

we have to suffer for Him, He will give us the grace to die a heroic death rather than be ashamed of Him and betray Him.

These are the principles underlying the doctrine of trusting self-abandonment. Accepted as they are by all theologians, they express what is of Christian faith in this matter. The golden mean is thus above and between the two errors mentioned at the beginning of this section. By constant fidelity to duty, we avoid the false and idle repose of the Quietist, and on the other hand by a trustful self-abandonment we are saved from a useless disquiet and a fruitless agitation. Self abandonment would be sloth did it not presuppose this daily fidelity, which indeed is a sort of springboard from which we may safely launch ourselves into the unknown. Daily fidelity to the Divine Will as expressed gives us a sort of right to abandon ourselves completely to the Divine Will of of good pleasure as yet not made known to us.

A faithful soul will often recall to mind these words of our Lord: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me" (*John 4: 34*). The soul finds its constant nourishment in the divine will as expressed, abandoning itself to the *Divine Will as yet not made known*, much as a swimmer supports himself on the passing wave and surrenders himself to the oncoming wave, to that ocean that might engulf him but that actually sustains him. So the soul must strike out toward the open sea, into the infinite

ocean of being, says St. John Damascene, borne up by the Divine Will as made known there and then and abandoning itself to that divine will upon which all successive moments of the future depend. The future is with God, future events are in His hands. If the merchants to whom Joseph was sold by his brethren had passed by one hour sooner, he would not have gone into Egypt, and the whole course of his life would have been changed. Our lives also are dependent on events controlled by God. Daily fidelity and trusting abandonment thus give the spiritual life its balance, its stability and harmony. In this way we live our lives in almost continuous recollection, in an ever-increasing self-abnegation, and these are the conditions normally required for contemplation and union with God. This, then, is the reason why our life should be one of self-abandonment to the Divine Will as yet unknown to us and at the same time supported every moment by that will as already made known to us.

- Taken from *Providence*, by Father Garrigou Lagrange.

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Abandonment to Divine Providence

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Why should we abandon ourselves to Divine Providence? The answer of every Christian will be that the reason lies in the *wisdom and goodness of Providence*. This is very true; nevertheless, if we are to have a proper understanding of the subject, if we are to avoid the error of the Quietists in renouncing more or less the virtue of hope and the struggle necessary for salvation, if we are to avoid also the other extreme of disquiet, precipitation, and a feverish, fruitless agitation, it is expedient for us to lay down four principles already somewhat accessible to natural reason and clearly set forth in revelation as found in Scripture. These principles underlying the true doctrine of self-abandonment also bring out the motive inspiring it.

The **first** of these principles is that everything which comes to pass ***has been foreseen by God from all eternity***, and has been willed or at least permitted by Him.

Nothing comes to pass either in the material or in the spiritual world, but God has foreseen it from all eternity; because with Him there is no passing from ignorance to knowledge as with us, and He has nothing to learn from events as they occur. Not only has God foreseen everything that is happening now or will

happen in the future, but whatever reality and goodness there is in these things He has willed; and whatever evil or moral disorder is in them, He has merely permitted. Holy Scripture is explicit on this point, and, as the Councils have declared, no room is left for doubt in the matter.

The **second** principle is that nothing can be willed or permitted by God that does not contribute *to the end He purposed in creating*, which is the manifestation of His goodness and infinite perfections, and the glory of the God-man Jesus Christ, His only Son. As St. Paul says, "All are yours. And you are Christ's. And Christ is God's." (*I Cor. 2: 23*).

In addition to these two principles, there is a **third**, which St. Paul states thus: "We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good: to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints". (Rom. 8: 28), and persevere in His love. God sees to it that *everything contributes to their spiritual welfare*, not only the grace He bestows on them, not only those natural qualities He endows them with, but sickness too, and contradictions and reverses; as St. Augustine tells us, even their very sins, which God only permits in order to lead them on to a truer humility and thereby to a purer love. It was thus He permitted the threefold denial of St. Peter, to make the great Apostle more humble, more mistrustful of self, and by this very means become

stronger and trust more in the Divine Mercy.

These first three principles may therefore be summed up in this way; Nothing comes to pass but God has foreseen it, willed it or at least permitted it. He wills nothing, permits nothing, unless for the manifestation of His goodness and infinite perfections, for the glory of His Son, and the welfare of those that love Him. In view of these three principles, it is evident that our trust in Providence cannot be too childlike, too steadfast. Indeed, we may go further and say that this trust in Providence should be blind as is our faith, the object of which is those mysteries that are non-evident and unseen (*fides est de non visis*) for we are certain beforehand that Providence is directing all things infallibly to a good purpose, and we are more convinced of the rectitude of His designs than we are of the best of our own intentions. Therefore, in abandoning ourselves to God, all we have to fear is that our submission will not be wholehearted enough.

In view of Quietism, however, this last sentence obliges us to lay down a **fourth** principle no less certain than the principles that have preceded. The principle is, that obviously self-abandonment does not dispense us *from doing everything in our power* to fulfill God's will as made known in the Commandments and counsels, and in the events of life; but so long as we have the sincere desire to

carry out His will thus made known from day to day, we can and indeed we must abandon ourselves for the rest to the Divine Will of good pleasure, no matter how mysterious it may be, and thus avoid a useless disquiet and mere agitation.

This fourth principle is expressed in equivalent terms by the Council of Trent (Sess. VI, cap. 13), when it declares that we must all have firm hope in God's assistance and put our trust in Him, being careful at the same time to keep His commandments. As the well-known proverb has it: "Do what you ought, come what may."

All theologians explain what is meant by *the Divine Will as expressed*: expressed, that is, in the Commandments, in the spirit underlying the counsels, and in the events of life. They add that, while conforming ourselves to His expressed will, we must abandon ourselves to His Divine Will of good pleasure, however mysterious it may be, for we are certain beforehand that in its holiness it wills nothing, permits nothing, unless for a good purpose.

We must take special note here of these words in the Gospel of St. Luke "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater." (16: 10). If every day we do what we can to be faithful to God in the ordinary routine of life, we may be confident that He will give us grace to remain faithful in whatever extremity we may find ourselves through His permission; and if