

broken, incomplete, and distorted knowledge of everything, he measures all things by his tastes and his ideas. Being indifferent to everyone except himself, he wants life to be successful right here and now. Patience, however, is truly a divine virtue. God is patient not because He is "indulgent," but because He sees the depth of all that exists, because the inner reality of things, which in our blindness we do not see, is open to Him. The closer we come to God, the more patient we grow and the more we reflect that infinite respect for all beings which is the proper quality of God.

Finally, the crown and fruit of all virtues, of all growth and effort, is *love*—that love which, as we have already said, can be given by God alone—the gift which is the goal of all spiritual preparation and practice.

All this is summarized and brought together in the concluding petition of the Lenten prayer in which we ask "to see my own errors and not to judge my brother." For ultimately there is but one danger: *pride*. Pride is the source of evil, and all evil is pride. Yet it is not enough for me to see my own errors, for even this apparent virtue can be turned into pride. Spiritual writings are full of warnings against the subtle forms of pseudo-piety which, in reality, under the cover of humility and self-accusation can lead to a truly demonic pride. But when we "see our own errors" and "do not judge

our brothers," when, in other terms, chastity, humility, patience, and love are but one in us, then and only then the ultimate enemy—pride—will be destroyed in us.

After each petition of the prayer we make a prostration. Prostrations are not limited to the Pray of St. Ephrem but constitute one of the distinctive characteristics of the entire Lenten worship. Here, however, their meaning is disclosed best of all. In the long and difficult effort of spiritual recovery, the Church does not separate the soul from the body. The whole man has fallen away from God; the whole man is to be restored, the whole man is to return. The catastrophe of sin lies precisely in the victory of the flesh—the animal, the irrational, the lust in us—over the spiritual and the divine. But the body is glorious; the body is holy, so holy that God Himself "became flesh." Salvation and repentance then are not contempt for the body or neglect of it, but restoration of the body to its real function as the expression and the life of spirit, as the temple of the priceless human soul. Christian asceticism is a fight, not against but for the body. For this reason, the whole man—soul and body—repents. The body participates in the prayer of the soul just as the soul prays through and in the body. Prostrations, the "psycho-somatic" sign of repentance and humility, of adoration and obedience, are thus the Lenten rite *par excellence*.