

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

A few months ago we promised to provide some regular contributions for religious men and women. It has proved a surprisingly difficult task to discover writers willing to undertake this responsible work. However we are fortunate to have secured from the posthumous papers of the late Very Reverend Father Austin Barker, O.P., S.T.M., a profound and thorough treatment of the foundation of religious life. In his essay on obedience the author, who was Professor of Metaphysics at the English Dominican House of Philosophy, takes the opportunity of showing the natural basis for the complete self-dedication of the vow of obedience, so that his words do in fact provide wholesome doctrine for all readers, be they lay or religious. But the final chapters which, as we are publishing the essay serially, will only appear in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* after several months, are concerned more exclusively with the vow of obedience and its implications. We publish below Father Barker's introduction to his essay under the title which he gave to the whole work.

THE EDITOR

THE HUMAN BASIS OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

INTRODUCTORY

BY

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HE subject matter of this essay, in so far as it is concerned with what is called the Obediential Potency, naturally finds no exact place within a course of philosophy properly so-called, when later the student proceeds into formal theology, the divine science, it is customarily assumed that the matter has been already sufficiently studied in the preliminaries to theology. It finds its right place within the Science of fundamental theology, or Apologetics, which deals with the *Præambula Fidei*, the motives of credibility and similar material. Sometimes, however, its central importance fails to receive adequate attention, and its essential significance, while not being entirely overlooked, rarely obtains the emphasis which is its due. The following pages are intended briefly to co-relate it with the growth of divine action in the soul, and to suggest that the endowment of divine grace progressively proceeds in correspondence with the development of the obediential capacity.

In regard to any movement of God within man beyond the natural human measure, there must be recognised either implicitly or explicitly some native principle of receptivity. If the human being