

The Spiritual Life and How to be Attuned to It by St Theophan the Recluse - Summary of Chapters 1-13

3 Ways of Life

1. **The Spiritual Life:** This is a life lived seeking union with God and thus focussing on the health of the soul. It is characterized by the fear of God, by listening to one's conscience (in order to do God's will & follow the commandments), and by a longing for God. This is life in the truest sense, life as it was intended.

2. **The Intellectual Life:** This is life lived in pursuit of knowledge, logic, and the sciences. It raises the life of the mind above all else and is often characterized by the empty wandering of thoughts.

3. **The Sensual Life:** This is life lived for pleasures and comforts. It is almost sub-human, for it focusses on food, sleep, sex, and entertainment. The soul, in this life, is subject to the desires of the body; the body, thus, rules the soul.

Fallen State

Mind is "scattered" - it lacks focus. It is attracted to and stuck on things of this life.

Seeks to acquire what is pleasant & comfortable. Indulgences often reign.

Focus on pleasing the senses; seeks to obtain what is pleasant to the body & avoid what is not.

The Soul



Natural/Sanctified State

Everything experienced & observed leads to a yearning for the Ideal, the Divine.

Desires useful/fit deeds and the acquisition of the virtues.

Takes in what is needed to sustain life; love of the beautiful predominates all.

St. Theophan offers a picture of the soul as described by the Fathers who preceded him. On the left, we see what a fallen soul - and thus an unhealthy soul - looks like and what it desires. The soul in its natural, intended state - the healthy soul - which is described on the right, shows what our goal is. In this soul, the passions have been transformed into virtues, the soul is rightly ordered, and the desires of the soul are healed and properly aimed.

While this may seem overwhelming or confusing at first, the basic point that St. Theophan calls us to is simple:

Follow the Commandments & the Teachings of the Gospel. This is the way to an ordered, holy life.