

Stages of Faith

I. STAGES OF FAITH

- A. **The focus of the relationship is the union of the soul with God.**
- B. **As God is a holy God, this can be accomplished only by becoming a holy person.**
 - 1. O.T. term=just
 - 2. N.T. term=a godly person. A greater or lesser saint.
 - 3. Holiness: a functional definition in 3 parts
 - a) To belong to God
 - b) To be filled by God (with grace. Grace is defined as the unconditional love of God which, when it enters the human soul empowers it to do what it needs to do for God, Self and others).
 - c) To mediate (pass on) what God has given us.
- C. **To develop this holiness, we must pass through the stages. Among these are...**
 - 1. Belief in God to...
 - 2. Trust in God to...
 - 3. Rest in God to...
- D. **BELIEF IN GOD**
 - 1. This involves the first three levels of faith commonly found in those that are in the first level of spiritual growth called by Evagrius Ponticus since the 4th century, The **PURGATIVE** Stage. The Greek Orthodox theologians call this level **Theoria**.
 - 2. Bonnaventure links this stage with meditation on the Creation of God--coming to understand how the world works and it's spiritual implications.
 - 3. The faithful here have a mind set that contains many theories about God. They question because they yet do not know. This level consists of believing...
 - a) God is.
 - b) God is good.
 - c) God cares.
- E. **TRUST IN GOD**
 - 1. The **ILLUMINATIVE** Stage in Greek Orthodoxy is termed **Theologia**.
 - 2. The faithful begin to see the hand of God in their lives and the lives of others.
 - 3. The illuminating force in the mind is the startling personal recognition of the **Logos of God**, ie. God's thinking or intelligibility.
 - 4. Bonnaventure links this stage with meditation on the Mind of God
 - 5. Now there is an experiential faith understanding that...
 - a) God redeems

- b) God redeems in His Way
- c) God redeems in His Time

F. REST IN GOD: The UNITIVE Stage

1. Now Faith realizes that
 - a) When God redeems, it is the best available for me under my circumstances.
 - b) It's the best for others
 - c) It's the best thing for God's plan and you and other people.
2. This comes to greater and lesser saints when all of the souls faculties are integrated through the total conviction that "all things work together for the good for those who love the Lord." (Rom 8:28)
 - a) "All things" mean that God is not wasting any experience that comes to the soul who is seeking Him. Good, seemingly bad, and indifferent experiences, *rather like our lady Truth*, ALL participate meaningfully in the process of conforming the soul to the "image" or "archetype" or "in depth pattern" of Christ.
3. The soul resting in God have given up trying to control the results of their effort and ministry.
 - a) They may make plans, but they recognize the Hidden Ingredient found in the higher levels of spiritual life--ie. the Holy Spirit.
 - b) A good test psychologically is to ask if you are still beating yourself up emotionally when things go seemingly wrong. If you think or feel in such a way that you think you must control reality instead of discovering and cooperating harmoniously with it, then you are not in God's Rest.