

ASCENSION

Fruit of the Mystery: HOPE

Hope (widest acceptation): Movement of the appetite towards a future good, which though hard to attain is possible of attainment.

Hope (supernatural order): Divine virtue by which we confidently expect, with God's help, to reach eternal felicity as well as to have at our disposal the means of securing it. Divine: not merely because its immediate object is God, but also because of the special manner of its origin. Hope, such as we are here contemplating, is an infused virtue. Like Faith and Charity it is directly implanted in the soul by Almighty God. Capacity: the transforming of a faculty for the performance of functions essentially outside its natural sphere of activity.

Theological virtues: have God for their object, both in so far as by them we are properly directed to Him, and because they are infused into our souls by God alone, as also, finally, because we come to know of them only by Divine revelation in the Sacred Scriptures" St. Thomas.

Almighty God is both the material and the formal object of hope. He is the material object because He is that which is chiefly, though not solely, aimed at when we elicit acts of this virtue: not only supernatural helps, particularly such as are necessary for our salvation, but also things in the temporal order, inasmuch as they can be means to reach the supreme end of human life, may be the material objects of supernatural hope.

By the formal object of hope we understand the motive or motives which lead us to entertain a confident expectation of a happy issue to our efforts in the matter of eternal salvation.

It is a truth constantly acted upon in Catholic life and no less explicitly taught, that hope is necessary to salvation: as faith, indispensable means of attaining salvation. Hence even infants, though they cannot have elicited the act, must have had the habit of hope infused in Baptism. Faith is said to be "the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1), and without it "it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

The question as to the necessity of hope is followed with some natural sequence by the inquiry as to its certitude. Manifestly, if hope be absolutely required as a means to salvation, there is an antecedent presumption that its use must in some sense be accompanied by certainty. Hope, whose office is to elevate and strengthen our wills, is said to share the certitude of faith, whose abiding place is our intellects. In a subordinate sense, our hope is built upon our own merits, as the eternal reward is not

forthcoming except to those who shall have employed their free will to co-operate with the aids afforded by God's bounty.

-1 Supernatural hope is evidently certain in this way, because, granted that a man does all that is required to save his soul, he is sure to attain to eternal life. This is guaranteed by the infinite power and goodness and fidelity of God

-2 There is a certainty proper to virtues in general in so far as they are principles of action. A really temperate man may be counted on to be uniformly sober. Hope being a virtue may claim this moral certainty since it constantly and after an established method encourages us to look for eternal blessedness to be had by the Divine munificence and as the crown of our own merits accumulated through grace.

-3 A thing is certain absolutely upon the verification of some other thing, but quite independently of any such event. In this case no room for doubt is left.

This doctrine is in direct antagonism to the initial Protestant contention that we can and must be altogether certain of our salvation, as special faith or confidence in the promises which alone, without good works, justified a man.

Assuming that the seat of hope is our will, we may ask whether, having been once infused, it can ever be lost. The answer is that it can be destroyed, both by the perpetration of the sin of despair, which is its formal opposite, and by the subtraction of the habit of faith, which assigns the motives for it.

Do the souls in Purgatory hope? It is the commonly held opinion that, as they have not yet been admitted to the intuitive vision of God, and as there is nothing otherwise in their condition which is at variance with the concept of this virtue, they have the habit and elicit the act of hope.

As to the damned, the concordant judgment is that, as they have been deprived of every other supernatural gift, so also knowing well the perpetuity of their reprobation, they can no longer hope.

The words of St. Paul (Romans 8:24) are to the point: "For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen, is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for?" The blessed can still desire the glory which is to be proper to their risen bodies and also by reason of the bonds of charity, they can wish for the salvation of others, but this is not, properly speaking, hope.