

is a magnificent slogan; but it must not be misunderstood as meaning that we can somehow increase his own glory and excellence. It is in creation, and supremely in our own selves, that we are to show forth the glory of the God who indwells us.

'Shall I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of he-goats?' What is the meaning of this divine irony in Psalm 49; and similarly of the many passages in which God complains of his weariness of sacrifice and incense and ritual? Not (St Thomas explains in the reply to the second objection of the article which we quoted at the beginning of this paper), that God condemns the external worship which he himself had sanctioned and ordained, but precisely because it was supposed that he—rather than we—had need of these things. Neither, St Thomas will say in his Third Part, does God need the incarnation or death of his Son, nor yet the holy Eucharist. But we do.

We may think we are too enlightened to deserve such irony, or to be subject to such reproof. But when we hear the '*Ite, missa est*' we are sometimes inclined to feel that we have now rendered our 'service' to God, 'fulfilled our obligation' to him. Such a feeling all too easily hardens into a perfunctory performance, which entails nothing further of us. This precisely is the divine complaint through the mouths of the prophets to the Chosen People of old. But the truth of the matter is that it is God who has rendered a service to us, and filled a stupendous deed of self-giving love to us—to which he was under no obligation other than that to which he had freely committed himself in his own gracious promises. We have played the part of our true selves, subject and receptive to divine Power and Love. At the '*Ite, missa est*' our obligation does not end; now, more exactly, it begins.



ERRORS ABOUT NATURE AND GRACE

BY

AUSTIN BARKER, O.P.



WE claim to take for granted in the purposes of this essay the central facts of Christ, his reality in history, his verifiable effect, and the chief truths of his life, as they were preserved at least till a generation ago among the divided sects in the break-up of Christendom, and as they are now, and for ever will be preserved, only by the Catholic Church. Thus the divinity of Christ is

here assumed, and the doctrine of divine grace and merit which he poured out upon mankind by his death; his identity with his mystical Body, the Church whose life is but an extension through time and space of his own Incarnate Being; and chiefly here the thesis of his vivifying and redemptive work in the minds and wills of the men who decisively accept his Church. He is God the Creator, and in his advent the Redeemer; the divine Reality, now as during his days in Galilee, teaching, influencing, moving, affecting, attracting, converting the hearts and thoughts of his followers; by his own will and power achieving in his disciples, now as much as then, faith, hope and love; producing the effect we call grace, which, by his own defining, is not of human causality, but by his own spontaneous endowment: 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee but my Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 16, 17). 'If any one love me, he will keep my word. And my Father will love him' (Jn. 14, 23). 'I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing' (Jn. 15, 5). 'He that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do: and greater than these shall he do' (Jn. 14, 12). 'If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father: and he shall give you another Paraclete that he may abide with you for ever: the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him. But you shall know him, because he shall abide with you and be in you' (Jn. 14, 15-7). These utterances of Christ gave to men a promise which already in those who accepted was fulfilled and from the beginnings of the Christian Church, through the tradition of saints, fathers, doctors, theologians and in general of the faithful, the truth of this supernatural gift of God has been treasured and preserved. The divine grace which Christ brought and promised was a great and precious gift, by which men were 'made partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1, 4), a 'new creature' (Gal. 6, 15), 'the charity of God poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us' (Rom. 5, 5); and therefore could St Paul write to the converts at Corinth: 'Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?' (1 Cor. 3, 16).

This then has been the creed of Christendom, the doctrine and thesis that man henceforth, by the living power of Christ, was twofold in principles of life and activity. By birth and specific order he held within himself a principle of activity consonant with his nature, comprising powers of mind and will, powers of mental and physical culture, powers of generation, production, and of control of social order and well-being. But in addition to this, by act of God, and the

real living presence of Christ and the Spirit of God, there was further contained within our human frame a principle of activity which co-related man, no longer merely to a destiny and perfection measurable by the law of his nature, but to a life of thought and action that was in strict definition divine. This was a wholly gratuitous gift, a positive quality at home in the soul, grace given by God qualifying and modifying the soul in its very essence, and previous to those particular graces which perfect the powers and faculties of the soul. For whereas the particular grace which is charity is principally the perfection of divine love infused and transforming the human will; and the particular grace which is faith is a certain participation by the human mind of divine knowledge, so there is primarily a created quality in the soul itself: grace sanctifying its very essence with a new accidental form, to enter into, by a certain similitude, a participation in the divine nature itself.

In these simple but profound ideas and definitions, we can easily realise something of the deep gulf that distinguishes what is called the order of nature from the order of grace, a gulf however that may be bridged by the active gift of God, in the soul of one who receives Christ's redemptive effect. And perhaps it is from the emphasis placed upon the distinction between these two orders, that some misunderstandings arise, particularly among writers whose traditions have been inherited from erroneous conceptions both of grace and (it is to be noted now, *therefore*) of nature. Thus for example it need be no matter of surprise when we read from so learned and sincere a writer as W. R. Inge, a statement of the teaching of the Catholic Church in terms which entirely falsify the Catholic truth. Dean Inge once wrote and published the following sentences: "The Roman doctrine is that there are two orders, the natural and the supernatural, dovetailed into each other on the same plane. Some events and some states of mind are natural, others are supernatural. Every agent and every state of mind is either one or the other. The frequent intervention of the supernatural within the natural order is attested by the frequency of miracles in the modern as in the ancient worlds. To many of us this dualism is objectionable, not only in drawing a hard and fast line where experience shows none, but by virtually excluding from the operation of divine Providence all phenomena and states of mind which belong to the "natural order". We do not believe in modern miracles, and we do not see how an event can be "supernatural but not miraculous" unless supernatural is merely a misnomer for spiritual'.

In reading such a statement one is almost tempted to suppose that its writer had gathered his account of 'Roman doctrine' from

the words written twenty-five years earlier with much the same complaint by M. le Roy, in his famous 'Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'un dogme?' He too, a more important power in the modernist movement, had pictured the Catholic doctrine as though it affirmed the revealed truth to be something catastrophic, wholly unintelligible, and out of touch or accord with the verified data of the human mind. M. le Roy in 1906 used vivid and picturesque phrases about what he assumed the Catholic teaching to affirm: 'Tel un caillou dans l'organisme: il ne nourrit pas mais tue. Tel un astrolithe tombant du ciel: il ne vous atteint pas, ou vous casse la tête'. Viewing this wild burlesque of Catholic teaching, it can hardly surprise us that the French modernist drew away from so grotesque an idea, though it does remain a wonder that he ever seriously entertained it, still more that his reaction from it should lead him as it did to a religious theory that was in effect radically pantheist. He naturally enough objected to such a dualism, but it cannot be believed that he could find any Catholic theologian intending to defend it. Above all it is to be regretted that he with so many others seemed to be entirely unfamiliar with the classical teaching of St Thomas upon the receptive powers of the soul, with the real Catholic doctrine of nature and grace, and the complete harmony that is produced when divine grace penetrates the soul ennobling the whole being of man. It might surprise Dr Inge to know that the objection he implicitly raises to Catholic doctrine had been, not only urged earlier by the French writer, but much more fully anticipated by the greatest of the Schoolmen away back early in the 13th century. Here, however, for the moment it will be enough for us merely to comment upon the sentences we have quoted, and from them to remove as clearly as possible the misunderstandings they contain.

In the first place there is in Catholic thought no such mutual exclusiveness between nature and grace, between the natural order and the supernatural order as Dr Inge's paragraph conveys. The natural and the supernatural orders are not dovetailed at all on any plane, and the idea of such heterogeneous, mutually exclusive elements as there described will be as objectionable to Catholic theologians as to the Anglican writer who imagined it. If there is a dualism in the Church's teaching, it is certainly not such a dualism as her opponents pretend; and no Catholic will be found to support the suggestion that there are any phenomena or states of mind from which the operation of divine Providence is either virtually or in any way excluded.

It is indeed difficult to realise how any modern writer familiar with his time could for a moment imagine that Catholic doctrine is con-

ceived by the Church to overlook, or to exclude from the influence of God's grace, any single section or area of human activity. From the very clash of the Church with her greater opponents in the world of today, it would almost seem a more reasonable reproach against her that her most alarming claim was to include all human life within some, more or less immediate, ordering by divine control and direction. This might certainly be found to be the main unifying motive in most of the Papal Encyclicals that have issued from Rome during the last half-century, from Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, insisting on divine justice and supernatural charity as the only right solution for all our modern industrial disputes, through the same wise Pope's recall of political action to the norm and guidance of the rule of God down to the more recent Encyclicals comprising within supernatural sanction and divine order such personal human relationships as those of marriage, the home, and the education of children. There might, indeed superficially, appear to be some reason, if economists and politicians and educationalists disputed the invasion by divine rights within their respective spheres. At all events there is certainly no sign that the Roman Church is drawing a hard and fast line where experience shows none, or is virtually excluding from the operation of divine Providence phenomena and states of mind which belong to the natural order. It is strange that this most important thesis of close unity between revealed truth and the deepest springs of human life was not clearly understood and appreciated in the opening years of this century by the distinguished writers of the modernist group who upbraided the Church for her alleged '*Extrinsécisme*', advancing the reproach against her that she imposed alien, rigid, harsh and heterogeneous dogmas upon the human spirit, affirmations that were supposed to cramp the spontaneity, initiative and vitality of man. Not without reason was it then suspected that such writers were less familiar with the Catholic truths they disputed than with the naturalism and humanism that, wittingly or unwittingly, they were championing. At all events, exactly within the period when industrial conditions and mechanical progress were inaugurating an intellectual system and educational standards that really were crushing and fatal to all mental culture, the up-to-date modernist intellectuals were found supporting that enslavery and in opposition to the one institution on earth whose dogmas and direction, whose divine life and guidance remain now (now it is becoming more daily evident) the one institution on earth calculated to rescue and defend the responsibility of men; the vitality, initiative, and freedom within order, that make the native nobility of the soul of man.