

the Storting, the Association of Authors, the family, from Denmark, Sweden, Norwegian women, the Catholic Women's Association, St Torfinn's congregation, her publishers Aschehoug, from the Town Councils of Hamar and Lillehammer, the Urban Council of Faaberg, the County Councils of Hedmark and Opland, from her birth-place Kalundborg in Denmark, from her personal friends, from the Norwegian Fjells, and many, many others—all the glory of summer laid at the feet of her who would never allow any fuss about her person. Eight of her author colleagues formed a guard of honour round the coffin. After Mass had been said by Bishop Mangers, assisted by the Prior of the Dominicans, the Bishop preached on 'truth in charity' from Ephesians 15, 4. Then followed the laying on of the wreaths, a Norwegian custom. As each wreath was offered, the last words of appreciation, gratitude and affection were said. What her country, her colleagues, her fellow Catholics, her friends and her own people thought was well summed up by the deeply touched eighty-year-old author Peter Egge: 'Everyone who has been so fortunate to penetrate the enclosed world she lived in, knows that a nobler soul has never lived among us. We thank her in love and wondering admiration.'

She was buried in the family burial place at Messnalien, north of Lillehammer, in a lonely cemetery high up on the mountain side. The bell in the little forest chapel tolled its welcome. It was here she wished to be buried, a mother between her two loved children, lonely, as her life had been in a sense lonely, but high up and free. May she rest in peace.



THE OBEDIENTIAL CAPACITY

BY

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FROM the wider and more general considerations we may now presume to formulate in clearer and more precise terms what is here meant by the words Nature and Grace. In the modern vernacular they no longer at once offer to the mind the clear-cut idea they once represented when Catholic doctrine was more familiar and more closely ingrained in the English mind. In the developing and perhaps changing philosophy of any given people, particular terms or words endure in current use; but gradually they are emptied of the signifi-

cance that once charged them, and they are apt to become uncertain coin of exchange, particularly within the generation which marks the dissolution of a preceding era and the opening out upon new and uncertain adventures of the human spirit. The Catholic terminology among a non-Catholic people suffers this like any other, and therefore it is frequently incumbent upon students to restore words to their ancient significance, or at least by careful definition to rescue clear ideas from the debased currency of speech that accompanies the decline of a customary speech.

In attempting, however, some definition of what is intended by the terms nature and grace, one particular difficulty must be borne in mind; namely that, whereas an adequate definition of grace can only be drawn up, proposed and received as valid, under the authority of the Source or Principle whence, in the hypothesis, grace is derived, an adequate definition of nature is within our human competence. This obvious qualification is, of course, essential to the matter in question. Movement of God, action of God, life of God which proceeds from him over and above the intrinsic and natural limitations of the recipient, must necessarily be defined only by the divine Giver in his giving; and he who does not receive can regret, but cannot reasonably complain, if he does not wholly and rightly understand what he does not receive. 'He that hath ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches: to him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna and will give him a white counter: and in the counter a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it' (Apoc. 11, 17). That this must be the case is evident from the very nature of the problem. The conception which we mean by 'Nature' is intelligible to us all; for we ourselves are well within it, of the stuff of it, and we are passing judgment upon that which is strictly within our faculty. But the conception which we here name 'Grace' is of something from without, only to be understood on its own terms, defining itself by its own intrinsic authority; and that intrinsic authority exceeds the direct and immediate reach of unaided human judgment.

By Nature, then, is meant that order, observable, verifiable, definable, according to which created beings stand within the terms of their birth; endowed with instincts, capacities, qualities and faculties that mark off the varieties of species; co-ordinate with results, actions and achievements consonant to their kind, according to the intrinsic law of their type. By nature fig-trees produce figs, the rain nourishes the grass, the mother-bird feeds, shelters, protects her young; and by a parallel law of nature man is a reasoning being, with an instinctive desire to know what is true, and spon-

taneous drawing towards what is good. These instincts, powers and qualities may in certain circumstances and under various accidental influences be thwarted; but when such accident occurs we at once recognise and speak of them as unfulfilled, and the very frustration bears witness to the law of the type suffering the violation. The human mind, of itself and naturally, assents to the right sequences of causalities and spontaneously rebels when these are offended. The quick 'why?' 'how?' 'who?' and 'what?' of the always inquisitive child is an enduring evidence of the normal mind of the human being. The right answering of such questions may not always be within the parents' power; but when the right answer can be given, then the questioner finds content and his mind is so far in function fulfilled. And there are similarly a score of other human instincts with which we are familiar, personal, social and political: the instinct of self-expression in speech and song; the craving to make, to invent, to instruct; the hunger for property, the appetite for permanence, along with which goes the noble self-forgetfulness that is the mark of love. Within all human kind, there is a desire to give, an instinct for worship which is first found in human love, marriage and parenthood, as well as in the awe and worship proffered to the Divinity. In the other directions this extends itself to the love of one's own tribe, to that pure instinct of patriotism which all normal men honour, which rises to immeasurable heights of worth when a man lays down his life for the safety of his country. All these elements are implicit in the definition of man, and by them primarily or consequently we know the thing of which we speak; it is these we mean when we use of man the terms 'nature', and the 'order of nature'.

In mental contrast with such an order we may then compare the affirmations, precepts, and counsels which we owe to Christ. In him and from him, all men can readily observe a scheme of thought and a way of life that, whether or no it contradict or confirm the foregoing, it is at all events clearly distinguishable from it. Upon that point all history has agreed. His followers have been at one with his adversaries at least in recognising that with him there stepped upon our human stage someone certainly new, distinct, and in some definite manner different from the kind with which men were familiar. Whether he was human or divine, whether he was impostor or redeemer, he lived, worked and spoke after a manner and with an accent that have ever compelled attention, and set him somehow apart from the ordinary human category. The adversaries who compassed his death and crucified him bore witness to him as well as against him, declaring in the logic of their opposition that he talked like

God. And that indeed was true; if human lips could do such a thing, he talked like God might talk. 'Before Abraham was made, I am'. 'It was said to them of old . . . but I say to you . . .' 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'. 'For God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting'. 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever'. 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me'. 'I and the Father are one'. Speech like this is beyond measure, but it was the appropriate accompaniment of the news of life which his followers call the Faith. The faith means a real incorporation with himself, his motive, meaning and manner of life are to become the common property of the faithful. Declarations of the desires of God, and a new ethic, life and destiny for men were the revelation that appeared on earth when the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. 'Blessed are the poor', 'Blessed are the meek', 'Blessed are the merciful', 'Blessed are the clean of heart', 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake'. 'You have heard it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy, but I say to you: love your enemies: do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you'. 'Lay not up to yourself treasures upon earth . . . but lay up to yourself treasures in heaven'. 'Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice'.

Now therefore we mean here by '*Grace*' that principle of action, thought and life which Christ, God-man, implements in those who accept him. In him, in his way, they live, move and have their being. The aim of all their thought, the end of all their effort is to be in unity with him; and this unity is primarily one of understanding and will. He therefore gives a new orientation, a new purpose, a new quality, a new value, to their being: a fresh and further realisation of God the Father, a new realisation of his eternal and only begotten Son, in whom, through the Holy Spirit of God, man's life is no longer an experience limited to mortal effort, and the measurements of merely human endeavour. Man's life is now called to a destiny, a growth and development to be achieved by the hand of God, by the continual presence among men of his Spirit pouring forth this grace. The grafting of this supernatural life of grace upon and within the natural life and activities of man cannot mean a mechanical juxtaposition of incompatible and hostile elements; but it does mean a re-birth, a conversion, a transformation of human life into a condition, not now merely in conformity

with the law of its kind, but of participation in the divine effect and achievement of the Redeemer, who is Christ.

It must be emphasised that this infusion of divine grace into the life of man cannot be a mere amalgam or material admixture of contradictory or essentially antagonistic elements. God in his eternal purpose created man, and in this creation which was according to his infinite mind, the Creator himself looked out upon that which he had made, and what he saw was only good. No subsequent rebellion by sin of men could substantially destroy that good. In the mystery of original sin, man could and did violate the order which God had made, and the ill-effects of his sin fell upon the sinner, creating disorder and weakness within him. But the essential nature of man, though weakened and troubled in its component elements, remains in substance what the Creator had decreed it. Against the pessimistic heresies of Luther and Calvin, the Church has always affirmed the essential integrity and substantial perfection that remained in the created nature, even when man had turned and fallen away from God. In the 16th century the Church condemned the theories denying human freedom and responsibility; but similarly in the last century and within our own period she has reaffirmed afresh the validity and absolute values of the human reason. When the Fideists and the Traditionalists of the 19th century questioned and disputed the power of the human mind to prove primary certainties and the existence of God, and again later when more recent groups have questioned and rejected the intellectual validities of man's reason and logic, the Catholic Church has upheld again and again the essential rights and powers of the mind. It has been particularly significant that just when a strange distrust of logic, and that paralysis of thought, a sickness of the mind, which is scepticism, have become most prevalent in Western Europe, the Catholic Church alone has championed the cause of human reason, insisting on its claims, rights and powers, and has fearlessly anathematised the false realism of the Modernists who led the anti-intellectual revolt.

But all this only makes it more pressing for us in the Church to show clearly how the harmony of nature and grace, the wedlock of reason and the faith, the unity of the soul with God, can by divine grace be brought about. How can the supernatural unite with nature without harming or at least discrediting the specific qualities of man? Has not the faith been an imposition, a restriction upon the mind? Has not the human will been cramped, and the human reason overawed, if not oppressively coerced by the dogmatisms of the Faith? Surely it must be the commonest complaint heard among the non-Catholics in England that these questions can only be answered

affirmatively, that the Catholic Church is always arrogant, intolerant, tyrannical in imposing her teaching on mankind. Indeed it is notorious that the journalistic and popular hostility to the Faith, and to the Church proclaiming the Faith, nearly always claims to speak in defence of freedom, of free-thought, of free-speech, against, it would seem, the oppressive and coercive claims of the Church. Practically this would be the impression given to the outsider, unacquainted with the truth, if he judged by the polemics that thunder against Rome. But on closer inspection it will be found that the acid which is truth effectively dissolves such erroneous impressions, and as a plain matter of fact it must soon be evident to all that these accusations against the Church are pretty well the exact opposite of the truth.

Parenthetically it might even be noticed here that the real oppressors of mankind, whether they control and regiment men by their financial power, or by harsh economic theory, instinctively see in the Catholic Church their chief foe. A Bolshevik régime, which is only the logical application of the economic Socialist theory, is as hostile to, and destructive of human freedom and individual initiative as is the concentration of financial power in the impersonal and private corporations which make up the international bank. But Catholic doctrine and the Catholic Church will be in permanent opposition both to the tyranny of the economic materialist and to the oppression by a plutocratic society ruled by anonymous finance. Her Catholic teaching will emphasise the individual's vocation of responsibility and initiative; therefore she will defend the authority and rights of the family and of widely distributed property which is the economic defence of the family. It would be evidence of this, but outside our present purpose, to point to the conditions in Catholic countries like Ireland, where strong peasantries flourish and economic initiative is widely distributed, in comparison with the non-Catholic countries like England, where oligarchic servitudes continually grow stronger and the domination by wealth increasingly paralyses the nerve of responsibility. The *Rerum Novarum* and the *Quadragesimo Anno* are the Catholic and supernatural reply to the new Slavery which is progressively the note of non-Catholic societies. But all this is parenthetic, introduced here merely to illustrate, in material issue, the real effect which revealed truth must have when human life is touched by grace of Christ. Our immediate purpose is to point out how the divine may find point of contact with the human; how the spirit of man may be caught up, transfused as it were, transfigured and transformed by a mode of action, life, and energy which is of Christ and strictly speaking supernatural.