

When God Does Everything, What Remains for Man ?

*Divine Will, Freedom, and the Risk
of Quietism in the Writings of Luisa Piccarreta*



Thematic Supplement to
Questions and Answers on the Divine Will

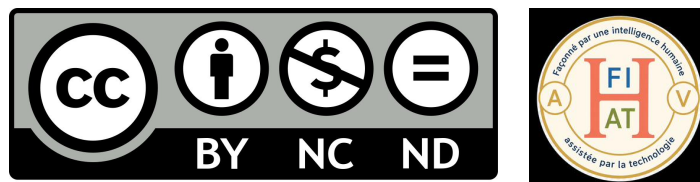
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This booklet offers a thematic study extending *Questions and Answers on the Divine Will*: an article devoted to human freedom, the soul's dispositions, and the risk of quietism in the writings of Luisa Piccarreta, developing what the main work teaches on this point. The complete work — 214 questions across fourteen parts, with commentary, citations verified against the Italian corpus, and Catholic doctrinal articulation — is available free of charge at amen-fiat.fr, in French, English, Spanish, and Italian, in PDF and EPUB formats.

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Luisa Piccarreta.

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Introduction — “You will do nothing; I will do everything”

On January 7, 1921, Jesus says to Luisa words which, taken literally, seem to leave no room at all for the creature’s action: “You will do nothing; you will only place your will at the disposal of my Will, and I will do everything.” He continues:

“You will be nothing other than the sound of my voice, the bearer of my Will, the one who destroys the virtues in the human mode and makes them rise again in the divine mode, marked with an eternal, immense, infinite point.”¹

Luisa immediately notes that she felt “completely annihilated.” The word is strong. We are clearly beyond a simple request for God’s help in practicing the virtues better: Jesus speaks of their destruction “in the human mode” and their resurrection “in the divine mode.”

A few weeks later, on February 16, 1921, the same radicality appears in another form. To enter the Divine Will, Jesus explains, “there are no roads, no doors, no keys.” The creature need only remove “the little stone of her own will.” Then,

“at that very instant, she flows into Me and I into her; she finds all my goods at her disposal: strength, light, help, everything she wants. This is why there are no roads, no doors, no keys: it is enough that she wants it and everything is done; my Will takes charge of everything else.”²

Jesus explicitly contrasts this simplicity with the ordinary path of the virtues: “how many efforts, how many struggles, how many long roads!”

On March 16, 1913, Luisa sees several souls immersed in divine light, as though estranged from everything else, “as if they were doing nothing.” Yet from these souls proceeds “all the divine working.” Jesus comments:

“One who does my Will feeds on light, that is, on Me; and while she does nothing, she does everything.”³

On August 14, 1917, Luisa herself describes what, in her understanding, it means to live in the Divine Will: to “do nothing by oneself.” The soul even comes to feel a kind of revulsion toward her human activity, “even if holy”; then, after carrying out her work, she can say: “I did nothing; Jesus did everything.”⁴

Even the struggle against the passions seems to change in character. On December 23, 1900, Jesus promises Luisa that if she remains fixed in his Will,

she will no longer need continually to fight her passions. Before the holiness of the Divine Will, they “die without fighting, without noise, gently.” Her “only occupation,” he adds, will be to love Jesus and to be loved by him.⁵

What, then, becomes of human action? If God does everything, what remains for man? If “it is enough to want it and everything is done,” what becomes of the long Christian ascetic path? If the virtues must die in their human mode, what remains of their exercise? If the passions can fade without struggle, what purpose do effort, vigilance, and mortification still serve? And if the soul can say after acting, “I did nothing,” what meaning is left to personal responsibility?

We would miss the force of these texts if we reduced them to the true but insufficient idea that God gives his grace and man then does his best. Luisa is describing something more radical: divine action becomes so interior to the soul’s acting that the soul no longer wants to claim as its own any act separated from God.

What she says must therefore be taken seriously: something truly changes.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 12, January 7, 1921. Working translation from the Italian: « Tu non farai nulla [...] Io farò tutto [...] la distruggitrice delle virtù in modo umano e la risorgitrice delle virtù in modo divino... »
- ² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 12, February 16, 1921.
- ³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 11, March 16, 1913.
- ⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 12, August 14, 1917.
- ⁵ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 4, December 23, 1900.

1. Something Really Changes with Luisa

On May 9, 1929, Luisa looks back over the first years of her spiritual experience. She remembers the trials, the struggles against the enemy, her state as a victim soul, and the sacrifices to which Jesus had called her. A difficulty occurs to her: Jesus later taught her that one who lives in the Divine Will is no longer subject to the same temptations and disturbances. Is there not a contradiction between the two stages?

Jesus does not try to erase the difference. On the contrary, he gives it a place within Luisa's path:

"It was necessary that I gather in you all human sanctity in order to consume it in you, so as to begin the true sanctity of living in my Divine Will. Sanctity in the human order had to be the footstool, the throne, of sanctity in the order of my Divine Will."¹

The two modes are not opposed as falsehood and truth. Sanctity "in the human order" prepared what followed; it was its footstool and throne. Yet it also had to reach its completion so that another mode could begin.

Jesus then recalls that in the beginning he would ask Luisa whether she accepted sufferings before sending them. He wanted a "voluntary suffering," not a forced one. It was her will that he wanted to make die, so that his own could come to life in her. Then he adds:

"Everything you suffered then was nothing other than the completion of the order of sanctity in the human mode. This is why I told you almost nothing about the sanctity of living in my Divine Will; I wanted to complete the one in order to begin the other."²

"To complete the one in order to begin the other": the divine mode is not merely a new label placed on the previous spiritual life.

Several years earlier, the language had been even more abrupt. On January 7, 1921, Jesus did not say merely that the virtues would receive more grace or be practiced more perfectly; he announced their "destruction" in the human mode and their "resurrection" in the divine mode. He spoke of an acting "marked with an eternal, immense, infinite point."³

The human mode is not thereby declared evil. The 1929 text calls it a "footstool" and a "throne." The struggles, sacrifices, and virtues of the first period genuinely

belong to the path of sanctity, but they lead toward another way of living the good act.

What changes seems to concern above all the way the act itself is lived. Loving, obeying, suffering, practicing patience or humility retain their Christian meaning. But the creature no longer wants to experience herself as the autonomous center of these acts, to which God would simply add his help. She seeks to receive the Divine Will itself as the inner life of what she does.

The image of the little wheel, given on February 4, 1922, expresses this very simply. Jesus compares his Will to the great wheel of eternity and the souls who live in it to little wheels placed within the great one. Their movement comes from that immense wheel; yet they truly turn. Jesus says to Luisa:

“Let your rounds be continuous [...] I will give you the cord, and you will lend yourself to receiving it.”⁴

The little wheel does not give itself its own movement. Yet it really turns, because it lends itself to receiving the cord. The image is simple, but it already says a great deal: divine action does not erase created action; it carries it.

This is also how the earlier struggles receive, in 1929, a new place. Jesus explains that they had completed “the order of sanctity in the human mode.” Then, when the life of the Fiat is formed, the relation to evil changes: the light of the Divine Will surrounds the soul, and disturbances, passions, and sins “lose the road.” Yet he concludes with a very concrete demand: “be attentive,” and let your living in his Fiat “be continuous.”⁵

The transformation is real. It does not simply consist in making greater efforts, but neither does it make the soul inactive. Rather, the soul learns to receive her acting while remaining attentive and faithful to what she receives.

It is in this light that one of Luisa’s most surprising claims must be heard: one does not enter the Divine Will as the final reward for a successful spiritual performance. One enters first because God gives and the human will consents.

Notes

¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 26, May 9, 1929.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 12, January 7, 1921.

⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 13, February 4, 1922.

⁵ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 26, May 9, 1929.

2. “It Is Enough That She Wants It”: The Gratuitousness of the Gift

How, then, does this passage begin? In Luisa, the answer is disarmingly simple: with a willing.

The text of February 16, 1921 states this with almost provocative clarity. The Divine Will is already everywhere, “under the feet, to the right and left, above the head”; there is no road by which one could reach it as though it were far away. What prevents the soul from participating in its effects is “the little stone of her own will.” Let her remove it, and “at that very instant” she flows into God and God into her. “It is enough that she wants it and everything is done.”¹

The same simplicity returns fourteen years later, in a passage where Luisa is complaining precisely about the distance she thinks she still has to travel. Jesus replies:

“Tell Me: what do you want? Do you want my Will to reign and live in you as life? If you truly want it, everything is done.”²

At first reading, this could sound like a kind of spiritual automatism. The same passage prevents that interpretation. Jesus speaks of the Divine Will and the human will as “two spiritual powers”: one immense, the other small, yet genuinely capable of willing and receiving. The created will is not an empty space that God occupies without it. It can open or close; it can make room for self-esteem, pleasure, or sin; and it can also want the Divine Will to become its life.

“It is enough to want it” therefore does not mean: feel a passing desire, pronounce a formula, and then regard everything as permanently settled. Jesus speaks of wanting “truly,” of deciding, of willing “firmly and perseveringly.” And he adds a detail that prevents the whole matter from being reduced to interior intention:

“On your part, it will be seen by the facts, if in all things you conduct yourself as the possessor of a Divine Will.”³

The willing of which he speaks therefore involves more than a moment of fervor; it tends to take flesh in the way one lives.

On May 6, 1938, Jesus takes up the same idea in an almost familiar manner. The first indispensable thing is to want to live in the Fiat; then one must take a first step, then another, and then another.⁴ The text of 1921 is not contradicted.

The beginning remains simple because the Gift comes from God. But simple does not mean instantaneous: this willing opens a path.

The gratuitousness of the Gift does not make consent irrelevant. The creature cannot manufacture Divine Life, even by accumulating efforts; but she can receive it. And God takes this little human will seriously enough not to force it.

The word "Gift" remains essential here. But because what is given is a Life, the yes that receives it cannot remain a single inward moment. Little by little, it asks for the whole house.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 12, February 16, 1921.
- ² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 33, March 19, 1935: « Figlia mia benedetta, dimmi che vuoi? Vuoi tu che la mia Volontà regni e viva in te come vita? Se veramente lo vuoi, tutto è fatto... »
- ³ *Ibid.*: « ...da parte tua si vedrà con i fatti, se in tutte le cose ti comporterai come posseditrice d'una Volontà Divina. »
- ⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 36, May 6, 1938.

3. Disposing Oneself: Receiving a Life That Wants to Grow

A word appears often in Luisa: *disposizione*. It would be misleading to treat it as a spiritual technique, as though the soul could prepare by herself what God would later place within her. Rather, it points to a real readiness, the readiness of a freedom learning to make room for a Life it receives.

On August 23, 1937, Jesus rejoices to find “the soul disposed to want to listen to Me and receive the great gift of which my word is the bearer.” Without this disposition, he says, his word cannot deliver the gift it carries. Then the image broadens. Because the Divine Will is Life, it does not want to remain motionless in the creature; it wants to grow. For that growth it awaits “one more attention, a sigh, a desire to want its Life,” even “the smallest act” and “a loving invitation from the creature.” Above all, it “does not want to grow by force”: it wants the creature herself to want its growth.¹

This is where disposition really comes into play. The soul produces nothing divine by her own power, but the way she receives truly matters. Jesus distinguishes the soul who is “all attention, all eyes, all heart” from the one who wants his Will without much attention; in the latter, he says, fullness still remains far away.²

A sentence from January 5, 1936 gathers the two movements admirably:

“Supreme attention is needed, and my Will will do everything needed to form its Life in the creature.”³

Attention does not manufacture this Life. Rather, it creates the human space in which the Fiat can form it.

This attention is not reduced to a general disposition made once and for all. On May 27, 1922, Jesus distinguishes the “prevenient act” from the “actual act.” At the beginning of the day, the soul can fix her will in God’s, decide to live and act only in the Divine Will, and place all her acts there in advance. This prevenient act is real; it gives direction to the day. Yet it can be clouded by human ways, one’s own will, self-esteem, or negligence. The actual act, made at the very moment of acting, disperses these clouds and renews the union. Jesus concludes without ambiguity:

“Both are necessary: the preventive gives the hand, disposes and forms the plan of the actual; the actual preserves and enlarges the plan of the

preventive.”⁴

The initial “yes” therefore cannot remain a pious memory placed at the beginning of the path. It has to descend into acts. An intention can orient an entire day; it still has to meet what happens, when it happens.

This logic reaches even the most ordinary things. On August 15, 1927, Jesus speaks of the small sacrifices he asks for: giving up a pleasure, a desire, an interest, a vanity, detaching oneself from something that seems almost insignificant. These little trials, he says, are like supports on which he can place “the great capital” of his grace and prepare the soul for greater sacrifices. Luisa then records this formula:

“The little [sacrifices] are the strength of the great ones: they dispose God to give grace and the soul to receive it.”⁵

The expression is bold. It does not mean that man can produce in God the decision to give grace, as though the Gift became the wage of an effort. In the passage, God takes the initiative in the trial, asks for the small sacrifice “for the good” of the creature, and then “abounds in grace” when he finds her faithful. The relationship takes the form of trust: fidelity in little things makes the soul capable of receiving more, and God entrusts more to her.

There is an asceticism here, but it looks less like an accumulation of merits than an apprenticeship in response. God takes the initiative, the creature responds, and this response opens her further. A small sacrifice can prepare a greater fidelity; renewed attention makes the soul more available. Grace remains first, without making the response decorative.

We can then better understand how Luisa can write that “everything is done” when the will truly gives itself, while later speaking of an act, a sigh, a desire, or an attention. This is not a sequence of payments. A Life has been received, and that Life still seeks to take up all its room.

A deeper question remains. If it is the Divine Will that gives the movement, forms the Life, communicates its strength, and even sustains the creature’s willing, can we still say that the creature truly acts? Or does all this language of disposition, consent, and attention merely describe how she lets God act in her place?

Luisa answers that question with striking clarity.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 35, August 23, 1937.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 34, January 5, 1936: « Attenzione somma ci vuole e la mia Volontà farà tutto ciò che ci vuole per formar la sua vita nella creatura. »
- ⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 14, May 27, 1922.
- ⁵ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 22, August 15, 1927: « ...i piccoli sono la forza dei grandi, dispongono Dio a dare la grazia e l'anima a riceverla. »

4. “God Does Everything”: Who Acts, Then?

In the entry of April 2, 1933, Luisa records a word of Jesus describing divine action in the creature as a continual exchange. God gives, the creature receives; then comes this clarification:

“And what is more, We want her with Us in order to operate; We do not want to do it alone.”¹

This sentence is difficult to reconcile with the idea of a creature simply set aside. God wants her “with” him in the operation.

This cooperation proceeds from God’s choice, not from a need. Jesus stresses that he can do everything without the creature: his power receives nothing from her. Yet when he wants to operate in a human will, he respects precisely what makes it a will: its freedom.

On June 17, 1935, Jesus goes so far as to present free willing as one of the greatest delicacies of creative love. God gave man a little will, “free,” so that he could open his own house to God. He does not want “a forced will.” He wants the creature to know the good he desires to accomplish in her and to open the doors to him “spontaneously.” She can then offer her Creator something that is genuinely in her power: her own willing.²

The Gift therefore does not make this little will useless. On the contrary, it makes it a place of encounter: God acts there according to his power, and the creature responds according to hers. Jesus puts it this way: he wants the human will “operating together with Us,” adapted to him as he adapts himself to it.³

This is why the death of the human will, so often evoked by Luisa, cannot be understood as its annihilation. On March 31, 1929, she describes her will as “dying” under the rule of the Fiat. Yet she adds that the Divine Will does not glory in making it die completely: if it did, it would lose “its prestige of operating upon a human will which, while living, voluntarily undergoes upon itself the vital act of the Divine Fiat.” The created will accepts “living while dying” so as to give life and dominion to the Supreme Will.⁴

There is indeed a death, but it is not the death of the faculty of willing. What has to die, in Luisa, is the willing that sets itself up as a separate principle and takes the act back as its own. But this renunciation itself presupposes a living will: it

"voluntarily" receives the act of the Fiat. Without this freedom, the self-gift of which Luisa speaks would simply no longer make sense.

This also makes understandable the image of the little wheel already encountered. The great wheel gives the movement and the cord; the little one creates neither. Yet Jesus asks it to turn continually and to "lend itself" to receiving the cord. The activity it receives does not therefore become unreal. It is all the more fully its own movement because it is attuned to the movement that carries it.

In 1938, Jesus sums up this relationship in almost familiar terms. Luisa would like to remain only in the joys of the Divine Will; he replies:

"But no, my daughter, the work is needed too."⁵

And he adds:

"In the work I never leave you alone; I do more than you; without Me you could not have done it."⁶

"I do more than you" does not mean that Jesus substitutes himself for Luisa. Above all, it expresses the disproportion: his action precedes, sustains, and makes possible the creature's action. Yet the work asked of her still really has to be done.

Luisa's "Jesus does everything" is therefore poorly understood as a division of percentages, with everything on God's side and nothing on man's. That would place the two agents on the same level. The most explicit texts say something else: God's action becomes deeper, while the human will remains living, consenting, attentive, engaged with him.

Here the same words can lead in two very different directions. To say that God is the living principle of the act is not yet to say that the human will must be extinguished. Yet the confusion is possible, and the history of Christian spirituality offers a very concrete example.

Notes

¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 32, April 2, 1933: « ...la vogliamo insieme ad operare, non vogliamo fare da soli. »

² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 33, June 17, 1935.

³ *Ibid.*: « ...lo vogliamo operante insieme con Noi... »

⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 25, March 31, 1929.

⁵ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 36, May 15, 1938: « ...ci vuole pure il lavoro... »

⁶ *Ibid.*: « ...nel lavoro non ti lascio mai sola, faccio più Io che tu, senza me non avresti potuto farlo. »

5. Quietism: When Abandonment Becomes Passivity

The words used by Luisa meet here a historical precedent that is difficult to ignore. In 1687 Pope Innocent XI condemned sixty-eight propositions connected with the teaching of Miguel de Molinos. One possible confusion of names should be set aside at once: Miguel de Molinos, a figure of seventeenth-century Quietism, is not Luis de Molina, the Jesuit theologian whose name is associated with “Molinism” in debates about grace and freedom.

What was condemned in Molinos was not contemplation, interior silence, or abandonment to God in themselves. The problem arose when the primacy of divine action led to the devaluation of the creature’s own activity. Two propositions are enough to show the point of rupture:

“To will to act actively is to offend God, who wills to be himself the sole agent; therefore one must abandon oneself wholly in God and then remain like an inanimate body.”¹

And again:

“Natural activity is an enemy of grace and hinders the operations of God and true perfection, because God wills to operate in us without us.”²

The expression “in us without us” appears in another proposition: after surrendering free will to God, the soul should leave to him every reflection and every care concerning herself, so that he may thus accomplish his will in her.³ The logic then extends into concrete acts. In temptation, only a negative resistance would be required, “without applying any energy”; in perfect prayer one should remain without producing acts; once the soul had reached “mystical death,” it would no longer even have a will, God having taken it away.⁴

It is easy to see why some of Luisa’s phrases can cause unease. “You will do nothing; I will do everything.” Passions that die “without fighting.” The human will that must die. The soul who, “while doing nothing, does everything.” Taken in isolation, the verbal parallels are striking.

A few common words, however, are not enough to decide the matter. We have to ask what they do with the creature. In the condemned propositions of Molinos, the ideal tends toward the inanimate body, and human activity becomes suspect because it would seem to hinder God. In Luisa, by contrast, the human will remains alive precisely so that it can consent. Jesus says that he does not want

to act alone; he asks for attention, the actual act, fidelity in little things, and even work.

The verbal proximity can therefore be misleading. In 1687 the idea is condemned that God should be “the sole agent,” while the creature remains like a lifeless body. In Luisa, Jesus can say that he does everything, yet he continues to speak of a little human will that voluntarily receives the vital act of the Fiat. The little wheel turns precisely because it receives the cord.

Quietism thus helps us see where language can slip. If the primacy of God ends by eliminating the created act, then “dying to one’s will” comes to mean losing one’s will, and “doing nothing” becomes no longer acting. The condemned propositions make that slope very concrete.

Other parallels will appear later when we deal with prayer for oneself, the virtues, confession, and spiritual authority. But the heart of the problem is already visible. A mysticism of divine action can exalt God’s initiative to the highest degree; it crosses another boundary when it makes the creature an inert subject.

The Catholic tradition had formulated this boundary long before the Quietist crisis.

Notes

- ¹ Innocent XI, constitution *Coelestis Pastor*, November 20, 1687, proposition 2, DS 2202: « Velle operari active, est Deum offendere, qui vult esse ipse solus agens [...] permanere velut corpus exanime. » Working translation.
- ² Ibid., proposition 4, DS 2204: « Activitas naturalis est gratiae inimica [...] quia Deus operari vult in nobis sine nobis. »
- ³ Ibid., proposition 13, DS 2213.
- ⁴ Ibid., propositions 17, 21, and 61, DS 2217, 2221, and 2261.

6. The Catholic Boundary: Prevenient Grace and Real Cooperation

The Council of Trent had already stated with great clarity the relation between grace and freedom. God takes the initiative: man does not move himself toward justification; he is preceded, called, and helped by grace. But this grace addresses a real freedom, capable of assenting and capable also of resisting.¹

Canon 4 of the decree on justification addresses exactly the point that would later become decisive in the condemnation of Quietism. It rejects the idea that free will, moved and stirred by God, “cooperates in no way” by assenting to the divine call and remains “like something inanimate,” purely passive.² The following canon adds that free will was not lost or extinguished by Adam’s sin.³

The cooperation of which the Church speaks does not place God and man on equal terms. God precedes, awakens, sustains, and makes possible even the response he asks for. The Catechism takes up the language of Trent by saying that justification “establishes cooperation between God’s grace and man’s freedom.” It then adds:

“When God touches man’s heart through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he could reject it; and yet, without God’s grace, he cannot by his own free will move himself toward justice in God’s sight.”⁴

This sentence holds together what is easy to separate: grace comes first, and yet the man who receives it is not inert.

Catholic theology understands divine action as the source of created action, not as a force that takes its place. The Catechism speaks of God as the First Cause acting “in and through secondary causes” and bestowing on creatures “the dignity of acting on their own.”⁵ Divine causality opens the creature’s space because it grounds the creature’s capacity to act.

Saint John Paul II gives this understanding of freedom a formulation especially illuminating for our subject. In *Veritatis splendor*, he speaks of “theonomy,” or “participated theonomy”:

“man’s free obedience to God’s law effectively implies that human reason and human will participate in God’s wisdom and providence.”⁶

The context is moral life, not Luisa’s mystical experience. Yet the structure is

fruitful: obeying God does not mean that man is externally subjected to a will alien to his freedom. His reason and will are called to participate in divine wisdom and providence. Free obedience becomes participation.

Luisa's most balanced pages can be read well in this light. When Jesus says that he wants the human will "operating together with Us," he does not hand over to it a share of sovereignty; he associates it with his action. And the little wheel, when it receives the movement of the great one, does not therefore cease to turn.

Catholic teaching on prayer preserves the same structure even in the highest states of union. The letter *Orationis formas*, published in 1989 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, describes Christian prayer as "a meeting of two freedoms: the infinite freedom of God and the finite freedom of man."⁷ Later it recalls that even in the highest states of grace, "an absorbing of the human self into the divine self is never possible."⁸ Union can extend to divinization by grace; the creature remains a creature, with freedom, otherness, and the capacity to respond.

The permanence of the created subject is recognizable by its fruits. Christian contemplation, the same document says, continually leads to love of neighbor, action, and acceptance of trials.⁹ Union with the Father did not draw Christ away from his mission; it led him to fulfill the Father's will even in the Passion. In the same way, Christian interiority comes to fulfillment in action increasingly attuned to God.

We can therefore preserve the full force of "God does everything" without making freedom fictitious. Everything comes from God as Source: being, grace, the movement toward the good, the supernatural fruitfulness of the act. And it is precisely because he gives the creature the power to act that he can want her real consent.

Seen in this light, the word from 1938 takes on particular depth: "I do more than you; without Me, you could not have done it." Jesus is not measuring two independent shares of the same work. He points to a deeper dependence: human acting exists, but receives from God its very possibility and, in the life of the Fiat, seeks to receive from him even its inner principle.

This articulation gives a first answer to the formulas with which we began. Some passages in Luisa, however, seem to go further still: no longer fighting one's passions, no longer thinking about oneself, no longer asking for oneself, letting the virtues die in their human mode. We must now return to those texts.

Notes

- ¹ Council of Trent, Session VI, Decree on Justification, chap. 5, DS 1525.
- ² Ibid., canon 4, DS 1554.
- ³ Ibid., canon 5, DS 1555.
- ⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1993, citing the Council of Trent, Session VI, chap. 5.
- ⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 306-308.
- ⁶ John Paul II, encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, August 6, 1993, no. 41; see also nos. 42 and 103.
- ⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation (Orationis formas)*, October 15, 1989, no. 3.
- ⁸ Ibid., no. 14.
- ⁹ Ibid., no. 13.

7. No Longer Fighting, No Longer Thinking About Oneself?

The principles are now fairly clear. Some passages, however, remain rough. They concern very ordinary gestures of spiritual life: fighting one's passions, looking at one's faults, asking forgiveness for oneself.

On December 23, 1900, Jesus tells Luisa that if she dwells in his Will, she will no longer need continually to struggle against her passions. Before the holiness of the Divine Will they will die "without fighting, without noise, gently."¹ The statement is strong. Yet it does not describe a soul who has by definition become incapable of temptation. The same passage gives its own criterion: if movements of passion begin to make themselves felt again, it is a sign that the soul "does not dwell continuously" within the boundaries of the Divine Will; she makes "exits," "little escapes" into her own will.

The struggle seems rather to shift its center. Attention is no longer absorbed entirely by the passion itself; it is directed toward remaining within the movement received from God and not taking up again a separate willing. Something still has to be held. Nearly thirty years later Jesus will again say, "be attentive," and let your living in the Fiat "be continuous."² The gentleness of which he speaks therefore has nothing in common with spiritual drowsiness.

Even more unsettling is the passage of November 1, 1912. Luisa is praying and making reparation for everyone; in the bitterness caused by the sensible absence of Jesus, she suddenly thinks of herself and asks: "Have pity on me, forgive this soul; are your Blood and your pains not also mine?" Jesus answers that by thinking of herself she impoverishes herself, and then adds that in his Will she is to pray and make reparation for others. He goes so far as to ask her:

"Does it not seem strange to you that one who has formed one single thing, one single will with Me, should ask Me for pity, forgiveness, Blood and sufferings, when I have constituted her mistress together with Me?"³

Here we touch one of the most difficult statements in the whole body of texts. It can resemble the Quietist idea that a soul which has reached a certain state should no longer examine her condition or ask for herself. Several condemned propositions of Molinos went precisely in that direction: no longer reflecting on one's faults or perfection, no longer concerning oneself with salvation, and even regarding certain petitions or acts of thanksgiving as incompatible with the state

of perfect resignation.⁴

Luisa's context, however, is very particular. Jesus is not speaking to a soul seeking to excuse herself from conversion; he is addressing Luisa while she is already praying and making reparation for everyone, and he grounds his word in a union he describes as already formed: "one single thing, one single will with Me." The word therefore presupposes the grace of which it speaks. Taken by itself, it is not a shortcut by which anyone may declare himself to have reached that state and then infer that repentance has become useless.

This matters all the more because the temptation to presumption is real: one need only attribute to oneself the union being described in order to turn a word of self-forgetfulness into a spiritual exemption. Yet the texts we have already encountered require precisely that the truth of the Fiat be verified "by the facts," in attention, fidelity, and the absence of voluntary faults.

On December 25, 1937 the same theme returns in another form. Jesus asks Luisa not to occupy herself with her weaknesses, miseries, and evils. The more one thinks about them, he says, the weaker one feels and the more these miseries tighten around the creature; if one stops feeding them with thought, they lose their strength. Good, on the contrary, calls forth good: "an act of love calls another love; an abandonment in my Will makes one feel within oneself the new Divine Life." He therefore wants her thought to be occupied with loving him and living in his Will.⁵

The word here is aimed at an interior fixation that feeds what it contemplates. It invites the soul to move her gaze away from herself toward God and the good to be done. In the light of the criteria already established—real freedom, duties, absence of voluntary faults, actual acts—this shift does not abolish conversion; it refuses to make self-examination the permanent center of spiritual life.

There is an important nuance here. Looking at one's sin can lead to repentance; looking continually at oneself can also imprison the soul within herself. Luisa pushes the movement toward God very far, to the point of no longer making the struggle against oneself the center of the interior life. That movement would become unhealthy if it were used to deny a real fault. The other texts on the Fiat do not point in that direction.

This question leads immediately to the virtues themselves. If the soul is no longer to build herself through an effort centered on herself, what exactly is meant by the most radical expression of all: "to destroy the virtues in the human mode"?

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 4, December 23, 1900.
- ² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 26, May 9, 1929.
- ³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 11, November 1, 1912: « Non ti pare strano che chi ha formato una sola cosa, un solo volere con Me, mi domandi pietà, perdono, sangue, pene [...]? »
- ⁴ Innocent XI, *Coelestis Pastor*, propositions 8-15, DS 2208-2215.
- ⁵ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 35, December 25, 1937.

8. The Virtues: Destroyed, Absorbed, Become Life?

On January 7, 1921, the words remain deliberately abrupt. Jesus tells Luisa that she will be only “the sound” of his voice, “the bearer” of his Will, and then speaks of the Divine Will as the one that “destroys the virtues in the human mode” and “makes them rise again in the divine mode.”¹ Luisa immediately says that she felt “completely annihilated,” in a context where she also refers to a sacrifice so hard that she does not wish to describe it in writing.

The language should be allowed to retain its roughness. “Destroy” says more than “improve,” and “make rise again” presupposes that a passage has taken place. Luisa is not merely speaking of ordinary virtues made more fervent.

The passage of August 14, 1917 gives a first key. Luisa writes:

“In the Divine Will, the virtues take their place in the divine order; outside of It, in the human order, they are subject to self-esteem, vainglory, and passions.”²

But this distinction between the human and divine orders does not yet convey the full force of her writings. Other texts go further and speak of a genuine absorption of the virtues into love.

On October 16, 1905, Luisa has just read a book about the virtues and is troubled because she can recognize almost none of them in herself. She finds only one thing: she wants to love Jesus, she loves him, and she wants to be loved by him. The heading of the entry summarizes the theme by saying that the closer the soul draws to the love of God, the more “the virtues disappear, absorbed in love.” Jesus’ direct words are even more illuminating:

“My daughter, the more the soul reaches the end, in order to draw near to the source of every good, which is the true and perfect love of God, where everything will remain submerged and love alone will remain afloat to be the motor of everything, so the soul will lose all the virtues she practiced during the journey, enclosing everything in love and resting from everything in order only to love.”³

What follows, however, prevents this “loss” from being understood as a moral vacuum. Jesus explains that as the soul advances, she feels less and less the distinct working of the various virtues because love, investing them all, converts them into itself, keeps them at rest within itself “like so many noble princesses,”

and itself works and gives life to all. He gives a very concrete example: the soul obeys, but no longer experiences her act primarily under the separate category of obedience; what she experiences is that she loves, because she obeyed out of love.⁴

A 1910 text develops the same intuition. Jesus says that love “contains everything, binds everything, gives life to everything”; one can say that love is patience, obedience, gentleness, strength, peace—“it is everything.” The virtues, he adds, if they do not receive life from love, can at most be called natural virtues; love changes them into divine virtues.⁵

The point becomes even clearer on July 30, 1929. Jesus contrasts those who practice the virtues holily “in the human order” with those who operate them “in the divine order” of his Will. In the human order, patience, obedience, charity and the other virtues remain distinct acts. In the Divine Will, its light possesses a “communicative and unifying virtue” that fuses the works together so that they form “one single act, with innumerable effects.” Jesus compares this to the sun: one light gives many colors and effects while remaining one sun.⁶

This is stronger than saying that the virtues simply remain side by side but are performed with more grace. In Luisa’s language, their distinct work tends to disappear as a separate spiritual accounting. They are gathered into a more unified principle of life: divine love and the Divine Will operating in the creature.

The text of November 20, 1938 takes the language one step further. Jesus says that one who lives in the Divine Will has received from God the virtue of producing “Life, not works,” because when God gives his Sanctity, his Love and the rest, he gives “the generative virtue,” and the creature “continually generates Life of Sanctity, Life of Love, Life of Light, of Goodness, of Power, of Wisdom.” Other creatures, he adds, can at most give works of holiness and love, “but not Life.”⁷

This vocabulary must also be heard. Luisa’s claim is not merely that Christian virtues become easier or more intense. She describes a shift from a collection of virtuous works to participation in a Life that carries within itself holiness, love, light, goodness, power and wisdom.

Here Catholic theology offers a useful point of contact without exhausting Luisa’s own claim. The Catechism says that charity “is the form of the virtues”; Saint Paul says that in the end charity never passes away.⁸ Love already possesses, within ordinary Christian doctrine, a unifying and animating role. Luisa takes this unity into the specific language of the Fiat and speaks of the Divine Will giving life to all the virtues until their separate labor is, as it were, submerged within a more unified divine operation.

This allows us to preserve the radicality of the word *distruggitrice* without concluding that patience, obedience, humility or sacrifice cease to exist. Their concrete reality remains. One still obeys; one still bears, serves, forgives, gives oneself. But the soul no longer necessarily experiences each of these as a separate virtue she is trying to possess and perfect. Love can become the immediate motive and the Fiat the living principle that animates them all.

The May 9, 1929 text confirms this continuity at the very heart of the passage to a new order. Jesus calls human sanctity the “footstool” and “throne” of the sanctity of living in the Fiat.⁹ A footstool is surpassed but not despised; a throne is ordered to what it bears. The struggles, sacrifices, and virtues of the earlier stage are taken up into a way of living in which the creature receives more deeply the principle of her act.

The book *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will* expresses the same reality with an anthropological precision that is especially valuable. In the trial where Mary must surrender her will to God, the Divine Will tells her:

“You will keep it, but you will live as though you did not have it, placing it under the total dominion of my Divine Will, which will be your life.”¹⁰

The text is precious because it states clearly that the human will remains. Its sacrifice does not consist in losing the faculty of willing, but in renouncing the attempt to make of it a life separated from the Divine Will.

This also sheds light on the “death” of the will encountered earlier. To die to one’s own will is not to cease willing; it is to cease willing separately from God. The opposite of self-will is not an absent will, but a will becoming filial.

The virtues can then be read from this same point of view. Humility becomes less an anxious monitoring of one’s littleness than the truth of a creature who knows how to receive. Obedience remains a free act, patience retains its concrete flesh, and so does sacrifice. What changes in Luisa’s language is their center: they are lived less and less as a perfection one possesses and more and more as a way of allowing the Fiat to take form in a human act.

That is why Luisa can use the language of destruction, absorption, and even “Life, not works,” while continuing elsewhere to describe holiness as more stable, more sacrificial, and more attentive to duty. The virtues do not vanish into an undifferentiated mysticism. Their distinct work is gathered into the living unity of love and of the Fiat.

And this transformation has a very earthly criterion: concrete duty.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 12, January 7, 1921.
- ² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 12, August 14, 1917: « Nel Voler Divino le virtù prendono posto nell'ordine divino; invece fuori di Esso, nell'ordine umano, sono soggette a stima propria, a vanagloria, a passioni. »
- ³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 6, October 16, 1905. The heading of the entry—distinct from Jesus' direct words—summarizes: « Quanto più l'anima si avvicina all'amore di Dio, tanto più le virtù scompaiono assorbite nell'amore. » Jesus then says: « Figlia mia, quanto più l'anima giunge al termine, per avvicinarsi alla fonte di ogni bene, qual è il vero e perfetto amore di Dio, dove tutto resterà sommerso e solo l'amore galleggerà per essere il motore di tutto, così l'anima smarrirà tutte le virtù che ha praticato per il viaggio, per rinchiudere tutto nell'amore e riposarsi di tutto per solo amare [...] Così l'anima, più cammina, meno sente il diverso lavoro delle virtù, perché l'amore investendo tutte le virtù, le converte tutte in sé, tenendole in se stesso a riposo, come tante nobili principesse, lavorando lui solo e dando vita a tutte [...] L'anima non sente in questo che obbedisce, ma solo che ama, perché ha ubbidito solo per amore. »
- ⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 6, October 16, 1905. The heading of the entry—distinct from Jesus' direct words—summarizes: « Quanto più l'anima si avvicina all'amore di Dio, tanto più le virtù scompaiono assorbite nell'amore. » Jesus then says: « Figlia mia, quanto più l'anima giunge al termine, per avvicinarsi alla fonte di ogni bene, qual è il vero e perfetto amore di Dio, dove tutto resterà sommerso e solo l'amore galleggerà per essere il motore di tutto, così l'anima smarrirà tutte le virtù che ha praticato per il viaggio, per rinchiudere tutto nell'amore e riposarsi di tutto per solo amare [...] Così l'anima, più cammina, meno sente il diverso lavoro delle virtù, perché l'amore investendo tutte le virtù, le converte tutte in sé, tenendole in se stesso a riposo, come tante nobili principesse, lavorando lui solo e dando vita a tutte [...] L'anima non sente in questo che obbedisce, ma solo che ama, perché ha ubbidito solo per amore. »
- ⁵ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 10, November 23, 1910: « Figlia mia, l'amore racchiude tutto, incatena tutto, dà vita a tutto [...] l'amore si può dire: È pazienza, l'amore è ubbidienza, è dolcezza, è forza, è pace, è tutto [...] tutte le virtù se non hanno vita dall'amore, al più si possono chiamare virtù naturali, ma l'amore le cambia in virtù divine. »
- ⁶ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 26, July 30, 1929: « Figlia mia, che differenza tra chi opera le virtù santamente, ma nell'ordine umano e chi opera le virtù

nell'ordine divino della mia Divina Volontà [...] Invece in chi opera nella mia Divina Volontà, la sua luce ha la virtù comunicativa ed unitiva, che fondendo insieme tutte le opere [...] formano un atto solo, con effetti innumerevoli [...] Simbolo del Sole [...] dà tutte le tinte e comunica la vita della sua luce a tutti ed a tutto. »

- ⁷ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 36, November 20, 1938: « vivendo nel nostro Volere, essa ha ricevuto da Noi virtù di poter produrre Vita, non opere, perché Noi nel dare la nostra Santità, il nostro Amore ed altro, diamo la virtù generativa ed essa genera continuamente Vita di Santità, Vita d'Amore, Vita di Luce, di Bontà, di Potenza, di Sapienza [...] Le altre creature ci possono dare, tutt'al più, opere di santità, d'amore, ma non Vita. »
- ⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1827: "The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity [...] it is the form of the virtues." Cf. 1 Cor 13:8, 13.
- ⁹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 26, May 9, 1929.
- ¹⁰ *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, Day Four, "The Trial": "You will keep it, but you will live as though you did not have it, placing it under the total dominion of my Divine Will..."

9. Abandonment Does Not Dispense Us from Duty

The passage of August 14, 1917 contains a severe criticism of certain forms of devout life. Luisa speaks of those who identify holiness with pious practices, frequent offices, multiplied confessions, or meticulous spiritual direction, while their will remains far from that of Jesus. The revealing sign is very concrete: they care little about their duties, become irritated when their practices are interrupted, complain, disobey, or disturb their family. Luisa calls this a “false holiness.”¹

The holiness of the Divine Will, by contrast, is described as “attentive to its duties” and profoundly sacrificial. Ordinary obligations therefore do not become a lower floor of spiritual life. On the contrary, they are one of the places where its truth is tested.

The Marian book states this almost as an axiom on the day of the Circumcision. Mary contemplates Jesus, the Author of the Law, submitting himself to the law received by his people, and she draws this lesson:

“Sanctity is in one’s own duty, in the observance of the laws, and in fulfilling the Divine Will. Sanctity without duty does not exist. It is duty that places order, harmony, and the seal on sanctity.”²

The scene almost speaks for itself. Mary does not remain in an interior waiting while God does what must be done. She suffers, discerns with Joseph, and carries out the act being asked, despite what it costs her maternal heart. The Fiat passes through this concrete act.

The same realism returns in the ordinary scenes of the Marian book: fetching water, preparing what is needed, serving, traveling, caring for Jesus. The Fiat removes nothing from the density of ordinary existence. It wants to be lived there too.

Jesus says something similar to Luisa on November 10, 1927. After calling her to form in her acts the model of the return to the Fiat, he concludes:

“Your duties are great. [...] In all your acts, let the life of my Divine Will flow, so that it may provide you with everything necessary.”³

If these duties are “great,” it is precisely because the Fiat wants to pass through them. The most ordinary human act is not a residue to be discarded as one

advances in the interior life; it becomes the very material in which divine action can be received.

This perspective also helps us understand the change in asceticism discussed earlier. Living in the Divine Will can shift the focus: less anxious concern with building one's own perfection, more consent to the act God gives us to carry out. But the act given may be humble, repetitive, painful, obscure. It may require getting up, serving, keeping silent, speaking, repairing a fault, obeying, or beginning again.

Christian abandonment reaches here one of its most concrete forms: doing what is given, without reclaiming the act as a work separated from God. Duty thus becomes one of the simplest and safest places where the Divine Will wants to live and act.

This criterion becomes especially important when we come to sacramental mediation and ecclesial obedience. A spirituality could appear perfectly abandoned to God while bypassing, in the name of an inner light, the means through which God himself has chosen to reach his Church.

Notes

¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 12, August 14, 1917.

² *The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will*, Day Twenty-Three, "The Circumcision."

³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 23, November 10, 1927: « Perciò i tuoi doveri sono grandi [...] in tutti i tuoi atti fa' che scorra la vita del mio Volere Divino... »

10. Sacraments and Obedience: The Boundary Case of November 5, 1923

November 5, 1923 is probably the most delicate passage in this whole discussion. It brings together obedience, confession, the Eucharist, and that “Real Life” of Jesus in the soul who lives in the Fiat. Above all, a very particular situation could easily be read as a general rule if we move too quickly.

Luisa begins by recounting that her confessor refused her absolution because she had not opened herself to him with sufficient confidence. After receiving Communion, she turns inwardly to Jesus and asks him:

“You who are the sovereign of priests, give me absolution yourself; tell me that you forgive the faults that are in my soul; let me hear your most sweet voice that gives me life and forgiveness.”¹

Luisa has therefore not decided that confession has become unnecessary for her. She wanted to receive absolution, and her confessor refused it. The rest of the passage must be read from within this deprivation, not from a decision to free herself from the sacrament.

It is then that the long teaching on the “Real Life” begins. Jesus shows himself to Luisa under sacramental veils and compares the acts done in the Divine Will to “accidents” capable of enclosing him within the soul. Luisa herself is surprised and asks whether this is not simply the ordinary mystical life of souls in grace. The answer is categorical: “No, no, this is not the mystical life.” Jesus develops a direct analogy with his presence in the Eucharist and says that he wants to form in Luisa his first “Real Life.”²

The question of this “Real Life” has already been developed in *Questions and Answers on the Divine Will*. For our purpose, it is enough to recall this much: Luisa is not describing a new sacramental presence, still less a presence more substantial than that of the Eucharist. Her analogy concerns, among other things, the soul’s free response: where the sacramental species have no will of their own, the creature can consent and love.³ This does not make her a sacrament in the proper sense, and it obviously gives her no priestly power.

The passage then returns to Luisa’s very concrete crisis. Jesus tells her:

“What I want is that you put nothing of your own into it and that you obey as much as you can.”⁴

Then come the most sensitive words:

“My Will contains all the sacraments and their effects; therefore abandon yourself completely in my Will, make It all your own, and you will receive the effects of absolution or of anything else that might be denied to you.”⁵

Here the proximity to certain condemned Quietist propositions is real. Molinos could present the interior way as independent of confession and confessors; another proposition envisaged that God himself might supply when confession became impossible.⁶ Detached from its history and turned into a general principle, Luisa’s phrase would therefore become very problematic.

The context, however, moves in another direction. Luisa asks for absolution; she does not choose to be deprived of it. Jesus tells her to obey “as much as you can.” The supplying action of which he speaks occurs precisely where a desired mediation is denied to her. We are far from a parallel path on which the soul decides that she no longer needs the sacraments.

Catholic doctrine knows this distinction between God’s efficacy and the sacramental order he himself instituted. Regarding reconciliation, the Catechism teaches that perfect contrition can obtain forgiveness of grave sins even before sacramental confession, provided it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to the sacrament as soon as possible.⁷ God’s action is therefore not materially confined to the instant in which the sacramental sign can be received; but this action does not destroy either the desire for the sacrament or the ecclesial order that bears it.

It would be excessive simply to identify Luisa’s case with the doctrine of perfect contrition: the text does not provide what would be needed to make that equivalence. It does, however, display an analogous structure. God can supply in a deprivation the soul has not chosen; such supplying action establishes no right to bypass the sacramental means.

The rest of Luisa’s life confirms the direction of this reading. The testimonies gathered by Fr. Bernardino Bucci show her closely submitted to her confessors and to the ecclesiastical decisions that structured her life. A close witness reports that nothing concerning her extraordinary phenomena was to be disclosed without the priest’s permission, and that Luisa “did nothing and wrote nothing without the authorization of her confessor.” Elsewhere, when she was required to eat despite the physical phenomena that made this painful, her response remained simply: “Let us obey.”⁸

This biographical trait does not by itself prove the theological soundness of every formula in the *Book of Heaven*. It does show, however, that November 5, 1923 does not belong to a spirituality of rupture with sacramental or ecclesial

authority. This matters when we remember that condemned Quietism could go so far as to remove the interior way from the judgment of superiors and of the Church.⁹

We can therefore read Luisa's formula without trivializing it. In her language, the Divine Will contains all the goods God wishes to communicate; God remains sovereignly free to act. But nothing on this page authorizes the creature to declare herself dispensed from the means entrusted to the Church. In 1923, the Fiat takes the much humbler form of fidelity in deprivation: Luisa desires absolution, obeys her confessor, and abandons herself to God when she cannot receive what she had asked for.

This is why the passage should remain a boundary case rather than become a practical formula detached from its history. It would be unfaithful to Luisa to conclude: "Since the Divine Will contains the sacraments, I no longer need them." Her account says something else: when the creature wants to receive what God has instituted but is deprived of it without having chosen that deprivation, she can still throw herself into the Fiat with confidence, without turning that confidence into a rival to the sacraments.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 16, November 5, 1923: « Tu che sei il sommo dei sacerdoti, dammi Tu l'assoluzione, dimmi che mi perdoni le colpe che ci sono nell'anima mia... »
- ² Ibid. The entry is headed: « Gli atti fatti nel Divin Volere formano gli accidenti che imprigionano Gesù nell'anima e vi formano la sua Vita reale. »
- ³ *Questions and Answers on the Divine Will*, VII.6 and IX.4-5. The distinction adopted there is that of a personal, real, operative presence of Christ in the soul, without identifying it with the substantial sacramental presence of the Eucharist.
- ⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 16, November 5, 1923: « quello che voglio è che tu non ci metta niente del tuo e che ubbidisca per quanto puoi. »
- ⁵ Ibid.: « E poi, la mia Volontà racchiude tutti i sacramenti e gli effetti di essi [...] riceverai gli effetti dell'assoluzione o di altro che ti venisse negato. »
- ⁶ Innocent XI, *Coelestis Pastor*, propositions 59-60, DS 2259-2260.

- ⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1452.
- ⁸ Bernardino Bucci, *Luisa Piccarreta: A Collection of Memories of the Servant of God*, vol. 3, testimonies reproduced on pp. 38-39 of the PDF: submission to confessors and the response “Let us obey” concerning the obligation to eat.
- ⁹ Innocent XI, *Coelestis Pastor*, propositions 65-68, DS 2265-2268.

11. Entering, Leaving, Remaining: Neither Scrupulosity nor False Security

The possibility of “leaving” the Fiat was mentioned earlier to rule out the idea of a state that had become irreversible. That point is correct, but taken by itself it could create the opposite problem: making us think that a distraction, a weakness, or a movement of feeling is enough to lose at once the life of the Divine Will. Luisa’s texts are more nuanced.

The difficulty also comes from the fact that some passages speak of a very strong stability. On November 27, 1926, Jesus contrasts the little lights of other forms of holiness with the “sun” of the holiness of living in the Fiat: one cannot remove a drop of light from the sun or extinguish an atom of its heat.¹ The image says something about the solidity proper to what proceeds from the Divine Will. But by itself it does not tell us the exact state of every person who has begun to live from this Gift.

We must first remember that being “in” the Kingdom does not always mean having reached full stability there. On July 26, 1926, Jesus describes four people exposed to the sun in different ways. The first remains in her house and stays outside the boundaries of the Kingdom. The second has already entered “the first steps within the boundaries of the Kingdom of the Supreme Will.” The third advances farther within it. The fourth finally launches herself into the very center of the sun; Jesus says of her that she not only lives in his Kingdom but has “acquired” it.²

There is therefore a real entrance, followed by growth within. The second degree is not yet the fourth, but it is already inside the Kingdom. This distinction matters for our subject: discovering that much fragility or human will still remains does not necessarily mean that nothing has begun. Conversely, having begun does not mean that one already possesses the stability of the most mature degrees.

A text from the end of 1925 moves in the same direction, using different language. Jesus distinguishes the Divine Will received “as on loan,” asked for act by act, from the moment when what had been received in this way is given “as Gift” and possessed as one’s own life.³ It would be imprudent to superimpose this text mechanically upon the four degrees of 1926; Luisa herself does not do so. The 1925 passage, taken alone, does not allow us to decide whether the whole phase of the “loan” necessarily precedes entry into the Kingdom, or whether it

can accompany the first steps of an entry that is not yet complete. The text on the four degrees leaves that question open. What the two passages show with greater certainty is that beginning, growth, and complete possession are not interchangeable realities.

The very practical question remains: what is an “exit”? On September 21, 1931, Jesus says that the creature, “by doing her human will,” forms *fuoriuscite*, ways of going out from the luminous day of the Fiat.⁴ The problem is therefore not first of all that a thought crosses the mind, an emotion rises, or a weakness is felt. It concerns the moment when the human willing actually resumes its own independent movement.

A few weeks later, on October 26, Luisa uses a very expressive image. In the day of light that the Divine Will forms within her, “some cloud” can still appear; but the power of the light fixes it, and the cloud flees and dissolves.⁵ The cloud is not denied. Nor is it treated as though the entire day had disappeared with it.

Yet July 8, 1926 prevents us from making the notion of exit unreal. Jesus says that his Will does not tolerate the human will making its “little appearances” in his Kingdom, because Luisa would then come to “go out often into the vicious kingdom of her own will.”⁶ A real taking back of one’s own will is therefore possible, and the word *leave* genuinely belongs to the texts.

But this taking back must not be confused with every interior disturbance. On April 4, 1937, Luisa is precisely tormented by the fear of leaving the Fiat. Jesus answers her in words that deserve to be heard in their full strength:

“Do you think that with a thought, with a feeling, these bonds can be broken, our inseparability lost, and that We can surrender what is ours without decided and repeated acts willed by her will? My daughter, you are mistaken.”⁷

He adds that a will given to God “with a firm decision” forms a very strong bond with him. God raises three walls around the creature: his light, everything Jesus’ Humanity did and suffered, and then Creation itself. From then on, he says, it becomes “almost impossible”—*quasi impossibile*—to leave his Fiat.⁸

The choice of words matters. Jesus does not say that leaving is absolutely impossible; other passages clearly envisage the possibility. But neither does he present the soul as suspended over a void where the slightest involuntary movement would cause everything to be lost. The more firmly the will has given itself and the more life in the Fiat has taken root, the more a real stability is formed.

On April 1, 1928, Jesus takes this confidence even further. He explains that he himself wished, in his Humanity, to bear the trial of the children of the Divine

Will. He speaks of a strength received from him that closes the “doors of exit” and says that what remains to the creature is “the decision to enter so as never to leave, or not to enter at all.”⁹ This saying does not cancel the texts in which Luisa later envisages a real departure; rather, it shows where the stability being sought comes from. It rests first on Christ, not on the soul’s ability to monitor herself without ceasing.

It is in this light that the texts from 1929 to 1932 already encountered should be read. On June 4, 1929, Jesus takes the hypothesis very seriously:

“Suppose that you leave my Will: you go out and remain outside, but your acts do not go out.”¹⁰

The acts done in the Fiat remain in it; the person, however, can lose the rights attached to them. In 1931, when Luisa fears that she may want to leave, Jesus again tells her:

“Suppose that you leave our Divine Will [...] you may leave, but your acts remain.”¹¹

And on April 13, 1932, the same logic receives its clearest formulation: if the creature leaves, she loses her rights; if she returns, “she acquires again the right of possession.”¹²

These passages prevent false security. Freedom remains real. But they do not justify a scrupulous reading in which every distraction becomes a spiritual catastrophe. Between the cloud that passes through the day and the “decided and repeated acts” by which the will resumes its autonomy, Luisa herself leaves a difference.

The danger of presumption is therefore real, but it need not be fought with permanent anxiety. A soul can deceive herself by saying, “I gave my Fiat once, so now I possess everything and nothing can ever be lost.” She can also exhaust herself by asking at every moment, “Did I just leave?” Both attitudes end by turning the gaze back onto oneself.

The texts suggest a simpler way. There is a real entrance; there are then degrees of growth and possession. One’s own will can genuinely take back its place and lead to a departure, but a weakness suffered or a passing cloud is not by itself equivalent to that decision. And when the soul discovers that she has taken herself back, the Christian movement is not to pronounce a final verdict on her state; it is to return.

Confidence can therefore remain very great. It rests on God’s fidelity, on Christ who sustains the creature’s decision, and on the acts already done in the Fiat, which remain like so many bonds. This confidence does not have to become a

presumptuous certainty about oneself.

This brings us back to a very simple word we have already encountered several times: dispositions.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 20, November 27, 1926. Jesus contrasts other forms of holiness, “little lights” capable of growing, diminishing, or going out, with the holiness of living in the Fiat, compared to the sun.
- ² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 19, July 26, 1926. Jesus describes four degrees: the first remains outside the boundaries of the Kingdom; the second “has entered the first steps within the boundaries of the Kingdom of the Supreme Will”; the third advances farther within; the fourth “not only lives in my Kingdom, but has acquired it.”
- ³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 18, December 25, 1925. Jesus distinguishes the Divine Will received « anche come in prestito » and the moment when, after the soul has become accustomed to doing nothing without It, what was given on loan is given « come dono » and possessed as life.
- ⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 29, September 21, 1931: « la creatura, col fare la sua volontà umana, si formò delle fuoriuscite »; one who seeks to live in the Divine Will closes these ways of exit.
- ⁵ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 29, October 26, 1931. Luisa describes « qualche nube » appearing in the day formed by the Divine Will, then fleeing and dissolving under the power of its light.
- ⁶ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 19, July 8, 1926: the Divine Will « né tollera che la volontà umana faccia le sue piccole affacciatine nel suo Regno, altrimenti verresti ad uscire spesso nel Regno vizioso della tua volontà ».
- ⁷ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 34, April 4, 1937: « credi tu che con un pensiero, con un sentire si possono spezzare questi vincoli [...] senza atti decisi ripetuti che vuole la sua volontà? » Jesus then describes three walls—his light, his Humanity, and Creation—and says that it becomes « quasi impossibile uscire dal nostro Fiat ».
- ⁸ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 34, April 4, 1937: « credi tu che con un pensiero, con un sentire si possono spezzare questi vincoli [...] senza atti decisi ripetuti che vuole la sua volontà? » Jesus then describes three walls—his light,

his Humanity, and Creation—and says that it becomes « quasi impossibile uscire dal nostro Fiat ».

- ⁹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 24, April 1, 1928. Jesus says that he himself bore the trial of the children of his Kingdom, closed their « porte d'uscita », and adds: « alla creatura resta solo la decisione d'entrare per non uscire più, oppure di non entrarci affatto ».
- ¹⁰ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 26, June 4, 1929: « Ora supponi che tu esca dalla mia Volontà, tu esci e resti fuori, ma i tuoi atti non escono [...] ma se tu uscissi perderesti i diritti. »
- ¹¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 29, April 16, 1931: « supponi che tu esca dal nostro Volere Divino [...] tu potrai uscire, ma i tuoi atti restano [...] appena esce perde i suoi diritti. »
- ¹² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 30, April 13, 1932: « se poi fa delle uscite, perde i suoi diritti [...] se persiste a vivere nel nostro Volere, padroneggia insieme; se esce [...] nulla le tocca, ma se vi rientra, acquista di nuovo il diritto di padronanza. »

12. The Decisive Word: Dispositions

The notion of dispositions perhaps allows us to hold everything together. It prevents us from turning the Fiat either into an ascetical performance or into a waiting in which one no longer does anything.

On May 15, 1932, Jesus explains why the great Gift cannot simply be placed in souls without preparation. The truths about the Divine Will must first form within them the “eye” capable of looking at what is being given. Through knowledge they become able to understand and “to dispose themselves to receive so great a Gift.”¹ The image is very concrete: giving the sun to a blind person would not allow him to enjoy it. God therefore wants to heal the gaze before entrusting the light.

This preparation already belongs to the relationship with the Gift. The knowledges come from God, and the desire they awaken is sustained by grace; yet the creature learns, asks, desires, tries to look. She becomes capable of receiving by already receiving.

On January 5, 1936, the whole dynamic is contained in one sentence:

“Supreme attention is needed, and my Will will do everything needed to form its Life in the creature.”²

The sentence says both things without setting them against each other. The attention is genuinely the creature’s, while the Life is formed by the Divine Will. Attention does not produce this Life; it consents to it.

A year and a half later, Jesus multiplies the tiny gestures that count in this growth: “one more attention, a sigh, a desire to want its Life,” a little act, “a loving invitation from the creature.”³ He does not ask for a permanent heroic tension. The Divine Will almost lovingly watches for the slightest movement by which freedom opens the door a little wider.

On May 6, 1938, Jesus speaks very simply of successive steps: to want firmly, to take the first step, then the next, and to continue.⁴ The beginning remains simple, but it does not remain motionless.

These dispositions take very simple forms: knowing the Gift and desiring it, consenting, remaining attentive, renewing one’s yes in the present act, being faithful in little things, carrying out one’s duty, receiving the sacraments, obeying when a legitimate mediation is present, and returning when one’s own will

has genuinely taken over again. Nothing spectacular, in short. Yet all of this truly engages freedom.

These dispositions do not produce Divine Life and they do not purchase it. They are the concrete way in which a freedom allows itself to be made capable of receiving what God wants to give.

This also changes the way effort is lived. The soul no longer has to monitor her own performance constantly, as though holiness depended on a progress report. She responds to what is being given now. The effort can be demanding, but it becomes less a construction of the self than a repeated consent.

And here again we find the distance from Quietism. To desire, to consent, to fulfill one's duty, to obey, to return when one has genuinely strayed: all of this truly belongs to the creature. God arouses and sustains these acts, but he does not make them fictitious. "We do not want to do it alone," Jesus said.

The cooperation proper to the Fiat can therefore perhaps be stated more simply: to do what really belongs to the creature, while knowing that the Life she receives does not come from her. There is not, on one side, God's part and, on the other, man's part, as though two works were being added together. The creature consents, acts, and perseveres within an initiative that precedes and carries her. In this sense her cooperation becomes participation.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 30, May 15, 1932: the knowledges concerning the Divine Will form the sight and capacity necessary « per ricevere un dono così grande ».
- ² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 34, January 5, 1936: « Attenzione somma ci vuole e la mia Volontà farà tutto ciò che ci vuole per formar la sua vita nella creatura. »
- ³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 35, August 23, 1937.
- ⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 36, May 6, 1938: firmly willing to live in the Fiat, then taking the first step, the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth.

Conclusion — The Fiat of a Son

Let us return to the question with which we began: if God does everything, what remains for man?

Certainly not nothing. There remains that created freedom of which Luisa speaks constantly, sometimes saying that it must die, at other times showing it attentive, active, capable of giving its yes or of taking itself back. It is never the source of the Divine Life it receives. But neither is it mere scenery. God wants its consent, and he wants it even in the most ordinary acts.

This, it seems to me, is where the real novelty of Luisa's language lies. She is not merely speaking of carrying out God's will better, as though it remained before us in the form of commands to which we must conform. She speaks of a Divine Will that wants inwardly to become the life of the human will. Hence those formulas that can surprise and sometimes even alarm us: "You will do nothing; I will do everything," "it is enough that she wants it," the virtues rising again in a divine mode, the passions dying gently, the human will living while dying under the act of the Fiat.

Read alone, some of these phrases could take us very far. Read alongside the others, they acquire a different profile. The human will remains alive. Jesus says that he does not want to act alone. He asks for attention, continuity, little sacrifices, work. He recalls duties. He leaves open the possibility of a real departure from the Fiat, without turning every weakness or disturbance into such a departure. In Luisa's own life, obedience to confessors and sacramental life retain a concrete place.

Quietism helps us see the boundary. The error does not consist in attributing too much to God, as though we needed to defend a territory reserved to man. It begins when divine action is conceived in such a way that the creature no longer truly acts: an extinguished will, an inert subject, ecclesial mediations rendered useless. This is precisely what the Church refused.

In Luisa, the deeper logic seems to me different. The more the soul receives from the Fiat, the less she seeks to live from a separate principle. Her freedom is not abolished; it becomes increasingly filial. She remains capable of willing, but she wants to learn to will with God.

This is why the image of the little wheel remains so fitting. It does not give itself either the cord or the movement, yet it turns. Its dependence does not make it

less real. It simply tells us where its life comes from.

We can therefore keep, without weakening it, the formula that has run through this whole study: God does everything as Source, and the creature truly acts by receiving his movement. This is not a division of tasks. It is a relationship.

The dispositions then take on their full meaning. They are neither the price of the Gift nor a way of producing it. They are the way in which a freedom makes itself present to what it receives: desire, attention, consent, fidelity, return after a fall. Nothing spectacular. But without this response, we would no longer be speaking of a covenant; we would be speaking of a mechanism.

Luisa's Fiat is therefore not the immobility of an object in God's hands. It is more like the yes of a son: a yes received, sustained, sometimes renewed, but truly given. And what God wants to accomplish in the creature, he wants to accomplish with her.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 30, May 15, 1932: the knowledges concerning the Divine Will form the sight and capacity necessary « per ricevere un dono così grande ».
- ² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 34, January 5, 1936: « Attenzione somma ci vuole e la mia Volontà farà tutto ciò che ci vuole per formar la sua vita nella creatura. »
- ³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 35, August 23, 1937.
- ⁴ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 36, May 6, 1938: firmly willing to live in the Fiat, then taking the first step, the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth.

Epilogue — Living This Simply

After all these distinctions, it would be unfortunate to close this supplement with the impression that living in the Divine Will means solving a problem of spiritual theology every morning.

Jesus says precisely the opposite. On May 6, 1938, after so many teachings given to Luisa about the Fiat, he returns to something strikingly simple:

“My good daughter, the way to enter my Will is very simple, because your Jesus never teaches difficult things. My Love makes Me adapt greatly to the human capacity, so that the creature may do without difficulty what I teach her and what I want.”¹

He then gives the first step: to want to live in his Will. And then to take one step. Then another. The second calls the third, the third the fourth, and so on. He does not ask the soul to see the whole road from the beginning or to know exactly which degree she has reached. He asks her to want and to move forward.

A few months later, on December 25, 1938, Luisa wonders how Jesus can be born in souls. The answer moves in the same direction:

“My daughter, making Me be born is the easiest thing, all the more because We do not know how to do difficult things: our Power makes everything easy.”²

Jesus immediately explains how this happens. The creature wants to live in the Divine Will: she already forms a dwelling for him. She begins her act: she conceives him. She completes her act: she makes him be born. She loves in the Divine Will: she warms him. She gives him her own will and takes his: Jesus says that he celebrates his victory over the human will.

There is something deeply peaceful in these pages. Everything we have studied remains true: freedom matters, dispositions matter, one’s own will can take back its place, duty and the sacraments remain, and the soul has no reason to declare herself already arrived. But living all of this does not have to become complicated.

We can begin where we are.

In the morning, or simply whenever we think of it: “Jesus, I want to live in your Will. I give you mine. Come and live this act with me.” Then do what is in front of us. Get up. Work. Prepare a meal. Answer someone patiently. Fulfill a duty.

Pray. Bear a contradiction. Ask forgiveness. Offer a suffering. None of this is too small for the Fiat.

And when we discover that we have taken our own will back, there is no need to spend an hour establishing whether we have exactly “gone out,” at what degree, or for how long. If there is a real fault, we acknowledge it. If it calls for confession, we go to confession. If we have taken ourselves back, we return. And we can do it very simply: “Jesus, I give you my will again. I want yours. Take me back with you.”

This return is not a failure of the path. It belongs to the path as long as we are here below. The greater danger would be to turn the Divine Will into a new source of anxiety: monitoring every thought, every emotion, every distraction, as though the Fiat depended on our ability to maintain a state of perfect interior tension. Jesus speaks of attention, sometimes of very great attention; he does not ask us to live clenched around ourselves.

Attention looks at God. Tension keeps looking at one’s own state.

That may be a useful practical distinction to keep. An attentive soul can see her faults without becoming enclosed within them. She recognizes self-will when it appears, but her first movement is to return to Jesus. Little by little she learns to seek him in the present act rather than constantly measuring her interior life.

The dispositions we have discussed then take on a very ordinary face: to want, to ask, to consent, to remain available, to fulfill one’s duty, to receive the sacraments, to begin again. There will be days of light and days that are darker. Moments when the Fiat seems very near, others when we feel almost nothing. None of this alters the simplicity of the movement: give our will and take God’s, as often as necessary.

Trust has an essential place here. Not trust in ourselves, nor certainty that we already possess what we desire, but trust in Jesus, who wants this Gift even more than we do. In the text of May 6, 1938, he says that he surrounds the creature’s willing with grace, love, and goodness; and that, if necessary, he places even his own Life at her disposal so that she may live in his Will.³

There is therefore no need to make difficult what Jesus presents as simple. We need theological distinctions so as not to distort his words. But when it comes to living, we sometimes need to accept becoming very simple again.

To want his Will. To give him ours. To do the present act with him. And when we take ourselves back, to return.

Then continue.

Fiat.

Notes

- ¹ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 36, May 6, 1938: « Figlia mia buona, per entrare nella mia Volontà, il modo è semplicissimo, perché il tuo Gesù non insegna mai cose difficili [...] la prima cosa indispensabile è voler, sospirare con tutta fermezza di voler vivere in Esso. La seconda cosa, fare il primo passo [...] Vedi dunque com'è facile, ma è necessario volerlo [...] Corredo quella volontà di grazia, d'amore, di bontà [...] e, se occorre, la mia stessa Vita. »
- ² *Book of Heaven*, vol. 36, December 25, 1938: « Figlia mia, il farmi nascere è la cosa più facile, molto più che Noi non sappiamo fare cose difficili, la nostra Potenza facilita tutto [...] Come la creatura vuol vivere di Esso, così già forma l'abitazione al tuo piccolo Gesù; come vuole dar principio a fare i suoi atti, così mi concepisce e come compie il suo atto mi fa nascere. »
- ³ *Book of Heaven*, vol. 36, May 6, 1938: « Figlia mia buona, per entrare nella mia Volontà, il modo è semplicissimo, perché il tuo Gesù non insegna mai cose difficili [...] la prima cosa indispensabile è voler, sospirare con tutta fermezza di voler vivere in Esso. La seconda cosa, fare il primo passo [...] Vedi dunque com'è facile, ma è necessario volerlo [...] Corredo quella volontà di grazia, d'amore, di bontà [...] e, se occorre, la mia stessa Vita. »