

a better understanding of God. And is not the emphasis on her motherhood meant precisely to show us the need of *completing* our picture of God, of remembering the motherhood of God Himself, of leading us back to the way in which motherly mercy is, in God, the same thing as fatherly injustice?

A curious little fact in Christian history: there's a little story about Mary the Mother of God which has come down through the ages from some quite remote past, the middle ages, even the early middle ages, in versions differing in detail but always the same in substance. The story tells of how one evening the Lord thought he would take a stroll around heaven and see how things were going on, and as he went he noticed a number of very odd types who certainly didn't look as though they ought to be there; so he summoned Peter and said, "What do you mean, letting in these very strange, unsuitable people?" Peter after a great deal of embarrassment and attempting to escape the question, was finally pinned down and forced to explain. "Well, Lord," he said, "you see it's your mother. Because *I* always lock the gates at night and I sleep with the key under my pillow; but as soon as it gets dark *she* lets them in through the scullery window."

This story has come down through the ages. And the point of the story obviously isn't that we can somehow appeal to the Mother of God to cheat the justice of God. The point of the story is that the Mother of God *reveals* to us the justice of God by revealing to us the motherly mercy of God.

FEAR AND PERSONALITY

FEAR IS A BASIC WORD in the English language. This is not surprising because it represents a fundamental phenomenon of man's life. Fear is expressed in many different ways and varieties; anxiety, dread, alarm, terror, bolstered by more than a hundred kinds of phobias. Fear is mysterious, even at times paradoxical. Usually thought of as a concomitant of grief of some form, it is also entertaining. Fear expert Alfred Hitchcock says:

Clearly my audiences go to the theater hoping to be scared out of their

wits. I try not to disappoint them. And there are certain principles, I have learned, which I can depend on when I want my audiences to shiver. For one thing danger must be imminent. When the danger is remote and far away it does nothing to an audience. For another, imagination is more powerful than reality. How often do we fear something that is about to happen, only to find, when it does that it really isn't so bad after all.

This keen analysis of fear by Alfred Hitchcock was similarly made by Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. Fear regards a future yet imminent evil threatening to break at any moment. Fear is a response to a future imminent evil, but where does it come from; how does it affect the psychological and moral life of man? These latter considerations are our particular concern. Is fear good or bad? What kinds of fear draw us to or drag us away from our supernatural destiny? Answers to these questions will be attempted along the lines set down by Aquinas.

Where should one begin to look for this capacity to fear? Ultimately the search leads to the appetitive drives in man, those faculties whereby we lunge out toward good things and recoil from the bad. Every person has two kinds of impulses of appetite: a rational will, plus emotional drives. In turn the emotional drives spring from two main sources: pleasure seeking (concupiscible) and emergency (irascible) powers. This latter division is necessary since the good toward which the appetite tends is not always readily attainable. Obstacles may in reality stand in the way so that the good is attained and evil dispelled only with great difficulty. Fear, then, in its most elemental form belongs to the emotions, although it necessarily has a counterpart in the rational appetite or will. This latter action or interaction of the will is most necessary, for without it we would forever remain beyond the pale of responsible, human activity.

Fear as an emotion is going to be found in one of the two sensitive, appetitive powers. The pleasure seeking power is concerned with simple good or evil, abstracting from any difficulties which might be encountered. On the other hand, the emergency emotions come into play when there is an emergency. These are five: daring, fear, hope, despair and anger. Since these passions are had in common with the brutes, the body plays a large part in their functioning, so much so that there can be no passion without a change of some physical bodily organ. An emotion, then, is a movement of a sensitive appetite, accompanied by some bodily change. Putting these notions together we find that fear belongs to the irascible power, its object is a future evil which so presents itself to the imagination as to seem irre-

sistible. The notes of *future* and *imminent* are very significant. Anyone afraid of thunder, for instance, realizes that the crashing sound will come inevitably after the first flash of lightning. However, it is that brief interval which induces the terror.

If there were nothing more to man than a set of animal passions, this discussion would be relatively simple. Just as a young doe flees in fear of a lion, so a man would react when faced with a similar threat to his well-being. But if we accept no other authority and appeal merely to our experience, we know that we have higher faculties. No matter how weak it may seem there is in us the ability to order our lives and our passions in a human, rational way. We have a higher destiny than the brutes, our faith tells us it consists in being united to God. This direction to a supernatural goal introduces the element of complexity, the possibility of a conflict of the basic drives of our lower powers with our reason and will. The emotions are meant to obey reason, but at the dawn of human history Adam's sin clouded and befuddled the issue. From then on, man's successful dominance of his emotions became more difficult, his continued mastery of them without grace, impossible.

Fear can influence a rational human act. The fear may first arise as an emotion, but until some decision has been made in regard to it, it is not elevated to the dignity of a human action. On the other hand fear may arise in the depths of the soul independent of any sense stimuli and then work its way through to the body, setting off the passion. A person walks out on a stage and immediately "freezes." There is no one out there ready to throw eggs or fire bullets—the imminent evil arises solely in the imagination of the terror-stricken performer. It sometimes happens that fear is so great in people suffering from neurotic and psychopathic disabilities, that free will is destroyed in that area of their life. In such people, obviously, there can be no moral consideration of fear.

What is really at the root of all our fears? Is it merely the reality of a future imminent evil, or is there a more basic reason for fear? Basically, we fear something not merely because it is evil but because it threatens something we love. That is why one of the most basic fears is the fear of death. We naturally love ourselves very much and fear anything threatening to end our lives. Love, then, is the cause of fear. St. Augustine said, "We fear nothing save to lose what we love." In wartime why are parents chilled with fear as they exchange their last words with their sons before the departing troop ship? Of course, the answer is simple: the departing soldiers are their *loved* ones. Or why does the father of a family suffer

untold anxieties about paying bills and providing for his wife and children? Isn't it because he loves them that he fears any possible harm to them?

St. Thomas assigns another root cause for fear which is closely related to the first, defect. Consider again the case of the anxious, bill-ridden father. If he had a few hundred dollars salted away in some bank, he wouldn't be so worried. In any example of fear the element of defect is easy to detect: the young singer being auditioned for a Broadway musical may fear that her voice will falter before completing the number; a veteran boxer may fear that his aging legs won't sustain a gruelling ten rounds with his younger opponent; while smaller nations manifestly fear their lack of nuclear power in a nuclear world.

At this point it might seem logical to set forth the principles governing the morality of fear and then apply them to those fears which lead us to or take us away from God. However, we would like first to present a division of fear which points up some interesting psychological aspects of this phenomenon. In these species of fear we will probably recognize many familiar, perhaps ugly faces. "Fear regards a future evil which surpasses the power of him who fears so that it is irresistible. Now man's evil, like his good, may be considered either in his action or in external things. In his actions he has a twofold evil to fear. First, there is the toil that burdens his nature: and hence arises *laziness*, as when a man shrinks from work for fear of too much toil."¹ It may seem odd listing laziness as a fear. But think about it for a moment. Even to the most industrious, work is difficult, a drudgery opposed to our natural love of ease. The temptation to put things off until later for fear of getting embroiled in something is real. The Latin American adage "Mañana is good enough for me" carries magnetic appeal. "In the sweat of thy brow, shalt thou eat bread," Adam was told, and his descendants have naturally recoiled from work ever since.

"Secondly there is the disgrace which damages him in the opinion of others. And thus if disgrace is feared in a deed that is yet to be done there is *embarrassment*, if however in a deed already done there is *shame*."² Since these two fears are akin to one another, it's preferable to consider them that way. This distinction may seem like splitting hairs, but it's borne out in reality. Consider the plight of a young married couple living well beyond their means in a fashionable penthouse. These people have finally "arrived" or so they think. But the first of the month with its demands for payment of bills looms dangerously close. Unable to meet their financial commitments, they will be forced to move to a more modest apartment.

Before the first of the month the dread of being disgraced before their newly acquired friends causes embarrassment. Once their disgrace is in the open, they experience shame.

"On the other hand the evil that consists in external things may surpass man's faculty of resistance in three ways. First, by reason of its magnitude, when a man considers some great evil the outcome of which he is unable to gauge, then there is *amazement*."³ Such a fear is understandable to the race driver at the start of a long and tortuous course, whose spine-chilling curves he never before has experienced. Far from being deterred, he is lured on by this awe-inspiring challenge. Men of science frequently experience this amazement when confronted by the vast and mysterious powers of our atomic age. It grips the doctor at the sight of new life, while it prompts the mountain climber to scale ever greater heights. The beginning of all genuine inquiry is the fascination for the great unknown.

"Secondly because some unaccustomed evil arises before us, and on that account is great in our estimation: and then there is *stupor*."⁴ Instances of stupor, both spectacular and prosaic, are easy to find. Survivors of the first atomic blast in Japan were paralyzed by it. An explosion never before seen in history had unleashed its lethal power before their very eyes. Our personal experience reveals that when something unusual or extraordinary happens to us we're stupefied—flabbergasted. In a new experience, perhaps a new job, we're mystified by the situation. Maybe it's a radical or sudden change, as for the college professor who has been teaching chemistry when the Dean presents him with a complete set of notes in medieval literature which he is to begin teaching at once. You can almost see the expression on the poor man's face—utter disbelief coupled with momentary loss of speech: a strong case of stupor.

"Thirdly because the evil cannot be foreseen; thus misfortunes are feared and fear of this kind is called *anxiety*."⁵ This species of fear needs no special introduction. It is a well known, constant companion to human strivings and struggles for all age groups. A person fears what is going to happen tomorrow, next month or next year. The ironic part of this fear is that these future events cannot be predicted with any real certainty. Some, perhaps many, of the situations feared will never materialize, making for a needless sapping of energy among other losses. Our Lord Himself was well aware of the devastating force of this fear when He commanded, "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will have anxieties of its own. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (*Mt. 7: 34*).

Certainly all of these fears abound in a world which has been dubbed

"The Age of Anxiety." The physical and psychological hardships of inordinate fears are obvious as well as the corresponding benefits of healthy fears. If a child is afraid of touching a hot stove for fear of being burned, it's a good fear, of course. In fact a person who is absolutely without fear of any kind is, in the words of St. Thomas, suffering "from lack of love, pride of soul, or dullness of understanding."⁶ Aristotle concurs bluntly in this: "A man would be insane or insensible to pain if nothing, not even earthquakes nor deluges inspired him with fear." An outstanding contemporary spokesman has remarked, "Fear of disease stimulates medical research and fear of accidents leads to safety precautions. On the international scale fear of a common enemy creates more alliances among nations than does mutual love and self respect."⁷

How are we to determine when fear is good or bad? When is it an asset or a liability in our race toward eternity? St. Thomas lays down a succinct principle which governs the consideration here, "When the appetite runs away from what the reason dictates that we should endure rather than forfeit, fear is inordinate and sinful. . . . On the other hand, when the appetite fears so as to shun what reason requires to be shunned the appetite is neither inordinate nor sinful."⁸ In short, some fears must be obeyed; others must be looked in the eye, met head on, resisted at any price even death. Martyrs of the twentieth as well as the first century have dauntlessly refused to surrender to the inordinate fear of death rather than surrender their God.

More specifically, what are the fears which drive us to or repel us from God? Considering these, the role of fear in a person's spiritual life, in his eternal destiny, is brought sharply into focus. "We are speaking of fear now in so far as it makes us turn, so to speak, to God or away from Him. For since the object of fear is an evil, sometimes, on account of the evil he fears, man withdraws from God, and this is called *human fear*."⁹ Notice that Thomas is clearly speaking about a fear for which a person is held accountable. A tragic example of such fear is the young married couple who use contraceptives because they fear the responsibilities a large family would impose. Submission to this base human fear leads to a direct frustration of God's plan, an inevitable turning from His love.

"While sometimes, on account of the evils he fears, man turns to God and adheres to Him. This latter evil is twofold, viz., punishment and fault. Accordingly, if a man turn to God and adhere to Him through fear of punishment, it will be servile fear."¹⁰ Servile fear plays a tremendous part

in escorting a soul to the harbor of eternal life. For those blessed with God's friendship it serves as a strong deterrent against future serious sin. Perhaps a person isn't too concerned with sin as an offense against God, but he's afraid, and rightly so, of the punishment of hell. Although great love for God may not yet have developed, yet fear and terror of hell fire keeps the person on the proverbial straight and narrow path. In itself servile fear might not appear noble and it is very true that without God's assistance it cannot achieve the justification of a single soul. But this fear can be found, often is, in people habituated to sin, especially sins of the flesh. It may seem that the nobility of character of a sexual pervert or alcoholic has been entirely effaced. But no amount of sin is able to destroy that God-given endowment, the ability to do good. Perhaps all that remains of good is the disgust and hatred for the chaos sin has wrought in one's life, or the remnants of a sense of shame, an ability to blush—a servile fear which alone remains as the sole redeeming feature of a person's life. Perhaps it was such a servile fear which first prompted Mary Magdalen to desert a life of sin and to throw herself at the feet of her beloved Master, her tears dissolving her sins one by one to make room for His all embracing love. Servile fear is literally a redeeming feature. When a sinner kneels before a priest in the confessional, tells his sins and is sorry because of the malice of his sin or the fire of hell, with the absolution of the priest he once more becomes a friend of God, his soul is bathed in sanctifying grace. The Council of Trent testifies to the utility of *servile fear*, or as it is called in connection with the sacrament of penance, *attrition*:

Imperfect contrition is called attrition, since it is usually conceived either from a consideration of the malice of sin or from the *fear of hell and its punishments*. But the Holy Council declares that if the imperfect contrition excludes the will to sin and hopes for pardon, it does not make a man a hypocrite or a greater sinner, but is a gift of God and an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not indeed, as already dwelling in the soul, but as merely giving an impulse that helps the penitent make his way towards justice. And although attrition without the sacrament of penance cannot by itself lead the sinner to justification, still it disposes him to implore God's grace in the sacrament of penance."¹¹

St. Thomas continues, "if on account of fear of committing a fault, the emotion will be *filial fear*, for it becomes a child to fear offending its father."¹² Servile fear, always good in itself is still imperfect and thus should be only a transitional thing to something higher and more noble.

As the names suggest, the difference between servile and filial is the difference between the slave and the son. It may be customary for a slave to obey his master from fear of reprisal, but a son, worthy of the name, should consider what import his contemplated action will have on the good family name. The son should revere his father and fear to wound him by bad conduct. In somewhat the same way young children are usually first made to obey their parents from fear of scolding. Eventually if the child is to mature normally he must learn to obey not from servile fear but from the filial fear born of genuine love.

There can be no mistaking our call to a life of chaste filial fear: "The spirit you have now received is not, as of old, a spirit of slavery to govern you by fear; it is the spirit of adoption, which makes us cry out, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). We have not been destined to spend out our days in a cringing fear of hell's torments; rather have we been commissioned to live joyfully and courageously in our coveted roles as adopted children of God. Filial fear is still fear, to be sure; but the terrifying elements of the future imminent evil recede somewhat and give way instead to an awe-inspiring reverence for God. It is a fear which has undergone a change, been modified. It seems that the best example in the natural order is that chosen by St. Thomas; a child fears offending his father. To the five year old boy, Dad is the biggest, best and strongest sampling of masculinity in the whole world (even if Dad is only 5' 5" and barely glued together with the aid of a variety of pills). But, nevertheless, the reverence and devotion of the child is unswerving, fiercely loyal. The child will constantly strive to imitate the parent. If Dad is a carpenter, Junior will soon try his hand at hammering nails and sawing wood in an all out effort to win Dad's approval with his first erratic efforts. The fear the son experiences is not a panic or dread but rather the possibility of failing to please someone he loves with such great loyalty and devotion. We, as children of God, must love and honor the best of Fathers, and fear letting Him down through less happy efforts of imitation which involve sin. Sin, serious sin, is feared as the greatest of evils because it and it alone has the power to separate us from our first and greatest love.

Everything said about filial fear applies to the Gift of Fear of the Lord. In fact everything said concerning the nature of fear in general is included here. It was pointed out earlier that all fear springs from love and defect. This truth attains startling proportions in the case of Fear of the Lord. For who is more lovable than God, total and unlimited Goodness? What greater distance can separate two objects than the infinity which

intervenes between the Creator and the creature? Who can honestly look at himself and not see his own emptiness compared to God's magnificent fullness?

The full ramifications of the gift of Fear of the Lord are vast and deserve a special treatment in themselves. Here we merely point out a brief description as to the nature of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in general. A gift of the Holy Ghost is a quality by which the soul is rendered apt to obey the direction of the Holy Ghost. All the gifts are simultaneously present to the soul bathed in sanctifying grace, not simultaneously active however, since this depends on the movement of the life-giving Spirit, Who breathes where He wills. The gifts have strikingly been compared to so many sails ever ready to catch the gusts of the life-breath of the Holy Ghost. They give sails to our spiritual life (perhaps it would be better to say wings). A person acting under their influence is really acting in a divine way. The gifts are special tools designed by God for divine living. They make up for the clumsiness of our human powers in knowing and loving God.

Fear in one form or another is here to stay. For someone to stop fearing is to cease being a human person. We can either proudly flaunt the notion that we fear or be realistic and admit it. A petrified child may repeat over and over "I'm not afraid of the dark," but that won't dispel the fear. The absolutely fearless person is not a courageous hero but a lunatic. The truly courageous are truly fearful, paradoxical as this might sound. The war hero and martyr both fear death; they love life as much, perhaps more, than most people. But yet they willingly face death. Why? Because they love God and country more. They obey a more exalted and sublime fear, that of abandoning God and country.

Fear, then, is a thread which weaves its way through the lower and higher reaches of our lives. We must recognize its potential greatness on the one hand and destructiveness on the other. It is ever exerting its influence for better or for worse. One form of fear may drive a wedge between the soul and God, while another may be characteristic of a soul immersed in deep love of God. Always the nature and extent of our fears will be determined by the things we love. We only fear to lose the things we love. If all we love is our own selfish gratification, our corresponding fears will inevitably be base, ignoble, entirely unworthy of our special vocation to adopted sonship in God. To paraphrase the axiom, "Show me your friends and I'll tell you what you are": Show me your loves and I'll tell you your fears. We could take great pride in the fact we are living in an "Age of

Fear," only if it were also "An Age of Love." In a word, the answer to fear is love. True love destroys base fear and creates genuine fear. Let us fear, but as those children to whom these tender words were addressed, "Come children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 33: 12).

—Walter McGuire, O.P.

¹ *Summa Theologica* I-II, q. 41, a. 4.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Bishop John J. Wright "Address to John Carroll Society," Washington, NC News Release.

⁸ *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 125, a. 1.

⁹ *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 19, a. 2.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Decree of the Council of Trent, Denzinger-Banwar, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, No. 898.

¹² *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 19, a. 2.

LAY PARTICIPATION IN THE MASS

THE RUMPUS ROOM for toddlers is the newest feature of our modern church building. By keeping the unmanageable tot quietly out of sight and sound, it aims at making possible for mother (and for the rest of the congregation) a devout, prayerful attendance at Holy Mass. Again, kneelers comfortably padded; public address systems, rich-toned and strategically placed; ceilings acoustically perfect; walls of glass, light-giving and inspiring; the altar "in the round," encircled by the faithful—each of these too has the same purpose: to provide an atmosphere in which attention is easily focused on the drama of the Mass; to furnish a retreat to which the faithful can retire to worship their God, leaving behind the cares and distractions of the world.

This retreat is a unique structure. Built of stone, steel or timber like all other buildings, it is vastly different from them. Compare it with the theater, for instance. Strangely enough, it is in one important aspect not