

BAN ON A PHILOSOPHICAL DIVORCE

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HE Aristotelian-Thomistic synthesis may well be called the *philosophia perennis*. The test course of seven centuries has witnessed its birth as well as its growth, but death is a word bearing no affinity to the great work which Thomas has endowed.

If any thesis has dominated the thought of the ages it is the one which dissects, diagnoses and synthesizes the intrinsic causes of man, the being who is contemporaneous with the ages. In modern times we see the preposterous complications resulting from a more preposterous divorce inaugurated by Descartes. Although modern dualism derives from the embryo deposited by Descartes, the separation of mind from matter is no new malformation. Even before Thomas breathed, there raged throughout France a more fundamental aberration bearing the name Albigensian. And centuries before, there crowded about Augustine as if to smother him the lineal ancestor of French fancy—Manicheanism.

Thomas thought of Cartesianism and scrapped it before Descartes appeared. Augustine was not smothered by the Manichees; he broke their backs. But Augustine and Thomas built framework upon a rock, and the rock is Christ. They are doctors of the Christian theological science which guarantees to man his proper ontological status. They are witnesses to the marriage of mind and matter, for they testify that the purely spiritual Son of God was made flesh, that is, He united Himself to a nature which has matter for one of its essential elements.

Commentators become ecstatic when they discourse upon the Word made flesh, and it is to their eternal credit that they see the possibilities of so many profound doctrines in John's simple statement. They expound and amplify doctrines which ennoble man and establish him in the place where the Creator placed him as lord of this universe.

The science of metaphysics does not receive its data from faith, but the Catholic thought in the field of metaphysics has been free to expand because absolute truths accepted by faith act as beacons to

illuminate the pitfalls that lie open to engulf both natural and supernatural dogmas. The highest source of truth is Truth itself, and that the body of this truth, without disguise or laceration, had an official residence is certain. Empiricism snorts at revelation because blind guides prejudicially assert that revelation is as stifling to freedom of thought as the removal of the trachea is to inhalation. Modernists and Rationalists clamor for freedom, but they little realize that the men who are really free to think are the Catholic thinkers. Once a fact has been established a man can work on it, but since the so-called facts of Empiricism are in constant flux, present day thought is handicapped simply by a shortage of dogmas. Much groping ensues and chaos results. Thus we have to right and to left the melee of contrary and contradictory opinions about so many vital issues. Catholic philosophy, however, boasts a definite approximation to unity. It evolves from a positive foundation of first principles as they are applied to sensible data. If the human mind is guilty of no error in its reasoning and deductions, the scientific judgment attained can not but accord with revealed truth, and human science has positively climbed another step and stands looking down in mingled pity and contempt upon agnosticism. Faith knows no error, and reason too is a gift not given for nothing but endowed with power.

The philosophy of St. Thomas has not the same immediate object as his theology, even though the ultimate object of both these sciences resides in the analogical genus—truth. In each the points of departure differ for the reason that the principles of theological science are taken from revealed truth. Although the 'double truth theory' is no longer known by that name, the theory itself has never been relegated to oblivion, but jauntily perseveres like a retouched easter bonnet, even to our own day. The theory has a postulate which is made to pronounce with all the formality and finality of pseudoscience that faith is opposed to reason. Those, however, who do not dismiss logic as so much claptrap, even if they catch only a passing glimpse of Thomas' ontological grades, disdain to lower the expression of their science to any refrain which opposes truth to truth.

It is unfortunate that many real thinkers outside the church have not the positive help that comes of being a Catholic. We do not refer to the help which the sacraments give, nor to the movement of soul aroused by the exquisite beauties of the Catholic ritual; our reference is simply to dogmas. For example, we have a dogma which states that the Word was made flesh. No Catholic could believe that the Son of God, by an act of transubstantiation, was converted into this

flesh which is grass, because no reasoning man could hold for the transformation of Divinity into dust. But we do believe that the Son of God put on our humanity, that is, He took to Himself our nature and so marvelously united it to His own that He remains forever the God-man. This truth accepted by the Catholic mind is more certain than anything which can be established by the compass, meter or microscope. While riotous Manicheans, Albigensian zealots and deluded Cartesians ranted from the house tops about the divorce of mind from matter, and raved on and on into obscurity and contradictions, Catholic thought knew that the "eternally uttered Word" of God the Father had been united to spirit and matter and thus united persists into eternity. The Catholic moreover, knows with positive certitude that while the two are opposites, mind need not be estranged from matter. Plato, long ago, told of the involuntary incarceration of mind in matter; Descartes put a chasm between the two; Leibnitz permitted the two to cohabit; Hegel and Schelling, by masterful stirring, concocted the hodgepodge which merged both subject and object into an absolute. Logic demanded that the followers of these last two merge mind and matter, but after the merger the assets remained frozen in the impossible state of idealism. One system alone, with no fear of an explosion tempers by an amalgamation the antinomies of mind and matter. We speak of Catholic philosophy as presented in the Aristotelian-Thomistic synthesis. This union of mind and matter in Thomistic philosophy does not look to revelation as to the reason for its verity, but for sanction upon its conclusions philosophy can look to a higher science, because that which is higher contains and is analogically indicative of that which is lower. Thus it is that the union of mind and matter subscribed to by Thomists, although demonstrable by reason, has sanction from the fact of the Incarnation. That this sanction does not indicate a wish on our part to make the mode of the hypostatic union equivalent to the mode of union between the two essential marks of man is evident, for we know that no such adequation is possible. But after we grant the diversity of the two modes, it remains a fact that in the Incarnation the Word whose nature is purely spiritual was joined intimately to human nature. Positing the fact of the Incarnation the Word was necessarily united to matter because matter is essential to human nature. Hence theology sanctions the doctrine which philosophy demonstrates that the joining of mind and matter into an essential unity is not only intrinsically possible but that such a union actually exists.

It is true that the preceding observations have only that value

which is due to analogical argument, but, after all, the application of analogy to the subordinated grades in God's economy is not unworthy of rational human beings. On the contrary, it is indicative that he is in some way conscious of the appalling unity about him, a unity which relates each thing to everything and all things to God, a unity in which man himself is the master link.