shall ever draw downwards to earth. Give me a heart of honesty that no insincerity shall warp. Give me a heart of courage that no distress shall ever crush or quench. Give me a heart so free that no perverted or impetuous affection shall ever claim it for its own.'

(Daily prayer of St Thomas Aquinas)
