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THE VICE OF ACEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

In these days of fresh approaches to moral theology, when the emphasis is on the positive, it may seem a waste of theological effort to begin a thorough investigation of a vice with the exotic title of acedia. Granting that there may be far more important areas of theology, there are several reasons why such a study is not completely without value:

First, all sciences including theology advance when the tradition is comprehended in such a way that a new development becomes possible through an extension of what has already been discovered. Acedia has occupied a rather large, sometimes a disproportionate place, in the history of moral theology, although it has been more recently relegated to the indignity of a curious antique easily dismissed in a footnote. In the process, some of the subtle nuances of acedia have been missed, and mishapen definitions have permitted a too facile rejection of its relevance to the human situation. A careful, analytic study of the tradition will permit a more informed judgement on its importance.

Acedia is found in the somewhat larger context of the capital sins, which in the ascetic tradition were supposed to exercise a primary attraction over the human heart in its inclination towards evil. In the study of acedia, it becomes feasible to deal at the same time with this tradition of the so-called deadly sins, and to evaluate their continuing relevance or to dismiss them as curiosities in the history of theology, literature and art.

A more detailed delineation of acedia, however, permits its removal from its original context of other vices and a juxtaposition with the virtue, the positive value which it destroys. Very often the average sensual man, the beginner in the ascetic life, is more impressed by the evil he fights

against than the genuine value he pursues. Acedia is found in the development of the tradition to be diametrically opposed to the joy of Christian Charity which is, of course, at the very heart of Christian life and therefore at the center of moral theology.

If the value denied by acedia is so considerable, the question arises for the sheer intelligibility of the sin, what motivation can account for it. Without taking refuge in the general unintelligibility of sin, it will be possible to find in the human heart itself a specific perversity which inclines it towards the apparent value of acedia. In this connection, modern authors, in their efforts to distinguish acedia from ordinary sloth, have a tendency to over-spiritualize this sin which over-spiritualization not only misunderstands the tradition, but makes the sin even more unintelligible and certainly far removed from the common temptations of life.

Penultimately, it becomes necessary to reexamine the long theological tradition of acedia's causality. In its role as a "capital" sin it was supposed to exercise a general, baneful influence bringing in its train certain "daughter" vices. These effects of acedia could in the empirical order more often be discerned as symptoms of a deeper, more concealed cancer in the moral life. A more profound investigation of these symptom-effects has the double advantage of underlining the perils of acedia and of permitting the spiritual physician to make a diagnosis from what might otherwise seem a series of unrelated moral ills.

Finally, some idea of remedy should emerge from a consideration which, while primarily speculative, is concerned with what is, in the last analysis, a practical problem. In the immediately practical order, it is a great assistance to recognize the nature of an illness; to make, in other words, the correct diagnosis. More remotely, but perhaps in the long run of more general help, the knowledge of the exact nature of a sin permits not only its exposition in a doctrinal sense, but its exposé in the popular sense, that is, of the falseness of its claims to contribute any permanent and genuine help

towards human happiness. If this or any other sin be seen against the background of the virtuous Christian life presented not just in terms of general motivation but in detailed application, the precise and specific remedy becomes self-evident.

The order of exposition followed in this dissertation, however, has not been that of the paragraphs above which were rather designed to show some of the values which might be gained from a study of acedia. The order followed is more scientific, beginning with an historical study of the idea of acedia as it first presents itself in the literature of early Christianity in its Hellenistic milieu, as it develops in the scholastic period of accurate definition, and as it diffuses itself in later times until our own. The second chapter takes up the psychology of acedia, that is, its fundamental nature as a passion or emotion in order to get at the basis of the phenomenon before making any moral judgement as to its ultimate value or worthlessness in relation to the true ends of man. Then in the third chapter, on the morality of the sin, an attempt is made to utilize the varied descriptions found in the tradition and in the psychology in order to arrive at an exact definition which will permit moral analysis. This discussion on morality, gravity and related questions is followed by a fourth and final chapter on the causality of the capital vice which inquires into the precise mode of causality which a capital vice is said to exercise in general, and the causality acedia performs in particular, especially in regard to certain vices regularly associated with it. To conclude this final chapter, something is said about each of these particular sins both in themselves and in relation to acedia itself. By way of farewell to the problem, a conclusion deals with a remedy for acedia as a natural corollary from the establishment of its essence.

Lecturate Dissertation at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington and a beginning of this present work.

My Superiors, the Very Reverend W. D. Marrin, O. P., ex-Provincial, and the Very Reverend R. L. Every, O. P., present Provincial should also be thanked for the needed time to finish this work, but for their patience through my illnesses and other occupations which prevented an earlier completion.

In the same connection, I must be grateful to the Reverend Gerard S. Sloyan, Ph.D., S.T.L., Chairman of the Department of Religious Education of The Catholic University of America, who has taken the long view of the value of research when he was really pressed for my services as Assistant Professor of Moral Theology in his Department.

But, most of all, my thanks under God are owed to my own religious family in the Church, the Order of Friars Preachers. While this is true in the large sense of my career, there is a special fittingness here, for although I have learned of the evil of acedia from books, the meaning of the opposed good, the joyful service of theological charity has been incarnated for me in the persons of my Dominican fathers, brothers and sons.

Therefore the simplest dedication of a work designed to demonstrate the futility and frustration of acedia must be to those who struggle against it in a contemplation ordered to apostolic activity.

“Behold my mother and my brethren.”

(Mt. 12, 49)

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A word of thanks is owed to a number of friends who have encouraged and assisted me in this project for the many years (more than I like to remember) which its ultimate realization took. First and most important, thanks are due to the Very Reverend Ferrer Smith, O. P., S.T.M., Regent of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph who not only interested himself in the inception of the work, but insisted on its completion when my interest flagged and would have transferred itself to what appeared to be greener fields. Most of all, however, I owe to Father Ferrer's friendship the fatherly advice (of which he has given good example and which has been a lodestar for my theological career) namely, that, no matter how pressing and interesting historical research into sources might be, no matter how valuable empirical investigation of phenomena might be in current theology, one should return to thoughtful meditation on the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas for a solution. Then I should thank the Very Reverend T. C. O'Brien, O. P., S. T. Praes., Ph.D. for the ultimate completion of the work, since his metaphysical intelligence has demonstrated once more that even in that area of theology called moral, the axiom *quantus metaphysicus, tantus theologus* retains its validity in an age which is too often anti-metaphysical. Although I owe much to other teachers, I must also acknowledge my debt to Professor J. Kerby Neill, Ph.D., Chairman of the Department of English at The Catholic University of America who first showed his interest in acedia when I proposed it in his class as a possible solution to the character of Belial in the second Book of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. My unpublished M. A. dissertation on the subject was inconclusive, but it was this earlier work on acedia, directed by Doctor Neill which provided both a development of my

ACEDIA

CHAPTER I

The History of the Idea

A. Period of Formation

Acedia as a phenomenon is probably as old as humanity itself, but speaking properly of its history as an idea, it begins in the fourth century of the Christian era. It was then that the monks of the Egyptian desert sketched its outlines as one of a group of particularly dangerous obstacles to their pursuit of holiness. Those desert fathers whose warnings against this temptation were committed to writing speak of it as something rather easily recognized, so well known, in fact, that, beyond their implied appeal to experience, their only efforts towards the establishment of acedia's existence are references to isolated texts of the Septuagint. Modern scholars have ransacked primitive demonologies on evil spirits (which acedia was sometimes called), ancient astrologies, and old stories of Gnostic soul journeying to

discover more antique origins for acedia and the other evils of the sin-list. At the turn of the century, an outstanding scholar believed he had discovered the source in Stoic philosophy;² more recent investigation puts it in the entire Hellenic culture;³ most recently and convincingly the true source seems to have been discovered in Origen and his Alexandrian exegesis of the Scriptures.⁴ The word acedia does not seem to have been used by the Greeks or Romans in quite the same sense it came to have in the fourth-century Egyptian desert; the Septuagint use is rather rare, and a modern literal exegete would be somewhat reluctant to admit that the ideas there contain all the nuances which the Egyptian allegorists attached to it.

²Orto Zöckler, *Das Lehrstück von den sieben Hauptünden* (Munich, 1893). Following along the same lines, Ruth Ellis Messenger, *Ethical Teachings in the Latin Hymns of Medieval England with special reference to the Seven Deadly Sins* (New York: Columbia, 1930) cites passages from Zeno, Cicero and Vergil.

³Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Michigan: State College Press, 1932). This book represents the most complete compendium of the scholarship on the deadly-sin tradition to date, however its value is quantitative rather than qualitative. Cf. review of *The Thomist*, XVII (1954) p. 415. On the present point of the origin of the deadly sins, Professor Bloomfield appears to espouse the theory of a soul-journey to astral regions, but his multiple arguments rather conclude to a general Hellenistic background.

⁴Jean Daniélou, "Démon dans la littérature ecclésiastique jusqu'à Origène," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1957) III, 152 - 189. Although Père Daniélou traces the entire idea of eight demons back to the apocryphal *Treatment of the Twelve Patriarchs*, he admits that it was through Origen that the tradition reached Evagrius. An earlier article by Iréné Hausherr, "L'origine de la théorie des huit péchés capitaux," *Orientalia Christiana* 33, 3 (1933) 164 - 175 shows conclusively that, while some Stoic influence is possible (especially for *lypé* or sadness) all and only eight vices, including acedia, can be found in various sin-lists in Origen's scriptural commentaries, and therefore Evagrius' sole contribution was the order of the sins. Hausherr has some difficulty with acedia which he finds in only one place in Origen. He tries to fit it into equivalent terms (*hynos* and *dellia* = *formido* and *pulsillimitas*) which are later associated with acedia in the *Great Antirrheticion*, but ends by saying: "If however Evagrius did hesitate between acedia and envy, what could have decided his choice and made him more precise on this point than Origen was his own condition and his experience as a solitary. It is enough to have read authors who did not know the catalogue, Saint Ephraem or James of Saroug, to know that *taedium cordis* is the great danger of the solitary life." I would add that acedia can also be found in St. Athanasius' *Life of St. Anthony* on which Evagrius commented. (cf. MPG, 26, 895). And, whether Evagrius and the desert solitaries knew it or not, the concept of acedia can be found in *Hermas' Shepherd*: "For, just as old men, without hope of renewing their youth, have no other thing to look forward to except their final rest, so you also weakened by temporal affairs surrendered to indifference (acedia) instead of casting your care on the Lord. Yes, your spirit has been broken and you have grown old with your griefs." (Vision III, 11, 3) tr. Joseph M.F. Marique, S.J. in *The Apostolic Fathers* (New York: Cima, 1947) 252. See also the Tenth Mandate in this ancient Christian source (*Ibid.*, 274 - 277) where sadness is said to be worse than lack of confidence or anger, wearing out and oppressing the Holy Spirit, making the melancholy man commit sin.

¹The very word *acedia* is found a few times in the Septuagint, which, it should be recalled is the Biblical text actually used by these Desert Fathers. The Vulgate translates it as *taedium* or by some close synonym, and those vernacular Bibles dependent on the Vulgate move further and further away from the original word. For instance, the text most often utilized in the tradition, while retaining the word in the Latin translation, retains very little of the overtones the Desert Fathers found in it: "Scoop your shoulders and bear her, and be not irked (*acedentis*) at her bonds." (Ecclus. 6:26) The new Confraternity translation of the Old Testament, depending as it does on the Hebrew completely bypasses the LXX where the word was discovered and the Latin Vulgate which kept something of the Greek connotations, e.g. the Vulgate, "loquetur verba *taedi* et murmuratumum" becomes: "With curses and insults the borrower pays him back." (Ecclus. 29:6). Other texts variously render LXX's *acedia*: Ps. 61:3 *moerentis*; 29:3 *taedi*; 60:3 *anxiatus*; 101:1 *anxiatus fuerit*; 142:4 *anxiatus est*; Deut. 7:15 *horruit*; Bar. 3:1 *horruit*. There are of course throughout the Bible many condemnations of both excessive grief and laziness, concepts the monks could find especially in the sapiential books. When these ideas were found under the single word *acedia*, it was easy to accept it in the same sense in which it was found in pagan authors. E. Vastenberghe (DTC, XI, 2026, "Parrese") finds the word in Empedocles, Hippocrates, Lucian, Cicero (*Epistola ad Atticum* 12:45), and Seneca. A phrase from the last-named's *De tranquillitate animae* shows the word has approximately the same sense in the LXX: "Tedium et dispendia sui et nusquam residentis animi voluntaria, et oti sui tristis aequa aegra patientia." Besides Vastenberghe, cf. G. Barday, "Acedia," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937) I, 166. Also C. Taylor, "Acidie," in *Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, (New York: Scribner's, 1908) I, 65-66.

What is true is that the cultural milieu does have the great importance that commentators on acedia almost invariably mention. The monastic background for the understanding of acedia involves both experience and tradition. The experience of the hermit involved the loneliness of the barren desert, a body worn out by fasting, conditions easily leading to fatigue and boredom. The tradition was communicated by the spiritual father who would warn the neophyte of the temptations the ancient fathers had encountered in the same circumstances. In this respect, geography is almost as important as history. Not too far to the north stood the opulent metropolis of Alexandria. The ascetics were of course not born in the wilderness; they had fled from the city to the desert in their pursuit of God. Their Christian religion, the very heart of their endeavor, they had learned in a Christian community. While the Christian Church was part of a larger community and a wider culture, the frame of reference for these intense Christians was the Bible, which meant the Bible as interpreted by the Christian teachers in that community. Alexandria contained with its many pagan temples both Jewish Synagogues and Christian churches and schools. While neo-Platonism and Stoicism were being taught at the famous Museion, the Christian catechetical school, the Didascalion, taught the Christianity of Clement and Origen. Doubtless scholars are correct in their assertion that Orphic and Pythagorean ideas, beliefs from Persia and much crude magic and folk superstition were all elements which were not isolated behind cultural iron-curtains but combined and recombined in that syncretism which is Hellenism. And while Hellenism was as wide as the empire itself, if any place could be called its center, that place would be Alexandria.⁵ Still, even

⁵The history and topography of Alexandria is dramatically presented by E.M. Forster, *Alexandria* (New York: Doubleday, 1961). Its importance to ancient Christian literature is emphasized by Joannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, Maryland: Newman, 1960) Vol. III, 1 - 6; 146 - 148. Bloomfield in his explanation of the Hellenistic influence, puts it succinctly: "The chief center of this syncretism was Alexandria, that fundamentally Greek city, well fitted geographically, culturally and economically for the syncretic process." (*Op. cit.*, 3). The significance of the desert-setting is well caught by Jean Steinmann, *Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition* tr. Michael Boyes (New York: Harper, 1958). On the other hand, Evagrius who will be the first known

though Clement himself had worn with pride the philosopher's toga, the monks would be more than a little suspicious of paganism, and however it might intrude on their subconscious, their faithful hearts would be fixed on the words of the Holy Spirit speaking in His Church.

So it was in 383 when Evagrius of Pontus went into the Egyptian deserts of Nitria to live a hermit's life near Marcarius whom he accepted as his spiritual guide. When Evagrius himself became a master, he wrote *Concerning Eight Vicious Thoughts*, the seventh of which was acedia, "also called the noonday devil."⁶ It is Evagrius who is admittedly the first to write (or at least the first known to have written) on the subject; as Gennadius puts it: "Evagrius the monk . . . wrote . . . suggestions against the eight principal vices. He was the first to mention or at least among the first to teach these (vices) setting against them eight books taken only from the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, after the example of our Lord, who always met (temptations) with quotations from Scripture."⁷

The eight evil thoughts (*logizmoi*⁸) which Evagrius set down in writing a description of acedia was born at Ihora in Pontus, ordained reader by Basil the Great and deacon by Gregory of Nazianzus whom he accompanied to the Council of Constantinople (381) where he remained for a year before retiring to the Egyptian desert. (Cf. Quasten, *op. cit.* III, 169). Thus the first historical source for acedia demonstrates a broad Christian culture besides eremitical experience. Louis Bouyer speaks of the "erudite monasticism" of the Cappadocians and sums up many of the modern discoveries on the importance of Evagrius in *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* tr. Mary Perkins Ryan (New York: Desclée 1963) 380 - 394.

⁶The *dæmon meridians* which the Latin West knew for a millennium and a half has now become in the CCD translation merely a "devisating plague." But if the Fathers are to be understood, the Scriptures they read must be read, no matter how much more close to the originals modern translations may be. Evagrius Ponticus, *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus* (MPG, 40, 1271 ff.) especially VII, "Desidiæ Daemon."

⁷*De Vitis Illustris* tr. Ernest Richardson in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Oxford: Parker, 1892) 387-8. Quasten *op. cit.* 171 cites Socrates (*Hist. eccl.* 4, 23) who mentions that Evagrius composed a book which contained selections from Holy Scripture against tempting spirits, divided into eight parts according to the number of arguments, designated *Antirrhethikos*. This book has been preserved in Syriac and Armenian versions, although the original Greek as well as Gennadius' Latin translation have not survived. The portion in Migne is another work, long attributed to Nilus but now certainly established as Evagrius' *De octo vitiosis cogitationibus ad Anatholium*.

⁸Evagrius' reference to these evil thoughts (sometimes called evil spirits) is apparently to Mt. 15: 19-20: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, immoralities, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man." For a complete discussion on the relation between devils and sins, see Jean Daniélou, "Démons et vices" DSpir. III, 168 - 174.

listed were gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vain glory and pride.⁹ As anger is described as the sharpest, vain glory the subtlest and pride the bitterest, so acedia is the heaviest.¹⁰

The demon of acedia, which is also called the noonday devil, is the most oppressive of all the demons. He attacks the monk around the fourth hour, and continues the siege until the eighth hour. First of all, the sun seems slow or not moving at all, as though the day were going to last fifty hours. Then the monk keeps going to the window to look out, if he does not go out of the cell entirely to take another glance at the sun, or to see if one of the brethren is about. Then the demon casts on him a hatred of the place, and even of his life there, but especially a disgust with manual labor. After that, the monk is made to think the brethren have failed in charity since no one comes to console him. And if in fact anyone has given him trouble recently, the demon now inspires feelings of hatred. Then again he drives him to long for other places where his work would be easier and happier. He adds that one can be pleasing to God anywhere, for God can be adored everywhere. Together with this he reminds the monk of his family and his former life. The thought of the length of life sickens him, especially the burdens (*ponoi*) of a life dedicated to God. And last of all, he sets the machinery going, so to speak, which moves the monk to flee his hermitage and thus abandon the stadium.¹¹

Certainly these brief, disjointed sentences are the result of practical living. However Evagrius, Abba Isaia, Nilus and others who wrote of these vices saw them in the symbolic interpretation of Scripture offered by Origen a century before.¹² These were the eight enemy nations of the Israelites

⁹ Octo summa vitiosarum cogitationum genera sunt, sub quibus omnis cogitatio continetur. Prima est gulae, secunda libidinis, tertia avaritiae, quarta tristitiae, quinta irae, sexta desidiae (*acedia*), septima inanis gloria, octava superbiae. (Throughout I am using Migne's Latin translation of Evagrius but with reference to key words in the Greek.) (MPG 40, 1271.)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Here I have made my own translation from Migne's Latin while referring to one by Louis Bouyer, *op. cit.*, 385. Cf. MPG 40, 1274.

¹² There is great difficulty in establishing any interdependence here, *Orations* (MPG 79, 1148) are attributed to an Abba Isaia, but there are a number of "abbots" by this name; at least one died in 488 which is after Evagrius. The *De Octo Vitiis Cogitationibus* (MPG 79, 1435 - 1472) and the *De Maligis Cogitationibus* are most likely unauthentic (MPG 79, 1199 - 1234) but the *De Octo Spiritibus Malitiae* (MPG 79, 1145 - 1164) probably does belong to Nilus of Constantinople, sometimes said of Sinai since he is supposed to have left the tutelage of St. John Chrysostom at Constantinople (somewhat like Evagrius) for a life in the famed desert monastery of St. Catherine. This last work

in Deuteronomy.¹³ These were the seven other spirits the unclean spirit brought back with him to the man described by our Lord.¹⁴

What is of particular interest is that these fragments, like the *Apophthegmata*, seem to be part of a regular tradition. The almost hopeless problem of establishing origin, then, need not be solved here. Anything essential in these primitive descriptions of acedia, as Père Cayré says of the entire capital-sin tradition, is "to be found in Cassian's contemporary Latin work, which is our best source of information on Oriental monachism."¹⁵

John Cassian, an important figure in Occidental monasticism, occupies the position of the most significant reporter on the monastic traditions of the Orient, and it is to him that the West owes its knowledge of acedia. After spending perhaps nearly twenty of his early years in Egypt (c. 385 - c. 403) he settled in Marseilles in southern Gaul, bringing with him the wisdom of the desert fathers. His two most important writings are: *The Institutes of Cenobites* (a great part of which is devoted to a discussion of the principal sins, including acedia) and *Conferences of the Fathers* (the fifth book of which is devoted in a more brief fashion to the same topic).¹⁶

¹³ Written in poetic form, a florilegium of apothegms under each sin. All that one can say is that there was a certain common tradition on the deadly sins among the monks, and that writings on them circulated widely. Moreover, the condemnation of Evagrius as a follower of Origen would keep his writings going about under different names.

¹⁴ "When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are to enter and occupy, and dislodges great nations before you—the Hittites, Gergesites, Amorrites, Chanaanites, Pherezites, Hivites, and Jebusites; seven nations more numerous and powerful than yourself—and when the Lord your God delivers them up to you and you defeat them, you shall doom them." (Deut. 7: 1 - 2). The eighth nation was Egypt, but no one knew enough about these primitive nations to attempt an identification of a sin with each nation.

¹⁵ "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he roams through waterless places in search of a resting place, and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house which I left . . . And then he goes and takes seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.'" (Lk. 11: 24, 26). The Alexandrian allegorizing is evident here; a modern exegete would object strongly.

¹⁶ F. Cayré, A.A., *Manual of Patrology* (Paris Desclée, 1936) I, 500.

¹⁷ Translations are available in part. Cf. Rev. Edgar C.S. Gibson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Second Series) Vol. XI (Oxford: Jas. Parker, 1894) and the selection in Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1952) 227 ff.

Cassian's work on the vices, and especially his teaching on acedia, has had such an enormous influence on the subsequent history of this idea that it is necessary to quote, even at some length, his important witness.

Our sixth battle is with what the Greeks call acedia which we might name tedium or anxiety of heart. It is related to sadness, and is especially troublesome to hermits, a dangerous and frequent enemy to desert-dwellers. It disturbs the monk especially at noon, like a fever recurring at regular intervals, bringing its burning heats in waves. Some of the ancients say it is the noonday devil of the nineteenth psalm.

When it seizes some wretched mind, it begets a horror of his place, disgust with his cell and with the brethren there as somehow careless and less spiritual. Every task to be performed within the cell seems to make him listless and inert. He cannot stay in his cell; it will not permit him to perform his duty of reading. He groans that he has made no progress after such a long time here. He complains and sighs: "There is no spiritual fruit here, connected with this community; the whole spiritual quest has been in vain. To stay in this place is useless." He is one who could govern others and be useful to a great number of people. Yet here he is edifying no one, nor profiting anyone by his teaching and doctrine. He cries up distant monasteries and those which are a long way off, and describes such places as more profitable and better suited for salvation; and besides this he paints the life there with the brethren as sweet and full of spiritual good. On the other hand, he says everything about him is crude, and not only is there nothing edifying about his present brethren, but even necessary food is obtained with great trouble. Finally he imagines things will never go right while he remains there; unless he leaves his hermitage and gets away quickly, he will certainly die. Then the fifth or sixth hour brings such physical fatigue and hunger that he seems to himself worn out, wearied as by a long journey or some heavy work, or as if he has been fasting two or three days. Then he looks anxiously around, sighing that no brother ever visits him; he goes in and out of his hermitage, frequently looking up at the sun, as if it were too slow in setting. So a kind of unreasonable confusion of mind like some soul-darkness takes hold of him, making him idle and useless for every spiritual work. He imagines there is no cure for so terrible an attack in anything except a visit to some of the brethren, or in the solace of slumber. Then the disease suggests he should show courteous and loving friendship to the others; pay visits to the sick, either near or far. He talks too about some dutiful and religious task; he should inquire about his relatives; he really ought to go to see them more often; it would be a genuine work of piety

to visit some religious woman who is devoted to God's service, yet deprived of all support from her family. It really would be a fine thing to get what she needs and does not get from her relatives. In fact, he really should piously devote his time to such affairs rather than wasting away uselessly here.

So the wretched soul, harassed by such contrivances of the enemy is disturbed until, simply worn out by the strong battering ram of his spirit of acedia, he sinks to rest, or, driven out of his confinement, gets in the habit of looking for consolation in these attacks in a visit to another brother, only to be later even more weakened by the remedy itself . . . who has become a deserter of the warfare, involves himself in worldly business, and thus proves himself displeasing to Christ.¹⁷

While something of Evagrius can be recognized in this, there is great luxuriance of psychological detail, which will not be found again. For this reason, it may be well to utilize the comments of Cassian's outstanding commentator, Alardus Gazeaus, who summarizes the main points of this passage: 1) Horror of the place or monastery in which he dwells; 2) boredom with cell and cloister; 3) contempt for the community; 4) inertia and slowness in operations; 5) wandering outside the cell; 6) neglect of spiritual reading; 7) sighings and groanings which profit nothing; 8) the opinion that one might be of greater advantage to self and others somewhere else; 9) the desire to govern others for their utility and gain of souls; 10) hatred of discipline and monastic subjection; 11) impatience with fasting, solitude, prayer and mortification; 12) sleepiness and frequent napping; 13) idle visits and conversations; 14) long and useless journeys; 15) dangerous familiarities; 16) desire for and care of relations.^{17a} The effects of acedia here detailed are discussed by Cassian in the context of other vices, of course, and it is particularly important to remember that this section follows one on sadness (*lybê*). While only the introduction has been cited here, there is a more lengthy perusal of the effects and causes of acedia, and its remedies with a final sermon based on St. Paul's exhortation to work

¹⁷ This represents my own translation of the most important passage on acedia in Cassian, Book X, "De Spiritu Acediae" cc. 1-3 (MPL 49, 359-369).

^{17a} Alardus Gazeaus, O.S.B., *Commentarium in Cassianum* (MPL. 49, 359-362).

in II Thessalonians.

But the more general context of capital sins, from which *acedia* must be extracted and then returned, is of some immediate importance not only in the work of Cassian, but throughout its history. Cassian's complete list has some significance in that he, with the early tradition, apparently thought that the sins should be attacked one after the other; each would have some causality on the next. So sadness would cause *acedia*, which in turn would cause vanity. The entire list is roughly similar to others in this early monastic tradition in that it moves from the physical vices of gluttony and lust through those commotions having extrinsic causes, avarice and anger, to those excited by internal movements, sadness and *acedia*, to terminate in vices considered purely spiritual, vanity and pride.¹⁸

This octad of vices, including sadness and *acedia*, continues without change in the Oriental Church, and through Cassian's influence on a great part of Western thought, especially in monastic circles.¹⁹ Moreover, from Cassian's native Gaul, this listing spread to the Celtic Church and was then widely used in the Celtic penitentials. It is generally considered to have given way to another influence around the twelfth century, but there is some evidence to show that some of the present confusion, as well as much of the light, on *acedia* is due to Cassian's report of this tradition of Eastern monasticism.²⁰

¹⁸ Joannis Cassiani, *Collationes* (MPL 49, 611). "Octo sunt principalia vitia, quae humanum infestant genus, id est, primum gastrimargia quae sonat ventris ingluviem; secundum fornicatio; tertium phlarygia, id est, avaritia, sive amor pecuniae; quartum, ira; quintum tristitia; sextum *acedia*, id est, anxietas sive tedium cordis, septimum cenodoxia, id est, iactantia seu vana gloria; octavum, superbia." The order of the vices retained for a while some ascetic importance although it seems to have been dropped by later theology, e.g. St. Thomas. However, it still has some historic value which must be mentioned here, even if it seems an anticipation, for the different listings enable the historian to identify which of several sources a particular listing has. It is necessary to explain here that in the thirteenth century Henry of Osta popularized a mnemonic device (*saligia*) with the initial of each of the sins. Modern scholars like Zöckler have constructed similar devices for the present Cassianic listing (*glitav*) and the later Gregorian enumeration (*siaggl*). See my Figure 1, p. 33, for a more graphic illustration and cf. Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁹ Cf. St. Nilus Sorsky (c. 1433 - 1508), "The Monastic Rule" in G.P. Fedotov, *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948). The fifth and sixth vices considered are sadness and *acedia*, pp. 116 - 119.

However, in this very period of formation, a rival system was constructed which gradually modified, where it did not completely supplant the system of Cassian and the notion of *acedia*. A century and a half after Cassian, Pope St. Gregory the Great (d. 604) while papal legate to the court of Constantinople, wrote his *Moralia*, an exposition on the Book of Job, which included a brief, almost casual discussion of the principal sins.²¹ These few passages, making some apparently slight, but really significant, changes in the names, number and ordering of the sins were destined to have an enormous influence on the idea of *acedia*. Whatever the reasons for the changes (and they are not given) the later papal authority of Gregory, with whatever intrinsic excellence his corrections may have, insured to some degree the eventual predominance of his construction.

First, St. Gregory removed pride from the list, altogether, placing it outside and above the other sins, as a queen commanding her generals to devastate the human heart.²² Not only does this reduction to the number seven have even more mystical connotations,²³ but it gives pride, as St. Gregory himself remarks, the deep root Scripture seems to demand.²⁴ Secondly, while he retains the notion

²⁰ The light comes from the wealth of psychological detail: the confusion from the doubling of sadness and *acedia*. As we shall see, when the word *acedia* is translated sloth, it confuses *acedia* with one of its effects. Later efforts to recall *acedia* to its original significance end by over-spiritualizing it.

²¹ St. Gregory may not have been completely original. An earlier contemporary, St. Eutropius, although adding nothing to Cassian did rearrange his list to read: "Superbia, *acedia*, vana gloria, ira, tristitia, avaritia, gula, luxuria." *De Octo Vitiis* (MPL 80, 10). Pride is still included, envy still excluded, but *acedia* has moved in between two clearly spiritual sins.

²² Cf. *Moralia* 31, 45 (MPL 76, 620). "Exercitius diaboli dux superbia, cuius soboles septem principalia vitia . . . Tentantia quippe vitia, quae invisibili contra nos proelio regnant super se superbiae militant, alia more ducum praeeunt, alia more exercitus subsequuntur. Neque enim culpe omnes pari accessu cor occupant. Sed dum maiores et parcae neglectam mentem praeventum, minores et innumere ad illam se caeterarum fundunt. Ipsa namque victorum regina superbia cum devictum cor plene coepert, mox illud septem principibus vitiis, quasi quibusdam suis ductibus devagandum tradit. Quod videlicet duos exercitus sequitur, quia ex eis procul dubio importunae victorum multitudines oriuntur. Quod melius ostendimus, si ipsos duces atque exercituum spectaliter, ut possumus enumerando profertimus."

²³ Cf. *ibid.*: "Nam quia his septem superbiae vitiis nos captos doluit, idcirco Redemptor noster ad spiritalis liberationis proelium spiritu septiformis gratiae planus venit." (col. 621).

²⁴ "Radix quippe cuncti mali superbia est, de qua, Scriptura attestante, dicitur,

of one vice causing the next, he begins from quite a different side, the spiritual. "But seven principal vices," writes St. Gregory, "as its (pride's) first progeny doubtlessly spring from this poisonous root, namely vain glory, envy, anger, sadness, anger, avarice, gluttony, lust."²⁵

What is immediately obvious is the striking difference from the Cassianic octad — envy is apparently substituted for acedia. But while it is true that envy is now introduced, really in place of pride, acedia is in a sense not really discarded. A more detailed study of the tradition will show that those following St. Gregory did not hesitate to substitute acedia for his sadness, so that what actually resulted was the exclusion of sadness, or at least its inclusion under the name of acedia. As the Anglican Bishop of Oxford put it: "In one respect indeed, Cassian prevailed over Gregory. The word acedia or accidia was most generally chosen instead of tristitia."²⁶

The difference of order has already been remarked; the basis of that difference will have its repercussions on the notion of acedia. While Cassian had noted a fourfold distinction: carnal, externally caused, internally caused, spiritual, St. Gregory simply speaks of spiritual and carnal vices. Gluttony and lust are carnal, which of course makes the other five in some sense spiritual.²⁷

Whatever loss of psychological refinement this might cause to the notion of acedia as in some way physical, St. Gregory's simple codification is an advantage in the enumeration of effects. He speaks very briefly of the "armies" of each of the vices; to our point sadness — to be called again subsequently acedia — has as its army: "malice, rancor, pusillanimity, despair, torpor in regard to precepts, wander-

²⁵ "Initium omnis peccati superbia est." (Ecclesi. 10 : 15). Cf. S. Th., I-II, q. 84, a. 2.

²⁶ "Prima autem ejus soboles, septem nimirum principalia vitia, de hac virulente radice proferruntur, scilicet inanis gloria, invidia, ira, tristitia, avaritia, ventris inglutivitas, luxuria. *Ibid.*"

²⁷ Thomas B. Strong, *Christian Ethics* (Oxford: Bampton, 1896) p. 264.

²⁸ Ex quibus videlicet septem, quinque spiritualia, duoque carnalia sunt. S. Gregorius M., *loc. cit.* Cf. S. Th., I-II, q. 72, a. 2.

ing of the mind after illicit things."²⁸

With this brief, precise enumeration without explanation, there comes to an end the first period, that of formation, of the concept of acedia. As M. Lot-Borodine, in trying to distinguish acedia from aridity writes:

This is domain not too easy to explore. If the Ancients have elaborated and lived a spiritual experience of the greatest interest, they have always avoided systematized constructions and dissections of a word, the anatomy of the intimate mystery . . . Their analyses, as fine as they are, whether in establishing schemes of vices and virtues, or in giving the speculative foundation for the *itinerarium mentis*, rarely penetrate into the depths of their own religious psychology. On the particular point which concerns us, besides the insufficiency of texts, there is still another difficulty, that of being confronted with a terminology in the process of formation. Let us not forget that we are at the sources of Christian spirituality and not in the age of a precise vocabulary and exhaustive classifications . . . To embark on an easy of synthesis, we must be content with meager testimony; more often, brief suggestions which we should interpret with prudence and discretion.²⁹

B. Period of Choice

Once John Cassian had set down in writing the teaching of the Oriental monks on sadness and acedia as well as the other vices, and St. Gregory had modified that teaching by including the two ideas under the single title of sadness with its "daughter" vices there is little real theological development until the age of the great scholastics. Practically all authors, including Cassian, feel compelled to explain that there is also a good sadness, an explanation entirely unnecessary when acedia is used. Whatever the literary and cultural antecedents of the Egyptian Fathers, about which so much research has been done, with perhaps not sufficient attention to their experience, there seems to be little investigation of St. Gregory's changes.

But once those changes had been made, it is fairly easy

²⁹ De tristitia, malitia, rancor, pusillanimitas, desperatio, torpor circa precepta, vagatio mentis circa illicita. *Ibid.*

³⁰ M. Lot-Borodine, "L'Aridité ou Siccitas dans l'antiquité chrétienne," *Études cameliennes*, Année II (1937), p. 191.

to trace the influence of the double tradition, the Gregorian heptad and the Oriental octad, usually called Cassianic in the Latin West. The Orientals remained true to their tradition which, after all, Cassian had learned from them. The same descriptions of acedia abound with very slight differences in the works of St. John Climacus,³⁰ St. John Damascene,³¹ Antiochus of St. Sabbas³² and down to the last recorded redaction of St. Nilus Sorsky.³³ In all these authors, whatever their peculiar characteristics, the same doubling of sadness and acedia occurs, and the same monastic setting for the description of acedia.

In the monastic tradition of the West, the same is true to a point. Hrabanus Maurus,³⁴ Jonas Bishop of Orleans, Benedict Abbot of Anianen,³⁵ Alcuin,³⁷ Aldhelm,³⁸ all have the doubling, all repeat fairly much the same although per-

³⁰ St. John Climacus, *De Scala Paradisi*, Gradus XIII, "Peri Akedias" (MPG 88, 857 - 863).

³¹ St. John Damascene, *De Octo Spiritibus Nequitiarum* (MDG 95, 79 - 98).

³² Antiochus of Saint Sabbas, *Homily 25 Peri Lypesi; Homily 26 Peri Akedias* (MPG 89, 1510 - 1520).

³³ See Note 19.

³⁴ Hrabanus Maurus concludes his study of the principal vices (including sadness) with "the eighth and last of all, acedia" of which he paints a rather "secular" picture of a man rising from his drunken bed, not going to church to pray, not visiting the sick, not working in order to give alms. Rather he goes hunting, raises contention at home as well as abroad and is full of idle talk, games and jokes. *De ecclesiastica disciplina* (MPL 112, 1251 - 1253). Perhaps this reflects the transition of the writer from the monastery of Fulda to a wider service as Archbishop of Mainz.

³⁵ In the same (ninth) century and in the same situation, Jonas, Bishop of Orleans, *De Institutione laicali* devotes a section of his chapter on the eight principal vices to the sixth vice, acedia, "id est otiositas" which, he says, is a pest from which both clerics and laity suffer without knowing what to do about it. (MPL 102, 245 - 246).

³⁶ This Abbot Benedict suggests that at the time of the visitation of a monastery, the monks be questioned on both sadness and acedia. Those afflicted with the latter are (in the best Cassianic tradition) both active and idle. They are idle in their desire for ease and sleep, but at the same time are eager to hear foolish tales and—what is worse—disposed to wanderlust, obviously opposed to the stability the first Benedict's *Regula* demands. (MPL 103, 961).

³⁷ Alcuin, though obviously influenced by Gregorian notions of envy and pride, follows the Cassianic list. See *Liber de Virtutibus et Vitiis ad Wihonem Comitem*, c. 32, "De Acedia" c. 33, "De Tristitia" (MPL 101, 635). However the emphasis on sloth and idleness is heavier than Cassian's.

³⁸ Aldhelm of Malmesbury in *De laudibus virginitalis* is pure Cassianic (MPL 89, 103); in another work, entitled *De octo vitiis principalibus* (MPL 89, 281) he retains the listing of Cassian but brings in St. Gregory's envy under pride. Aldhelm also has the dubious distinction of being the first to use the misspelling *accidia*. For a correction of this common mistake, cf. Alardus Gazeaus, *Commentarium in Cassianum* (MPL 49, 361).

haps one can discern a little stronger emphasis on acedia's external effect, sloth. In fact, the tradition comes down even to a distinguished Thomist, Melchior Cano in the Spanish Renaissance, who in his ascetical work, *Victory over Self* favors the Oriental doubling, although the monastic, or at least eremitical background is absent.³⁹ While the tradition is evident in all this dependence of one author on another, originality in application is not wanting, and in the application there is often a departure, at least in emphasis, from the tradition.

St. Gregory's influence was, however, immense. It should be noted that in his brief remarks on the subject of acedia and the other capital vices, that there are no monastic overtones. St. Gregory's pastoral purpose gave acedia a much wider audience. His work was the source for many sermons, if not directly, at least through sermon books and *exempla*, books of homiletic material which included under the vices particularly, many illustrative stories.

Although it has been admitted that this period of choice has not a great deal of theological significance for the capital-sin tradition in general, or for acedia in particular, it must be further admitted that the period of great popularity for the ideas begins at this time, and was not without its influence on the idea of acedia. It is difficult for the modern theologian to realize what an enormous interest medieval Christianity took in the so-called deadly sins; one who can only with difficulty recall the names of all seven, and who recognizes the very subsidiary place these sins occupy in Thomistic, and even more so in modern theology, will be astonished at the predominance of the theme in medieval literature and art.⁴⁰ As an artistic theme, these cardinal

³⁹ Melchior Cano, O.P., *Tratado de la Victoria de si mismo* (Madrid: Andres, 1780). A translation by Edward James Shuster appeared in *Cross and Crown*, Vol. VIII (1956). The pertinent chapters appeared, Despondency (VIII) in March, pp. 145 - 149; on Sloth pp. 149 - 152. Cano's doubling of sadness and acedia is curious, since he himself appears aware that the two ideas are united, beginning chapter VIII: "Acedia en su propria significacion quiere decir tristezas; mas porque triste y perezosa que a los tristes se configue, llamamos acido dando el nombre de la causa al efecto . . ."

⁴⁰ Some idea of the pervasiveness of the theme of the capital sins in the medieval period can be garnered from Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, although we shall make further references to it in this chapter.

vices reached their apogee in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and although interest in them, and especially in acedia is by no means dead even now, it may be said that the tradition died with the Reformation in the sense that there is no further evolution, nor much writing on the subject.⁴¹ Protestant preference for the biblically-rooted commandments may be one factor; perhaps the tradition was already dying from over-writing; perhaps the abstraction involved was too scholastic; perhaps the new knowledge of science made for other explanations.⁴² What is of direct concern to the theologian is that the Counter-Reformation scheme of capital sins not only had less emphasis, but that the list propagated by the Jesuits no longer included sadness nor acedia, but simply sloth.⁴³

A major cause of this shift from a spiritual temptation through a neglect of one's duties towards God to simple sloth is the popularization of the idea.⁴⁴ The influence of the homiletic tradition through St. Gregory has been mentioned;

⁴¹The Constitutions of Archbishop Peckham of Canterbury (Canons of Lambeth IX-XIII, cited by Messenger, *op. cit.*, p. 26 state: "In quorum remedium discriminum statuendo praecipimus, ut quilibet sacerdos plebi praesidens quater in anno, hoc semel, in quilibet quarta anni, una die solemniter vel pluribus, per se vel per alium, exponat populo vulgariter absque cuiuslibet subtile texture fantasticis XII articulis fidei; X mandata decalogi; duo praecepta evangelica, videlicet geminae charitatis; et VII opera misericordiae; VII capitalia peccata, cum suis progenitibus; VIII virtutes principales; ac etiam VII gratiae sacramenta." While sermon-series on Creed, Commandments and Sacraments are still popular, a rather rare example of a series on the capital sins by Father Arthur Tonne, *Leit and the Capital Sins* (Emporia, Kansas: Diddle Printing Company, 1951) shows no awareness of the progeny of the capital sins. If the sins were so important in medieval catechetics, the much humbler task now assigned them may be one cause of their disappearance from literature and art. What is significant for the present study is that, at the same time the importance of the capital-sin tradition waned, the concept of acedia coarsened into a confusion with external sloth. Cf. Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, 96.

⁴²Cf. Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, 243, 441. Also Robert L. Ramsay, "Morality Themes in Milton's Poetry," *Studies in Philology*, XV (1918) 123-158.

⁴³Cf. my Figure I, p. 33, the *adligia* order of Henry of Orita seems to have had great influence in Spain from which the Jesuits originated. Cf. *The Arch-priest of Talavera* by Alfonso Martinez de Toledo (1438) tr. Lesley Byrd Simpson as *Little Sermons on Sin* (Berkeley: University of California, 1959). The "seventh deadly sin" while not called sloth, which is an Anglo-Saxon word, is identified with laziness, slowness and sleepiness. Pp. 85-86.

⁴⁴Bloomfield (*op. cit.*, p. 96) should be quoted: "We may also note a change in *accidia*. Gradually its spiritual meaning—dryness of the spirit—wears off, and more and more frequently it is used as a synonym for sloth. The intermediate step in this transformation is the common interpretation of sloth in the later Middle Ages as laziness in performing one's duties to God in such matters as church attendance . . . Throughout the medieval period it still keeps its original and derived meaning to some

Cassian's influence was through the Celtic penitentials, lists of sins and their appropriate punishment in the external forum which were later adapted as manuals for confessors and finally as means for the examination of conscience by penitents.⁴⁵ However, in this process the Gregorian influence came to have more and more weight. St. Isidore of Seville in his encyclopedic work hesitates between the two traditions, and, as already remarked, the substitution of acedia for St. Gregory's sadness soon becomes almost universal.⁴⁶

Moreover with the publication of St. Raymond of Peña-fort's *Summa Casuum Poenitentiae*⁴⁷ and William Perault's extent, but in Elizabethan times, if we may take Dekker's *Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606) as an example, sloth . . . retains not even a vestige of its medieval meaning. It is laziness, pure and simple."

⁴⁵St. Gregory's pastoral influence is still reflected in the Roman Breviary; his importance as a homilist is reflected by his early translations into Anglo-Saxon. St. Gregory's ideas received diffusion from the monks of St. Benedict of course, but the Celtic monks would be more under the influence of Cassian, though there is overlapping on both sides. This literary problem should not be allowed to confuse the derivation of confession-manuals (examination of conscience or questions by the priest according to a capital-sin list) from Celtic penitentials which were very detailed on sins and their punishment. In all this, the relevance to the concept of acedia is the daughters enumerated but not described by St. Gregory and the consequent danger of confusion with an effect (even though St. Gregory had named the vice sadness) on the one side; on the other Cassian provided his readers with abundant description but in a monastic context and with a separation of sadness and acedia—which was also subject to more than a little confusion.

⁴⁶St. Isidore, though quite early († 616), is an illustration *in parvo* of this period we have named the period of choice. Period is not quite apt since it is not a question of chronology. This erudite compiler shows himself familiar with both the Casianic and Gregorian traditions, but makes no effort to reconcile the two—something which will have to wait the next period, that of definition. In his *Differentiarum Liber*, eight vices are listed with no mention of acedia. This happens because he includes pride (which St. Gregory left above the seven) and envy (which Cassian had not included) and sadness (which comes down in the Gregorian tradition as acedia). He feels compelled to treat of three types of sadness, one of which is penance, another easily identified as anger, and finally "perturbata, irrationabilis, de anxietate mentis seu desperatione exortens"—which could be taken for our acedia (MPL 83, 96). Then in his *Quaestiones in Deuteronomium*, he is obviously following the desert tradition in seeing the eight sins in the eight enemy nations (cf. note 13); St. Gregory was commenting on Job. He follows the Casianic doubling of sadness and acedia; from sadness he draws three of the "daughters" mentioned by St. Gregory—rancor, pusillanimity and despair (cf. note 8)—and adds a new one, bitterness, even though he omits three. Then from acedia, he has an entirely new list of "daughters": idleness, sleepiness, idleness, restlessness, wandering about, instability of mind and body, verbosity and curiosity. (MPL 83, 366). Finally in the *Liber Sententiarum*, Lib. II, c. 37, he attempts to distinguish acedia from sadness, by making sadness an escape from the burdensome and laborious, while acedia is a positive pursuit of undue rest. His proposal of a somewhat haphazard psychomachia (against laziness there is zeal for the battle; against sadness, joy; against acedia, fortitude) likewise demonstrates that the idea of acedia has not yet crystallized. (MPL 83, 638).

Summa de Vitiis et Virtutibus,⁴⁸ the Gregorian system with the single exception of the word *acedia* is virtually triumphant. Not much attention, if any, seems to be paid to any interconnection of the vices; the order is shifted almost at will so that finally the popularization of Henry of Osta with the mnemonic *saligia* results. The order here seems to be based on neither the Oriental arrangement reported by Cassian nor that of Gregory, nor on any intrinsic reason, but simply the easiest way to remember.

The appearance of *acedia*, to note only two of the greatest works of medieval literature, in prominent places

⁴⁷ Sancti Raymundi de Penafort, O.P., *Summa casuum poenitentiae* (Veronae: Carallonium, 1744) was actually written between 1220 and 1230. A careful and elaborate discussion of the principles and meaning of the sacrament of penance, it was widely adapted and copied (e.g. cf. Notes 48 and 49) as a same theology of penance and a psychology of sin. Very little space or attention is given to the capital sins. Titulus XXIV, "De Poenitentis" first offers a verse to remember, "Luxus, gustus, avaritia, furit, invidia, ambitus" which is an indication that Saint Raymond cared little enough for order among the vices. Moreover, his listing of the "effects" of each sin is almost word-for-word from St. Gregory. Not only does he place *superbia* outside the list, but gives an identical enumeration. He speaks of *tristitia* instead of *acedia* and has proceeding from it Gregory's same six: "malicia, rancor, pusillanimitas, desperatio, torpor erga praecepta, negatio (sic) circa illicita." (434).

⁴⁸ Guilhelmo Perardo, Episcopo Lugdunensi, Ordinis Praedicatorum auctore, *Summa Virtutum ac Vitiorm* (Lugduni: Apud Joannem Freilonium, 1551). The treatise on the vices written c. 1236 or before, may, as Bloomfield says (*op. cit.*, p. 124), reveal a modified Cassianic sequence, but it is evident the author cares very little for order. For instance, at the beginning of Tractatus Quintus on *Acedia*, he remarks that sometimes (*interdum*) *acedia* arises from the preceding vice treated, avarice, but makes practically no effort to establish the causality. The treatment itself is clearly homiletic, descriptive and popular, displaying the author's scriptural and patristic erudition as well as his own inventiveness. After preliminary material on the harmfulness of *acedia* (it offends God, assists the devil and harms man himself), some sixteen vices are connected (*pertinet*) with *acedia* itself, then taken up in detail. These are: tepidity, softness, sleepiness, idleness, delay, tardiness, negligence, inconsistency, remissness, dissoluteness, carelessness, listlessness (*ignavia*), indolence, sadness, redium of life and despair. While something of Cassian's luxuriant detail is present, familiarity with Gregory is also evident, although even in this great list, at least half of the Gregorian daughters of *acedia* are missing. Finally, with some suggested remedies the author concludes with a warning against indiscrete devotion. While this book had immense popularity in succeeding centuries (cf. e.g. Note 49) and is not without psychological refinement, the precise, scientific discussion of *acedia* to be found in St. Thomas is wanting here so that the very genre makes it difficult to distinguish the true character of *acedia*. (For discussion of the problem of homiletic vs. theological treatment, see Note 51). Another important work of this period and type, and relying heavily on this *Summa Virtutum* is the *Somme le Roi* of Friar Laurents d'Orleans, also a Dominican, and most likely Prior of the Convent of Saint Jacques in Paris at the very time St. Thomas taught there. The available evidence on Friar Laurents as well as a fourteenth century English version of his work is available in W. Nelson Francis, *The Book of Virtues and Vices* (London: Early English Text Society, 1942). The treatment of *superbia* there is a shortened form of Petrault's, similarly imprecise. (pp. 26-30). Finally, the *Specula* of

in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*⁴⁹ and Dante's *Divina Commedia*,⁵⁰ gives some idea of the popularity of the idea,

Vincent de Beauvais, also Dominican should be mentioned. All three genuinely Vincentian *Specula* deal with the capital sins in strict Gregorian order, and a somewhat forced attempt is made to show some interconnection. These were written before 1264, but the pseudo-Vincentian *Speculum Morale*, belonging to the fourteenth century, lists large sections from the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas as does a sermon of St. Vincent Ferrer. (1346-1419). Cf. Vincent de Beauvais *Speculum Naturale* XXXI, 91; *Speculum Doctrinale* IV; *Speculum Historiale* XXIII, 50; *Speculum Morale* II, iii. For St. Vincent Ferrer, *Sermones de Sanctis* ed. Damian Diaz (Venice: Apud Bartholomaeum Rubinum, 1573) Sermo VI De *Acedia*, pp. 342-347.

⁴⁹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* ed. Rev. Walter M. Skeat (New York: The Modern Library, 1929). "The Persones Tale" especially *Acedia*, section 53-61, pp. 581-585. It is generally admitted that St. Raymond's *Summa casuum poenitentiae* (Note 47) and Perardus' *Summa Virtutum* were the ultimate sources of the Persones Tale; Germaine Dempster in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* ed. W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958) includes sections of St. Raymond and an outline of Perardus on *Acedia*. While an earlier scholarly effort to show that the Tales were all based on a schema of the seven sins, that of Frederick Tupper, "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* XXIX, 1914, 93-128 has now been thoroughly discounted, the present problem on the mode in which Chaucer or another derived the material on the Persones Tale from the double source is unresolved because of the entanglement of complex cross-influences and borrowings in the many moral treatises of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For a statement of the present state of the controversy, cf. Bloomfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192 with notes. My own examination of the texts of Perardus and Chaucer lead me to think that the section on *acedia* came to Chaucer through a much shortened *florilegium*. About eleven other evils associated with *acedia* are listed: Sloth, Drede to bignine to werke any gode werkis, wanhope (despair), Sompnolence, Negligence, Ydelnesse, Tarditas, Lachesse, coldesse, undevoucion, tristitia—all of which compare well with Perardus, and show no influence of the precision of Aquinas. The remedies which Chaucer offers are quite different from Perardus; for Chaucer's show some influence of a theological treatise on virtues (Fortitudo, Magnanimitas, Discretio, feith and hope in God, Magnificence, Constance and consideration of the peynes of helle and of the joys of hevene, and in trust of the grace of the holy goost) while Perardus is both more generic and yet practical: diverse occupations, consideration of future punishment, consideration of eternal reward, the society of the good, the example of one not lazy, consideration of present perils, the love of God, the grace of God. What is obvious in all this is the importance of the idea at this time and the pastoral mode of consideration of it.

⁵⁰ Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia* ed. Giuseppe Vandelli (Milano: Urico Hoepli, 1953). Although Dante (1265-1321) lived a century earlier than Chaucer (1340-1400) and might seem farther away from theology than the homiletic mode Chaucer reflects, his poetry is actually closer to the Age of scientific precision, since as Dorothy Sayers says: "Dante studies the work of St. Thomas closely and the theological structure of the *Comedy* owes more to him than any other theologian." Vol. I: Hell (London: Penguin, 1949) p. 304. In her second volume on Purgatory (1955) Miss Sayers shows clearly that the structure of Mount Purgatory is based on the capital sins. Cf. Diagrams pp. 8 & 62. The pilgrims are purged of *acedia* or defective love on Cornice 4 of Middle Purgatory. See also the Tabular Organization of Purgatory *ibid.* pp. 202-203. Before taking up the problem of *acedia* in purgatory, there is a scholarly problem about its supposed absence from hell. W.H.V. Reade, *The Moral System of Dante's Inferno* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909) is only one of many scholars worried about the absence or careful disguise of *superbia*, *invidia* and *acedia* in the infernal punishments. Reade is correct in his refutation of previous scholars like Witte who could see in these sins only sinful "propensities" which should not be punished since, according to him (Witte)

especially since it is known that acedia and the other sins became almost the exclusive topics for Lenten sermons.⁵¹ The results on the idea of acedia are these. From a trial and temptation for the desert Fathers, it becomes more and more a remissness in one's duties for God. Of course this is implicit in the monastic work, but the preaching of the idea with the penal codes of earth and hell are analogous in taking note of deeds only and not of guilty thoughts which have resulted in no overt acts. However, this does underline acedia's role as capital (Chapter IV of this work) and Dante has this in mind making the capital sins the subject of an ascetic purgation. But he has much more of the Thomistic concept in his notion of acedia itself. First, in the Inferno of the wrathful (Canto VII) Dante adverts to the psychology of the passion of sadness (our Chapter II) in this use of the word: *Tristi fummo nell'aere dolce che dal sol s'allega portando dentro accidioso* (121 - 123). But much more in the Purgatorio (Cantos XVII and XVIII) Dante shows he understands the nature of the vice (our Chapter III) as a love of good letting slide its proper duties. (Cf. XVII, 85 - 86). The penance (remedy) assigned is the zeal of devotion:

"Ratto, ratto che'l tempo non si perda
per poco amor" gridavan li altri appresso;
"chè studio di ben far grazia rinverda."
"O gente in cui fervore aguto adesso"
ricompe forse negligenza e indugio
da voi per tepidezza in ben far messo . . . (103 - 108; Purg. XVIII)

⁵¹ Objection might be taken to the inclusion of such homiletic material, and even more to artistic production, within a study which attempts the precision of science. Granted that the breadth of perspective makes scientific focus difficult, the real situation is that the concept of acedia originated in an ascetic literature with little pretension to science and it flowered with the other capital sins in popular preaching. The descriptions offered provide a dialectic towards definition, for, as Aristotle says, "Since definition is said to be the statement of a thing's nature, obviously one kind of definition will be a statement of the meaning of the name, or of an equivalent nominal formula." (*Posterior Analytics*, Bk. II, Ch. 10, 28). Up to this point the concern of this study has been to show both the origin and development of the concept of acedia, and the gradual result which has unfolded is an exteriorization of the original interior sadness; an identification of acedia itself with its effects, although something of the original notion has been preserved, and now becomes sharpened as we approach the scientific definition of St. Thomas. Moreover, it is a mistake to restrict theology's instrumentality to metaphysics (Cf. *Summa Theol.*, I, q. 1, a. 9, especially with the notes of Thomas Gilby, O.P., *Christian Theology* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1944; also Victor White, O.P., *Holy Teaching* (London: Blackfriars, 1958). When Père Chenu says: "Having become a scholastic theology, sacred doctrine excluded from its literary genre pastoral exhortation," *Towards Understanding St. Thomas* tr. Landry and Hughes (New York: Regnery, 1964) p. 111, he does not mean that scholastic theology did not have to draw on both the metaphor of Scripture and the homiletic mode of the Fathers. That part of theology called moral will particularly have to draw on experience, and the richness of experience may call forth an abundance of description. In the instance of acedia, not only patristic experience but homiletic consideration led to concrete example, and some rather Procrustean shapes. It will be the task of the scientific theologian to draw on the richness of the tradition in order to isolate the essential. Nevertheless, it is important to keep an ear open for the language of the people, lest the nearness of the formula be deceptive. *Time* magazine of July 10th, 1964 carried an informative article on the importance of "linguistic analysis" to the clarification of religious thought. In terms of logical positivism, many of the statements on acedia would be *blith*, that is, not subject to empirical proof, but with validity as an individual's interpretation of his experience.

examples of missing Mass, putting off the sacraments came to emphasize its external result rather than the interior disturbance. Later the word will simply be translated sloth, and something very closely resembling the original idea of acedia will come to be called melancholia with little or no reference to its morality, but rather its physical and medical aspects receive practically all the attention.⁵²

This, however, extends the concept chronologically much beyond the present period. Moreover, it would be possible to pursue the question even further and to see something very much like acedia positively cultivated as a mood fruitful for artistic endeavor.⁵³ However, it is in this middle period chronologically that the great work of the scholastic doctors comes to the fore, giving acedia a scientific precision it had not enjoyed up to this point, nor since.

⁵² While melancholy was a most noticeable phenomenon of the late medieval and Renaissance periods (Cf. J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, (London: Penguin, 1955) pp. 9 - 55, it was rarely called acedia, nor was any moral interpretation attempted. Lily B. Campbell in her *Shakespeare's Tragic Horrors: Slaves of Passion* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960) does touch lightly on sloth as an element of Hamlet's grief, pp. 114 - 115, but it is a fact that the Renaissance monument of misplaced erudition, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floye Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor, 1951) can be a veritable encyclopedia on this subject without once mentioning acedia or even seeming aware of the long patristic and medieval tradition. Miss Campbell's work, a revolutionary approach to Shakespearean and Renaissance scholarship, is a good introduction to the vast literature of that time on humorology in which these writers attempted to study the phenomenon earlier called acedia as well as other disorders of the passions. A careful study of these works shows that, while the authors were at times interested in moral considerations, and had some notions of scholastic doctrine on passions, they simply did not advert to the capital sin teaching in general nor that on acedia in particular. Cf. later Notes 75 - 76.

⁵³ This is the accusation of Irving Babbitt, *Romanticism and Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1919) p. 334: "If (Christianity) has perceived clearly how a man may move towards happiness and how on the other hand he tends to sink into despair; or what amounts to the same thing, it has seen the supreme importance of spiritual effort and the supreme danger of spiritual sloth. The man who looked on himself as cut off from God and so ceased to strive was according to the medieval Christian the victim of *acedia*. This sluggishness and slowness of spirit, this mere drifting and abdication of will may, as Chaucer's person suggests, be the crime against the Holy Ghost itself. It would in fact not be hard to show that what was taken by the Rousseauist to be the badge of spiritual distinction was held by the medieval Christian to be the chief (*sic*) of all the deadly sins. The victim of *acedia* often looked upon himself, like the victim of the age, as fardoomed. But though the idea of fate enters at times into medieval melancholy, the man of the Middle Ages could scarcely so detach himself from the community as to suffer from that sense of loneliness which is the main symptom of romantic melancholy." For Aldous Huxley's use of this notion of Babbitt as for further comment, see later Notes 75 - 77.

C. *Period of Definition*

St. Thomas, generally admitted to be the foremost authority on *acedia*,⁵⁴ speaks formally and *ex professo* on the subject twice. Although he had early in his career spoken passingly of the chief sins, calling *acedia*, "distaste for spiritual goods as they are obstacles to some inordinate sense-pleasure,"⁵⁵ it is in the *Quaestio Disputata de Malo* and in the Second Part of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae* that he offers his mature and complete teaching on *acedia*.⁵⁶ The two treatments, probably written at nearly the same time, display a coincidence of both arrangement and doctrine, although there are some differences, mostly attributable to the different nature and structure of the two works.⁵⁷ In both cases, the general morality of *acedia* is discussed in the first article, the specific nature of the sin in the second, the gravity of the offense in the third, and finally, in the last article, the causality *acedia* exercises as a capital vice.⁵⁸

The general immortality of *acedia* is established at the outset by a consideration of its object, which, since *acedia* is said to be a species of sadness, is a present evil. This present evil, however, is not a genuine moral evil but only apparently so. An analogy with lust is offered: disordered

⁵⁴ Cf. E. Vasteebergh, "Paresse" DTC, XI, 2026; "Saint Thomas d'Aquin, qui a étudié avec plus de rigueur que personne, la (*acedia*) distingue nettement de la paresse, en lui donnant le sens très précis de *tristitia de bono spirituali*, et souligne son effet, qui est 'enlever le goût de l'action.'" Also cf. HD. Gardelli, O.P., *La Carità*, Tome Troisième (Paris: Cerf, 1957) p. 280: "Le rôle de saint Thomas sera de tirer, par une analyse subtile, de cette tradition riche mais assez confuse, une notion précise de l'*acedia*, de mettre a part ce qui n'est qu'éléments adventices ou conséquences de ce vice, et dégager ainsi dans toute sa pureté son espèce morale; quitte ensuite, en la replaçant dans la complexité des états d'âme concrets, à lui rendre cette richesse de traits que les auteurs anciens lui avaient découverts."

⁵⁵ *II Sent.*, d. 42, q. 2, a. 3.

⁵⁶ *S. Th.*, II - II, q. 35; *Q.D. de Malo*, q. 11.

⁵⁷ As a standard report, cf. Angelus Walz, O.P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas* tr. Sebastian Bullough, O.P., (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1951) end papers.

⁵⁸ The structure of the *Summa* gives the virtues the primary place in moral study, vices being treated only as opposed to the virtues. The Disputed Question by its very genre is able to take up the vices in their own right and with much more detail. A curious difference in the two studies of *acedia* is the absence of all citations from Cassian in the very place where the more extensive treatment would have led the reader to expect it.

veneral pleasure is deceptively attractive (good) but really, in the larger context of morality, is not good but evil. So *acedia*'s object seems evil, but is really good. The argument in the *Summa* adds a codicil: when the object of *acedia* is truly evil, as would be the case in the virtue of penance, a sorrow for sin, the sadness could still be inordinate or excessive, especially in its effect, and therefore likewise sinful.

But, as the difficulties of the second article point out, this would not make *acedia* different from any other vice, for the glutton not only takes excessive pleasure in food, but is unduly grieved by the moral good of abstinence, and the lecher not only pursues disordered veneral pleasure, but flees the virtuous good of chastity. St. Thomas solves the difficulty by placing *acedia* against the structure of virtues arranged in a hierarchy of ends to the ultimate end, God, Who is attained by the supreme virtue of charity. Therefore, since it belongs to each of the virtues not only to pursue the good end of that virtue, but also to rejoice in that good, there is finally one virtue, charity, which loves and rejoices over the final destiny and purpose of Christian life, God Himself.⁵⁹ This is part of the teaching that charity is the form and mother of all the virtues.⁶⁰ *Acedia* is then opposed directly and specifically to the joy of charity, which is its first internal act after love itself.⁶¹

In the third article of both questions, in the *Summa* and the *De Malo*, St. Thomas investigates the seriousness of the sin of *acedia*. His general conclusion is that it is a mortal sin, and in support of this, cites St. Paul (II Cor. 7:10) saying that worldly grief (therefore in some way identified with *acedia*) produces death. Mortal sin, St. Thomas goes on to say, is called mortal precisely because it destroys the spiritual life of charity by which God dwells in us. A sin will be mortal in its kind (*specie*) when of itself, — by its very nature — it is opposed to charity. *Acedia* already defined as

⁵⁹ *S. Th.*, II - II, q. 23, a. 8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, ad 3um.

⁶¹ Deinde considerandum est de vitiis oppositis gaudio caritatis. Quod quidem est de bono divino, cui gaudio opponitur *acedia*. *S. Th.*, II - II, 35, Prologue.

sadness over a spiritual good is now seen to be opposed to that spiritual good which is divine, the very object of charity. The generic opposition of acedia to charity is thus immediately evident, for the proper effect of charity is joy in the Lord.

Nevertheless, in the extension of his remarks, St. Thomas admits that a movement of acedia in the sensuality is but a venial sin. In the *Summa* article, Cassian's account of this frequent and insistent temptation of hermits is taken in consideration, but the real reason for the admission of an imperfect sin of acedia is based on the general teaching of sin in the sensuality. The analogy with adultery is used: in its beginning in the sensual part alone, the sin is venial, and does not become mortal unless and until the reason consents in a completely human, voluntary act. Applied to the present case, a movement of acedia is sometimes only in the sensuality because of the natural repugnance of the flesh to the spirit. It is then a sin insofar as the reason could and should have prevented it, but it is venial. Only when the reason deliberately consents to the prevalence of the flesh over the spirit, resulting in a horror and detestation of the divine good on the part of the will does it become mortal. In several pertinent replies to objections, St. Thomas opposes sloth to the commandment respecting the holiness of the sabbath, transcending the merely ceremonial aspect of that commandment to a moral significance which is that of rest in, and contemplation of, the Lord of the sabbath. But even more incisively, sloth is seen as opposed to the commandment which is the first and most important, that of charity, the adherence of the soul to God.

One further point which helped later commentators to elaborate and apply the teaching of St. Thomas on acedia is the distinction between percept and counsel. The precept of the love of God, and its corollary, consequent joy in God, is the first and most prominent precept against which acedia sins. But this must not be extended to mean that the refusal to accept the counsels, whether evangelical or others, is in every instance a sin of acedia. On the contrary, St. Thomas

makes it clear that the matter with acedia deals, its object, is the situation when some thing has to be done for God's sake.

In the final article of both questions, St. Thomas reaffirms the right of acedia to be listed as a capital sin. His understanding of capital sin is that it is a sin from which other vices arise, especially by way of final causality. The pleasure of food and sex attract men to do and avoid many things; in parallel fashion, much will be done and much avoided to escape sadness. What will be done and what avoided is spelled out by an explanation of St. Gregory's list of the "armies" of sadness, which St. Thomas calls the "daughters" of acedia. Besides arranging these vices—malice, rancor, pusillanimity, despair, torpor about precepts, wandering of the mind after forbidden things—into an orderly division showing their relation to the parent vice, St. Thomas reduces the vices which St. Isidore had listed in greater profusion—bitterness, idleness, sleepiness, impertunity of mind, curiosity, verbosity, restlessness of the body and instability—to the Gregorian sextet.

After this most careful and scientific work of definition, there would seem very little which could be added. And, for the most part, the commentators on St. Thomas felt that the matter had received sufficient explanation and was so lucidly clear that no further work was needed. Yet there was the further explanation of difficult points and the matter of application to concrete situations. Both were done by St. Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence (1389-1459) in his *Summa Theologiae Moralium*.⁶² In his second volume—in his *Summa Theologiae Moralium*.⁶³ In his second volume—on Sins—this Dominican moralist reproduces the Thomistic teaching on acedia, then adds a discussion of possible causes⁶⁴

⁶²Sanctus Antoninus, O.P., *Summa Theologiae Moralium* (Verona 1740) Vol. II, Titulus Nonus, Caput I, 933-938.

⁶³The four causes of acedia listed by St. Antoninus demonstrate a good balance between the tradition he faithfully restates and a more modern interest in physical and psychological causes: 1) hunger; 2) from an apparent humiliation—as when a man works long and hard, and receives no apparent reward, he becomes bored and sinks into acedia; 3) from the complexion of the body (here the entire question of temperament and ancient and modern humnology might have a launching-pad); 4) the instigation of the devil. *Ibid.*, in fin. cap. 1., col. 936.

and useful remedies.⁶⁴ In two other chapters, the Saint takes up the thorny question of negligence as a sin distinct from acedia, and distinct from other easily confused ideas—sloth (*bigritia*), inconstancy, sluggishness and omission.⁶⁵ Negligence in good works is found to be a sufficiently wide concept to include the others in a general way, and negligence also provides an opportunity for some detailed application to particular moral problems. Through chapters five to twelve, the negligence of prelates, the omission of fraternal correction, negligence in the observance of feasts, in the reception of the sacraments, (especially penance and the eucharist), neglect of preaching and the recitation of the canonical hours are all treated not only as moral cases but as spiritual questions. The final questions of Title Nine—showing that all these matters are still within the orbit of acedia—are the other daughters: laziness, idleness, despair and pusillanimity.

Probably the most distinguished commentator on St. Thomas, Thomas de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan (1468-1534) finds only one matter for clarification in his master's teaching on acedia. That matter is the precise object which acedia opposes—the divine good. Is that divine good God Himself, or as the divine goodness is participated in this man, or is it

⁶⁴ His suggestions are devout prayer, frequenting the sacraments and good exercise. By the last he seems to mean the direct attack of which St. Thomas hints, saying that persevering consideration (in this case, at least) takes away the incentive for the sin which he judges occurs by reason of insufficient consideration. *Ibid.*, Cap. II, col. 937.

⁶⁵ The basis for the distinctions are found in S. Th., II-II, q. 54, a. 2, ad. 1um, but St. Antoninus expatiates on the pithy formulae of St. Thomas. The connection of negligence with acedia is by way of the "daughter" of acedia called torpor concerning commandments. Negligence itself is a defect of the interior act of the will which is choice. Laziness or sloth properly (*bigritia*) is a defect in external execution of the act implying a certain tardiness in performance. Inconstancy in the work itself (*desidia*) St. Thomas does not mention, but St. Antoninus sees the possibility of desisting in the execution of a work because of the difficulties involved. Torpor, the daughter of acedia, both see as a remissness, a tepidity (St. Antoninus' word from Apocalypse) or slackness in performance. This permits a description of lukewarmness in its physical result. Then inconstancy (distinct from *desidia* in this descriptive account of St. Antoninus) involves an instability of the will; undoubtedly this derives from St. Thomas' teaching on fortitude. (cf. S.Th., II-II, q. 137, a. 3, U. Constanntia peritine ad perseverantiam?). Finally, the Florentine Archbishop takes up omission, which St. Thomas treated without naming it such in I-II, q. 6, a. 3 and later, and explicitly on the sinfulness of some omission, *ibid.*, q. 71, a. 5. While it is useful to have all these closely related words spelled out, St. Antoninus contents himself with a less scientific, more descriptive and pastoral mode. C. III, De Negligentia in genere, c. 945.

both? If it were the first, acedia could not be distinguished from hatred of God, since the same virtue loves the good, rejoices over it, and is saddened by the opposite. Since charity secondarily and consequently rejoices over the divine good as men participate in it, acedia is very especially grieved over the divine good as men possess it, or at least could possess it. Thus Cajetan underlines the words of St. Thomas, that the proper object of acedia is the spiritual good in so far as it is divine; St. Thomas is not content with the vague formula that acedia is sadness about God. "And thus," the great Commentator concludes, "all here is in absolute harmony and in the doctrine of the Author."⁶⁶

Domingo Bañez (1528-1604) further refines Cajetan's discussion of the object of acedia in his commentary on St. Thomas' treatises on the theological virtues.⁶⁷ While agreeing with Cajetan, he states the same difficulty with some force, and brings out further that there is both a love of benevolence and a love of concupiscence involved in charity. Since this love of concupiscence—in this instance, love of self in God—is a secondary act of charity, acedia has as its peculiar object, the divine good as it is in oneself, that is, one's graded orientation towards the supernatural ultimate end. However acedia may be concerned not only with that quasi-ultimate end, salvation in God, but with the means to that end.

Another commentator writing in some detail is Noel Alexander⁶⁸ (d. 1724) who repeats all of St. Thomas' doctrine so that he may more correctly be placed in the category of manualist. Nevertheless, while homiletic and casuist tendencies are evident, the doctrine on acedia is sharp and precise. He adds that acedia's object, the divine good as it is participated in man, should be envisaged so that even those in mortal sin, therefore not participating in the super-

⁶⁶ "Et sic omnia constant simpliciter, et in doctrina auctoris." Cardinalis Thomae de Vio Cajetani, *Commentaria* in II-II, q. 35, a. 4, Editio Leonina Summae Theologiae.

⁶⁷ Dominico Banez, O.P., *De Fide, Spe et Charitate* (Lugduni: Apud Stephanum Michaëlem, 1588) pp. 146-152.

⁶⁸ Natalis Alexander, O.P., *Theologiae Dogmaticae et Moralis* in Episcopo Redactor a Fr. Salvatore Roselli, S.T.M., O.P., (Romae: Michaëlis Angeli Bartholini, MDCCXCII) T. III, Lib. III, Caput VII, pp. 207-212.

natural good, still may sin the sin of acedia in so far as they can possess this divine good. Moreover, he offers some theological specification of the daughters of acedia as well as some remedies.

So ends properly the period of definition and with it a great deal of scientific precision. A survey of modern writing on acedia is more than a little confusing. While some of the manualists and encyclopedists of the day repeat the doctrine of St. Thomas with some fidelity, many of them feel constrained to distinguish acedia as special or spiritual from ordinary sloth.⁶⁹ The terminology, spiritual sloth, un-

⁶⁹ The widely-used seminary-manual of Adolphe Tanqueray, S.S., *Synopsis Theologiae Moralis*, in a number of editions from 1902 onwards calls laziness (*pigritia*) a propensity in a general way to act remissly and negligently, while acedia is tedium with spiritual good (degoût des choses spirituelles). (Rome: Desclée, 1919) I, #562 (p. 327). Also widely-used is the *Summa Theologiae Moralis* of H. Noldin, S.J., in which acedia is taken widely for sadness about work, which may be either natural (of the body) or spiritual. This last is moral, special, opposed to the love of God, and *ex toto genere* mortal, though but rarely committed. I, 349, 1. (Omnipont: Rauch, 1921). Canon Lyons, in his Commentary, *La Somme de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Nice: Imprimerie Industrielle des Alteriers, 1901) translates acedia as "le dégoût spirituel." He Partie, II, secr. 35. Another commentator on St. Thomas, Thomas Pégues, O.P. in his literal discussion, *La Foi, L'Espérance et la Charité* (Toulouse: Privat, 1922) uses the word sloth (la paresse) which he explains (p. 734) in the most radical sense as not really *pigritia* but its interior and fundamental cause which is acedia. His only justification is that Christian language now uses the first word, sloth, in its list of capital sins. In the Lenten Conferences of 1916 at Notre Dame de Paris, Père Janvier remarks that it is difficult to give a name adequately expressive to this vice. He complains that its elements are so multiple that no one seems to have found a single word which will express them all. The catechisms speak of sloth, others of disgust and discouragement, still others of bitterness, while theologians retain acedia for which there is no vernacular equivalent. *Exposition de la Morale Catholique, Morale Speciale VI La Charité*, III, Actes Contraires, (Paris: Letellieux, 1916) p. 33. E. Vastenberghe in the most scholarly article on the subject, "La Paresse," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* ed. Vacant-Magenot (Paris: Letouzey, 1932) Vol. 11, Part II, 2033 distinguishes the wide and current sense of the word as meaning fear of effort (*pigritia*) from a more restricted sense of disgust with the things of God (*acedia*). Arthur Vermeersch, S.J. follows Tanqueray and Noldin with two remarks: 1) that common speech takes general acedia for a capital vice but theologians reserve that to special acedia; 2) caution should be used in possible confusion of acedia as moral with the dangerous but not mortal boredom with priesthood or religious life. *Theologiae Moralis* (Roma: Gregoriana, 1933) I, #449. Benedict Merkelbach, O.P., *Summa Theologiae Moralis* (Paris: Desclée, 1938) apparently follows St. Thomas very closely in seeing a general acedia as a circumstance of every sin, while acedia as a special vice is opposed to the spiritual good *per excellentiam*. I, #512 (p. 414-415); cf. #949 (p. 724). However in an earlier work, *Quaestiones de virtutibus Praeclatis* (Liège: La Pensée Catholique, 1935) p. 142, Father Merkelbach uses the expression *acedia spiritualis* which never appears in the later work. A more practical work, Dominic Prummer's *Manuale Theologiae Moralis* (Barcelona: Herder, 1946) attempts to assess the malice of general (in *sensu paulo latiore*) acedia or *pigritia* from acedia in the strict sense. The latter is, as St. Thomas says, a mortal sin; the former as negligence of salvation and the means thereto, is also mortal, leading to tepidity which in turn leads to ruin. I, I, #433-434 (pp. 296-297). Another Dominican moralist, Ludovicus

known to the patristic or medieval period, is first in evidence in the ascetic authors,⁷⁰ but is gradually taken over even by those who are presumed to be writing scientific works.⁷¹ Generally speaking, the short shrift given acedia, as well as the other capital sins betrays a lack of genuine interest in the problem.⁷²

However, outside theology, there has been a great deal

Fantani, *Manuale Theoretico-Practicum Theologiae Moralis* (Roma: Ferrari, 1930) I, #297-298 (pp. 445-446) takes acedia in a general sense to be a propensity to fulfill remissly and negligently any obligation. This is identified with sloth (*pigritia*) and is said to be, in opposition to Father Merkelbach, a venial sin. Acedia as a special vice is taken in the strict, Thomistic sense, is mortal *ex genere suo*. Both general and special acedia represent the capital sin, which is opposed to the position of Father Vermeersch. A most recent manual, Marcellinus Zalba, S.J., *Theologiae Moralis Compendium* (Mauritii: Biblioteca de Autores Christianos, 1958) speaks of acedia or *pigritia* as general in which case it is mortal or venial depending on the precept transgressed. Special acedia, boredom with the divine friendship, is mortal, although not entirely (Father Noldin is explicitly corrected). Special acedia is the capital sin. It is repugnant to divine charity either by destroying it in passing over necessary spiritual goods or by cooling it by displeasure with works of devotion and virtue not prescribed. The mortal sin consists in being sad over the happiness he knows should be obtained; venial sin in affliction over works of devotion to be performed. I, #882-884 (pp. 475-476). Finally Bernard Hering, C.S.S.R., *The Law of Christ* tr. Edwin G. Kaiser, C.P.P.S. (Westminster: Newman, 1961) writes of spiritual sloth (acedia): "In traditional theology the seventh capital sin, called sloth, is not repugnance to work, or disordered desire for repose and enjoyment (the term for this vice is *pigritia*, laziness), but the lack of zeal for things spiritual. It is feebleness and lack of spirit in opposing the heavy pull and pressure of earthly things and rising to the level of the divine. . . . This kind of sloth is a grave sin. . . . The spiritual sloth which is no more than a certain laxness or feebleness in the service of God due to a degree of repugnance in fulfilling the commandment is in its nature a venial sin" I, p. 381.

⁷⁰ St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), *The Dark Night of the Soul* tr. E. Allison Peers (Westminster: Newman, 1949) Bk. I, Ch. 7, p. 369. For actual citation, cf. page 65 of the present work on acedia. Cf. Ad. Tanqueray, *The Spiritual Life* tr. Brandeis (Tournai: Desclée, 1930) p. 420: "When sloth bears upon spiritual exercises it is called *spiritual sloth*." Also and especially cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrangé, O.P. who uses the expression "spiritual sloth" almost constantly for acedia. *The Three Ages of the Interior Life* tr. St. M. Timothea Doyle, O.P. (St. Louis: Herder, 1947-1948) Vol. I, 368, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 404, II, 41. Also Antonio Royo, O.P. and Jordan Aumann, O.P., *The Theology of Christian Perfection* (Dubuque: Priory, 1962) p. 417.

⁷¹ Besides Canon Lyons, Fathers Merkelbach and Hering cited in Note 70, cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrangé, O.P., *De Virtutibus Theologicis* (Torino: Marietti, 1949) p. 488 where it is qualified: "Vocatur quaedamque *pigritia spiritualis*." Père H.D. Gardel, O.P., *La Charité* (Paris: Desclée 1957) offers a wry comment (p. 389): "Il est intéressant de faire remarquer que saint Thomas n'a pas confondu, comme l'ont fait nombre de moralistes anciens et modernes, l'acedie avec la paresse, que l'on baptise alors, pour les besoins de la cause, paresse spirituelle."

⁷² Cf. John A. McHugh, O.P. and Charles J. Callan, O.P. as revised and enlarged by Edward P. Farrell, O.P., *Moral Theology* (New York: Wagner, 1958) p. 536: "Sloth is a special sin, since, as explained above, its individual objects differentiate it from the general slothfulness that is found in every sin, as well as from hatred, envy and laziness. But it is a sin, by comparison, rarely committed."

of interest in acedia. First during the Renaissance period, just at the time when acedia had become identified with its external effect, sloth and when the whole capital-sin tradition was showing signs of a weariness to death, a great interest developed in melancholia. Galenic humorology as understood by Renaissance authors has proved to be a most fertile field of research for students of Shakespeare, and the most outstanding of these have not hesitated to use the earlier patristic and scholastic ideas on acedia to understand tragic heroes such as Hamlet.⁷³ In much the same way, some contemporary writers would refer some of the older writing on the various effects of acedia to neurosthenic states.⁷⁴

Aldous Huxley has summed up this revolution of thought, "It is a very curious phenomenon, this progress of acedia from the position of being a deadly sin, deserving of damnation, to the position first of a disease, and finally of an essentially lyrical emotion, fruitful in the inspiration of much of the most characteristic modern literature."⁷⁵ The period in which acedia was considered a disease was the

⁷³ Cf. Note 52. It is significant that in the Renaissance works on humorology to which Miss Campbell's work introduces, the discussion on the morality of the passions does not introduce the specific sin of acedia, at least by name. Miss Campbell's mention of sloth, *op. cit.* p. 115 seems influenced by St. Thomas More's *A Dialogue of Comfort agaynst Tribulacion* which is practically unique in the period for its mention of the deadly-sin tradition in general and sloth in particular.

⁷⁴ In general, cf. P. Alphantery, "De quelques documents medievax relatifs a des etats psychatheniques" *Journal de Psychologie*, t. XXVI, 1929, pp. 763-787. The connection of modern studies on endocrinology with ancient humorology is shown by Leo M. Bond, O.P., "The Effect of Bodily Temperament on Psychological Characteristics," *The Thomist*, X (1947) 432-501; XI (1948) 28-104. The preliminary remarks of Vasterbergh in the DTC article (cf. Note 69) shows an awareness of the neurosthenic states resembling acedia. Some of the descriptions of psychoses found in contemporary texts could be placed against the descriptions of acedia in patristic and medieval literature with close parallels easily visible in the depressions. Cf. James H. Vander Veldt, O.F.M., and Robert P. Odenwald, M.D., *Psychiatry and Catholicism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952) pp. 252-254; John R. Gavanaugh, M.D. and James B. McGoldrick, S.J., *Fundamental Psychiatry* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1923) p. 301; John D. O'Brien, *An Outline of Psychiatry* (St. Louis: Herder, 1943) p. 123; Herbert Carroll, *Mental Hygiene* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951) pp. 288-291; Maslow and Mittleman, *Principles of Abnormal Psychology* (New York: Harpers, 1951) pp. 447-449.

⁷⁵ This represents the topic sentence of the essay, "Acidie," in *On The Margin: Notes and Essays* (London and New York: Doran, 1923), pp. 25-31. This essay which covers the territory from the *Vicie Patrim* to *World War I* seems largely based on C. Taylor's article, "Acidie," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribners, 1910) Vol. I, 65-66, as well as the author's own wide reach in literary sources.

Renaissance period, much of Huxley's data seemingly drawn from the article in Hastings's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.⁷⁶ The last stage mentioned is that of Romanticism which Irving Babbitt has already discussed, in particular accusing Rousseau and the movement of acedia.⁷⁷

Recent works have not hesitated to utilize the idea of acedia in literary criticism. For instance, Max Schorer writing on Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools* says in the *New York Times*: "The Seven Deadly Sins will be marched out and they are all unquestionably if most delicately here, but chiefly, and in every guise, 'acidia'—spiritual torpor, the paralysis of love."⁷⁸ So too Ralph de Toledano in the *National Review*: "In the *Golden Notebook* Doris Lessing has written what she seems to believe is a novel about sex and politics—those two raddling obsessions of the contemporary world. She has instead involved herself in an exposition of that deadliest of sins, *acidia*, the spiritual boredom of people who have really ceased to care."⁷⁹

Evelyn Waugh wrote the fifth of a series on the seven

⁷⁶ See Note above (75). In addition to sources already mentioned, Taylor relies on the article "Acidie" in *The Oxford English Dictionary* ed. James A.H. Murray *et. al.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933; 1961) Vol. I, A-B, p. 56.

⁷⁷ See Note 53 for citation. The use of the concept of acedia can be justly criticized in the instance of these literary men, who are dealing with literature more descriptive than scientifically accurate. However, their use of it to identify a current phenomenon is a valuable witness to an enduring tradition, a tradition which the students of today (See Note 74) either do not know or ignore.

⁷⁸ *The New York Times Book Review*, Section 7, April 1, 1962, p. 1.

⁷⁹ *The National Review*, XIII, 12 (Sept. 25, 1962) 235. The interest in acedia continues in very different forms of writing. On the pastoral side, a series of five articles appeared under the pen of Innocenzo Colosso, O.P. in *Revista di Ascetica e mystica* (Firenze) from 1957-1959, "Come nasce l'acidia," Vol. II (1917) 266-287; "I sofismi dell'acidia," *Ibid.*, 495-511; "Come quando e perche' la vita spirituale è monotona," *Ibid.*, III (1958) 185-201; "Le conseguenze dell'acidia," III (1958) 528-546; IV (1959) 22-33; "L'ultima due figlie dell'acidia," 159-169. A German Thomist finds the concept of acedia useful in his speculation; cf. Josef Ripper, *Leiturie the Basis of Culture* tr. Alexander Dru (New York: Pantheon, 1952) pp. 48-50 *et passim*. Even popular writers presume some thing of the tradition is known by their readers. For instance in Ian Fleming's *From Russia with Love* (New York: Signet, 1957) p. 72, the dashing international spy, Bond, awakes with an attack of acedia, "Just as, at least in one religion, *acidie* is the first of the cardinal sins, so boredom, and particularly the incredible circumstance of waking up bored, was the only vice Bond utterly condemned. . . . There was only one way to deal with boredom—kick oneself out of it." After vigorous exercise followed by hot and cold showering, the hero, satisfied at sweating acedia out of his body, reflects that those whom the Gods wish to destroy, they first make bored. And more recently, the protagonist of

deadly sins in the *London Times*, later published as a book. While he uses the word, sloth, he offers St. Thomas' definition of acedia as *tristitia de bono spirituali*, "the condition in which a man is fully aware of the proper means of his salvation and refuses to take them because the whole apparatus fills him with tedium and disgust."⁸⁰ Mr. Waugh goes on to suppose that this would be "a rare condition most often found among those who have dedicated themselves to a specifically religious vocation for which they find themselves unworthy, and not the prime temptation of men living in the world."⁸¹ (One sees here how the tradition has gone full circle back to the monastic setting in which acedia was first discovered). But Mr. Waugh continues that "in this generation the man of Sloth in all his full theological implications has become one of the stock figures of stage and novel."⁸² The example given is that of Query in Graham Greene's *Burnt-Out Case*.

Before proceeding with Mr. Waugh's literary analysis, it may be in order to apologize for such disproportionate space given literature in what is intended to be a theological dissertation. Whatever value there may be to the idea that novelists and dramatists are the prophets of our day, the fact remains that theologians pay very little attention to the idea of acedia, and what is written is, in the main, confusing. Not only do the literateurs display intense interest in acedia; they point up the long descriptive and literary tradition of acedia which makes the theological handling somewhat unwieldy. Moreover their problems with acedia are almost the same problems which are encountered at every step in the history of the idea.

The Ambassador by Morris L. West (New York: Dell, 1966) p. 265, finds himself in the same crisis with more spiritual cause. "But is it ended there — the traveller motionless, without tears, lacking light, refusing compassion? There is a word for that in the West: *acedia*, it signifies the false and terrible *Nirvana* which is founded not on union, but separation, not on the extinction of desire, but on the contempt of it."

⁸⁰Evelyn Waugh, "Sloth" in *The Seven Deadly Sins*, ed. Ian Fleming (New York: William Morrow, 1962) 57 - 64. Present quote, p. 58.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, prefaced with the remark, "Sixty years ago it would have been pedantic to treat of it in a secular journal."

⁸²*Ibid.*

To continue briefly with Mr. Waugh's analysis:

So much for the Sloth of the theologian, technically dubbed *accidia* (or *acedia*). There is no true classical term for this state, not because it was unknown to the ancients, but because it was too commonplace to require identification. The last centuries of European paganism before the revelation of Christian joy were sunk deep in *accidia*. Now that paganism is returning we see the symptoms again. Can we accuse our listless and torpid contemporaries of Sloth in the sense defined above? I think not, because the great majority have been deprived by the State of religious instruction. The phrase "Spiritual Good" is totally foreign to them, and they lack the full knowledge of its nature which is an essential element in the commission of mortal sin.^{82a}

Since Mr. Waugh undertakes here what is really a theological analysis, it may be as well for the moment to accept simply his statement on the currency of acedia as a human phenomenon without attempting to decide whether the guilt of acedia can be so easily absolved.

Finally, the author offers what he calls "very near parallels" to acedia, first of all, "in those whose calling has a superficial resemblance to the monastic life, the armed services." Then he complains of *pigritia* in mechanics and in his own profession.

From all this, several problems emerge. First, both the Oriental originators and modern observers of the scene detect acedia in a monastic background or in the contemporary analogy of one especially dedicated to some ideal. Does this mean that the ordinary man may be guilty of more mundane sloth, but not the more esoteric sin of acedia? Closely connected with the problem is another, raised this time by the ascetic writers who speak of spiritual sloth. If acedia is spiritual sloth, is there another sloth which is, in opposition, more carnal and physical? In that event, is not this carnal sloth the real capital sin, since capital sins by their very nature are supposed to exercise a prime attraction of the human appetite to vice?

The answers to these questions are implicit in this report on the state of the question. The effort of this work is to

^{82a}*Ibid.*, p. 60.

re-state acedia in its capital-sin context, that is, to see it precisely as a common attraction of the human appetite to Vice. This involves a refutation of the terminology of "spiritual" sloth. Acedia is more interior than its daughter sloth but very intimately bound up with the psychosomatic structure of the human phenomenon.

FIGURE I
(Note 18)

<i>Ostiensis (Modern)</i>	<i>Cassianic</i>	<i>Gregorian</i>
S-uperbia	G-ula (Gastrimargia)	S-uperbia (Vana gloria)
A-varitia	L-uxuria (fornicatio)	I-vidia
L-uxuria	A-varitia (Phylagryria)	I-ra
I-ra	I-ra	A-vidia (Tristitia)
G-ula	T-ristitia	A-varitia
I-vidia	A-vidia	G-ula
A-vidia	V-ana gloria	(ventris ingluvies)
or		
A-varitia	S-uperbia	L-uxuria
==	==	==
SALIGIA	GLAITAVS	SIIAAGL

The Ostiensis order (after Henry of Oria who popularized it in the thirteenth century) is called modern because it was propagated by the German Gatechism of St. Peter Gansius, and generally by the Jesuits of the counter-reformation period, and is still in use. As a mnemonic device, it is undoubtedly the best because the initials give something like a word. Moreover, no particular significance was any longer attached to the order of vices.

Otto Zöckler constructed the other two as a helpful device to distinguish between the two families of influence during the post-patristic period.

The Cassianic order represents two things: the ascetic order of attack, and some causality between each vice.

Gregorian order really removed Pride from the list, but it had a way of creeping back in later lists. So likewise did acedia replace St. Gregory's *tristitia*.

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