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INTERIOR RENEWAL

When Col. Glenn was making history as he orbited around the earth, he commented on the wonderful view with which the earth presented him. It was but a minor piece of information compared with the scientific data which was accumulated as a result of his orbital experience. Yet, he was not the first of the astronauts to remark on the wonderful beauty of the earth as seen from outer space. From this point of view, at least, man is reminded once more of a divine mind and a divine goodness which is at the back of all creation, for now more than ever, it would seem that "the heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands" (Ps. 18:1).

St. Paul had already registered this warning: "For the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, his eternal power also and divinity: so that they are inexcusable, because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks" (Rom: 1:20-21). One wonders for how many millions of men and women who heard this report of the earth's beauty from over a hundred miles above its surface, the words of the Book of Wisdom came as a rebuke: "But all men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God: and who by these good things that are seen, could not understand him that is, neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman. . . . For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby" (Wis. 13:1-5).

This comment on the earth's beauty by the astronauts serves as a reminder for something else, however. It is simply this. Often enough, the full grandeur of a thing is lost on us, as it were, until it is seen from the right angle, for nothing can be properly and fully known until it has been seen from every approach. That knowledge begets love is a common philosophical and theological axiom. It follows that a deeper knowledge will inevitably result in a deeper and fuller love.

It is not a rare occurrence that something has not been known because it was not properly seen or examined—and if a thing is not known, it cannot be properly appreciated for the thing it is. The Sacred Passion is as good an example as any. Viewed merely from the historical level it was

a complete fiasco. Here was a man who claimed to be the Son of God—a man who even went so far as to promise twelve thrones to his closest disciples on which they would sit in judgment over the House of Israel. His kingdom was one that would last forever. The people flocked to listen to his words, as apparently they flock to hear any new teaching, but it didn't last. The same people soon shouted for his execution, and the Roman soldiers did the rest. A good man, maybe, but led astray by his own vivid imagination.

This could be, and unfortunately is, one view of the life and work of Christ. It is too blatantly smothered in heresy and contradiction to need comment here. It is strange how so many sensible people could possibly apply the adjective 'good' to a man who was the greatest fraud the world has ever known—for that is what Christ is if He is not the true Son of God.

There is, however, another view which, though not as blatant nor quite so pernicious, is just as false. It is the outlook of those who consider the work of redemption as one only of penal expiation. They turn the economy of redemption into an act of simple suffering and humiliation. They transform the message of the Cross, which was meant to draw all men to Him Who died on it, into a stumbling block for the Jews and foolishness for the Gentiles. The redemptive act is so described and envisaged as to bring with it a sense of revulsion at what is, in fact, the most wonderful and elevating procedure of our spiritual restoration and inner renewal. There is the unconscious tendency to turn the Father of all mercies into a blood-thirsty God, avenging the wrongs of His human creatures on the body and soul of His own divine Son. The nature of the work of restoration becomes very lopsided as a result. The role of obedience scarcely fits into their picture of the work of our redemption at all; for that matter, neither does the role of charity. And the result is a very distorted picture indeed.

If the same people considered the event of man's creation, they would no doubt make it just as negative—for, after all, it can scarcely be denied that suffering is something quite negative. It is that lack of due disposition which forms the healthy and wholesome make-up of every creature. God's act of creation, and the nature of man's first fall, are events that must be understood aright if we are to understand properly the nature of the work of our redemption, for redemption through Christ was, in a very true sense, a second divine creative act. In many ways, it was even a far greater act than the first. We express this truth at every Mass before offering the Host: "O God, who, in creating human nature, didst wonderfully dignify it; and hast still more wonderfully renewed it. . . ."

Now the act of creation did not primarily concern man's body at all, otherwise you put man on the same plane with the beasts of the animal kingdom, and make his immortal soul a kind of divine afterthought. The product of God's creative act was a creature of the supernatural order—which means much more than (pardon the expression) a human soul with a dollop of grace (whatever that might mean). Our Catholic people very often have all sorts of fanciful notions about souls in the state of grace—and many a pious penitent, after receiving the sacrament of Penance, imagines her soul to be as white as the driven snow—which shows that she neither knows what her soul is, nor, for that matter, what grace is!

What Is the Soul?

When philosophers come to speak of the nature of the soul, they refer to it as the principle of life, that is, of course, the natural principle of life, which is manifested through the two functions of motion and knowledge (cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 75, a. 1). If a thing moves, it has life; and if it has life, it has a soul. Likewise, if a being has the power of understanding, then it has intellectual and rational life, and so has an intellectual or rational soul. The soul, therefore, is natural since it belongs to the very nature of man. "And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth: and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). We cannot take this text too literally. What the sacred author was trying to express was that the creation of man was on a different level from the rest of God's creatures. This product of God's creative act, therefore, was not an angel. Although the latter are not given specific mention in God's plan of creation as recounted in the Book of Genesis, yet we do know that they are completely spiritual creatures. Man was not so made. On the other hand, he was not in the same category as that of the mere animals. His creation is described as quite distinct and places him mid-way between angel and brute. He had a spiritual element as well as a material one, and what characterized him, what made him the being he was and nothing else, was the spiritual or rational soul with which God had infused him.

However, his soul was not something which was localized in him in the same way as, for example, his heart was localized. Surgeons can operate on a man's heart; they can manipulate it and count its beats. But you can do none of these things with a man's soul. It resides in him as a spiritual principle and is manifested only through its power. It is, however, something real, and since it resides in man, it must therefore be a created reality.

It is a created, spiritual 'something' which is the natural principle of life in man. That, I know, does not give a very clear idea of what the soul really is, but even St. Thomas seems to be at a loss for words when he comes to speak of the soul and refers to it as a '*res quaedam*' (Cf. *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8). Such must be the case with anything that is spiritual or intangible. God Himself is the perfect example, for just as He cannot be known except through the works of His divine providence, so also the soul cannot be known except through the manifestation of its acts. The soul itself is unfathomable. It is not a body and therefore cannot be analyzed or dissected as can anything material, and in this sense, the soul is unknowable.

Now, since the soul is the principle of life, it is obvious that, *as a general rule*, it cannot be separated from the thing which it enlivens. We have to emphasize the words 'as a general rule,' for de facto the soul can and indeed will exist without the body for that space of time after death until the day of general resurrection.

This presents no difficulty, for what is the principle of life for the body does not, or need not, lose its own life on account of the natural corruption of the body. The fire does not cease to exist just because there is nothing to heat or make warm, nor does the sun lose its inner power to give light simply because it is separated from the earth by a thick blanket of cloud. In much the same way, the soul has its own life, and therefore can have its own existence even without the body. However, body and soul are so intimately united that the soul cannot live fully without it. It will always demand the body which it was made to inform, with which it makes up one single substance, and in which it finds its true and full life and action. You can take the captain away from his ship, and you will destroy neither the vessel nor its commander. Their union comes only from an external association. The captain does not add anything to the perfection of the ship, nor does the ship add anything to the perfection of the captain. But the soul does add something essential to the perfection of Man—it makes of matter a rational and human being.

However, since man is distinguished from the mere animal by his gifts of understanding and will—and since the soul is known and manifested by its acts—it follows that the mind and will of man are powers which are rooted in his soul. They are the characteristics of the rational soul, and therefore can be called its constitutive elements, that is, those things which go to make it up. To think is a rational act, and it is the unique process of a rational creature. To make a choice is a rational act, and again it is the unique process of the rational being. To curtail or meddle with, much less

to deprive man of the acts which flow from these faculties, is tantamount to depriving man of his fundamental human dignity. That is why brain-washing, and such like modern methods of a so-called enlightened era of our history, are the work of the devil, and can only lead to the debasing of our nature and civilization.

This, then, was the kind of creature God had made. Or, to be more precise, it was the basis of the creature He destined to make like unto Himself. This is said here because man was not made a natural being with a kind of afterthought regarding his supernatural character. Man was created with a supernatural destiny, and was therefore created equipped with all the supernatural forces which were capable of attaining that destiny. Hence, from the very beginning, grace was built on nature.

Grace Building on Nature

Now, just as body and soul are two distinct entities, and can be conceived and studied as such, so the same can be said of grace and nature. In God's plan, they were meant to go together. As the body demands the soul as its life-giving form, so our nature demands grace as its elevating and supernatural principle. On the other hand, grace does not constitute part of our nature, otherwise it would not be termed 'supernatural.' A man is no less a man for being without grace. That is why the sin of our First Parents did not fundamentally alter or change our nature, as the Reformers postulated. "According to the teachings of the Church (Trid. p. 5, Denz. 787) and the exact analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas . . . the nature of man was in no way altered or diminished by original sin. St. Thomas teaches that the sum-total of Man's nature, and all that is its due, namely, reason and free will, was not dissolved or lessened by original sin but there was a decline in its aspiration towards virtue (*inclinatio ad virtutem*). . . . The injury therefore lies more in its relationship to that supernatural aspiration and order which was the divine intention at the creation. The loss of supernatural grace meant a tragic deterioration in the route by which all mankind must reach its ultimate goal." (Cf. *The Primacy of Love* by Dr. August Adam, pp. 50-51. Mercier.)

Hence, fundamentally, man's nature was not touched. In being destined to be a son of God, however, and to participate in a heavenly heritage—something completely beyond our nature and its power and capability—man needed a new organism which would be adapted to the securing of such a destiny. In other words, he needed an organism, a power or a new means of action which would be set in proportion to the end that was en-

visaged for him. And this is precisely where grace came into the picture of creation. In a sense, it was not something completely new. It was not a new substance, nor did it make this creature of God any more or less a man. Rather was it, what we might call, a re-fashioning of the old, or a re-fashioning of what was fundamental in him. It was an elevation of the state of man's soul, and the raising of its powers from the plane of the natural to the supernatural. It was a case of grace building on nature. This was the point of contact between nature and supernature, whereby, under the omnipotent power of God, its whole being and activity was so raised above its natural capabilities and aspirations. Theologians refer to this as the *potentia obedientialis*.

The gift of grace, therefore, was the gift of a new *state* of the soul. In that state, it participates in the divine nature and is thereby rendered pleasing in God's sight. This state of the soul becomes pleasing to God because it is a holy state, orientated, as it becomes, to the object and subject of all holiness which is God Himself. It is, therefore, at once a created reality, a state of being and a new way of life which influences, elevates or sanctifies every inner and exterior action of the creature.

This was a pure gift of God. In every true sense of the word, it was a grace—a new principle of a new kind of life or existence superimposed on the natural principle of life. It was grace or super-nature working in and through nature—grace working in and through man's essential and natural make-up. It was an inner renewal which brought man into a new relationship with his God, and its basis was God's love of friendship. When treating of this love of friendship, St. Thomas points out that it is founded on equality. "Friendship spells equality" is how he puts it (cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 124). There can be no true friendship except between equals. Man, therefore, had to be raised up—he had to be made lovable and good before he could become the special object of God's love and the intimate of His friendship. This was accomplished by God's free gift which, in a very real sense, made man His friend and the object of His love and beneficence. This gift of grace, this new state of the soul made it pleasing in God's sight because it made it a partaker in His divine nature.

However, if the soul is unknowable in itself, then how are we to know grace? To so many people nowadays, it means little to refer to it simply as a quality in the soul which brings about an interior sanctification. If the soul is known only through its operations, then grace will only be known through a knowledge of the soul's elevated operations.

Knowledge and Will

Understanding or knowledge is only possible through the power of the soul. Indeed, from our kind of understanding we conclude to the existence in us of a *spiritual* soul. Anything corporeal or material is thereby limited to the material. Likewise is it limited by time and place and circumstance. A stone thrown into the air cannot guide its own speed or fathom its height from the ground. It has no power to feel, nor has it any faculty by which to understand. In every sense, it is a 'dead' thing. But when a material being 'senses,' then it is alive—and the principle of that life is a sensitive soul. If, at the same time, it can understand, if it can abstract from matter and reflect on universals and its own concepts, then it too is alive—and the principle of that life is a spiritual, intellectual and human soul.

However, man's knowledge, in itself, is natural. It is hemmed in by its own powers and capabilities. It can reflect on the things it sees and experiences through the senses; it can draw conclusions and have surmises, but all remains within the sphere of the natural. It can go no further. With the aid of its own innate power it can go so far as to come to the knowledge of God's existence but, again under its own power, it could never make an act of supernatural love or of divine faith. To be able to do so, the power of the intellect and of the will needs to be strengthened, needs to be lifted up into a higher plain of knowing and willing which is only brought about with the help of divine grace. G. K. Chesterton, himself a convert, brings out this point very well. He says: "It is one thing to conclude that Catholicism is good and another to conclude that it is right. It is one thing to conclude that it is right and another to conclude that it is always right. I had never believed the tradition that it was diabolical; I had soon come to doubt the idea that it was inhuman, but that would only have left me with the obvious inference that it was human. It is a considerable step from that to the inference that it is divine. When we come to that conviction of divine authority, we come to the more mysterious matter of divine aid. In other words, we come to the unfathomable idea of grace and the gift of faith; and I have not the smallest intention of attempting to fathom it. It is a theological question of the utmost complexity; and it is one thing to feel it as a fact and another to define it as a truth."

We usually refer to this act of divine faith as an act of the intellect. This is true, but it is an act of the intellect *as moved by the will*. By nature, its choice lies within the sphere of the natural. Since it is influenced by the intellect in its choice, and since the intellect can only have natural knowledge

of God, it follows that the will can only orientate itself to God as its natural good. It cannot rise into a new sphere unless elevated by God, no more than it could induce the intellect to reasonably accept a mystery of faith without that grace which would impel it to do so in spite of the intellectual darkness.

It might be as well here to draw a distinction between man's capabilities in this matter before and after the fall of our First Parents. St. Thomas reminds us that to love God above all things is natural to man (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 109, a. 3). Hence, before sin, man loved God more than he loved himself, and truly loved Him above all things. After the appearance of sin, however, with its consequent wounding of our nature, the will tended to seek its own good, tended to place all its love in itself, and so needed, in the present economy of salvation, the grace to turn its love from itself, and place it in God as its highest Good.

Grace, therefore, must come to fallen man, not only as a naturally perfecting divine help, but also as a new principle of a new and elevated life based on friendship, or what St. Thomas calls elsewhere a 'spiritual fellowship' with God (cf. *ibidem*, ad 1). It is this note of friendship or familiar intercourse which strikes a predominant note in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. "And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise at the afternoon air, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God, amidst the trees of paradise. And the Lord God called Adam, and said to him: Where art thou? And he said: I heard thy voice in paradise; and I was afraid" (Gen. 3:8-10). Although this is the prelude to the rejection of man from God's company, yet it does emphasize the familiarity which had already existed. It did not necessarily consist, of course, of God walking through a garden and speaking on familiar terms with our First Parents. This was a human story about a divine association, and it was a story told in a very human way. Familiar intercourse, trees, rivers, flaming swords and the like only serve the purpose of putting across an event that had repercussions in the salvation history of mankind. The message and the event of divine rejection are the important elements—the circumstances and the details of the story only serve to clothe that message and event in the garb of human convention and intelligibility.

Destruction and Renewal

This close intimacy, then, between Creator and creature was founded on the new relationship which had sprung up from the life of grace. When this grace had been destroyed by the sin of our First Parents, the relation-

ship, the intimacy and the friendship was automatically destroyed with it. "And the Lord God sent him out of the paradise of pleasure, to till the earth from which he was taken" (Gen. 3:23). It could have been a destruction with eternal consequences, if God had so willed. At most, it could well have spelt the eternal rejection of man by his Maker. At its least, God may well have left this creature in the sphere of the natural, holding out to him a reward that would have corresponded to his natural capabilities, but no more. In fact, however, He promulgated a new economy of salvation which would be a renewal of the old, whereby the destroyed would rise up again through Christ. And in God's plan the renewed would even be greater than the old.

For this reason, theologians distinguish between the 'grace of God' and the 'grace of Christ.' The grace of God belonged to the old order; the grace of Christ belonged to the new economy. This latter brought us into a new relationship with God—a relationship founded on a new bond with the Redeemer, whereby we were adopted into God's family as co-heirs with Christ. ". . . we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:17-18).

This text of St. Paul serves the purpose of pin-pointing the nature of this new economy of salvation, and the manner in which it is applied to the members of the human race. It amounts to glory through suffering in Christ—final renewal coming by means of personal destruction. It is strange how the elements of this 'destruction-renewal' theory find their place throughout the whole story of the salvation history of mankind.

The insubordination of our First Parents had led to the destruction of their intimacy and friendship with God. Out of this destruction, however, arose the promise of a restoration or renewal in the Messiah: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:15). A new covenant, therefore, was formed between God and his chosen people—a covenant which brought the House of Israel into a new bond of love and friendship with Jahweh. "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be his peculiar people of all peoples that are upon the earth . . . because the Lord hath loved you . . . and thou shalt know that the Lord thy God, he is a strong and faithful God, keeping his covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments" (Deut. 7:6-9). Once

again, a blind obedience was at the root of this new divine deal. So long as that obedience and utter subjection held, all went well. But the history of the Jewish people was a continuous insurrection which eventually led to the rejection of the Messiah Himself. This rejection of the Messiah was intrinsically bound up with the rejection of the Covenant—and so the second covenant was destroyed. This, however, was inevitable and necessary. The preparation had to give way to the fulfillment; the imperfect had ultimately to be transformed into the perfect. "Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mt. 5:17). The perfect covenant only came into existence with Christ. He embodied it in Himself—and even He was destroyed before the fruit of His covenant could be attained. The result of His covenant was a sharing in the risen life of the Messiah—and it was to the accomplishing of this that the grace of Christ was orientated. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, who had brought many children into glory, to perfect the author of their salvation, by his passion. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. . . . Therefore, because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same: that, through death, he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil: and might deliver them, who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to servitude" (Heb. 2:10-15).

This destruction-renewal element belonged to the very essence of the mystery of Christ, that is, to the mysterious fashioning of our salvation through the Redeemer. As the grace of salvation was inaugurated by the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, so it is applied to men of all times through a continuation of Christ and His sacrifice among the redeemed. He is continually being made present, His divine life throbbing through the veins and members of the Church, His Mystical Body. And no member can attain the ultimate victory of his destiny, until he himself is destroyed in death—both real and mystical—before being lifted up into the glory and power of the resurrection.

St. Paul, aware of this mysterious power of Christ and its necessity of being realized in the lives of Christians, explained to the Romans: "Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized into his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the like-

ness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer: for he that is dead is justified from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ: knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him. For in that he died to sin, he died once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God: so do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Rom. 6:3-12).

The Fathers are fond of referring to grace as the seed of this glory, since by it, a man is formally made holy and thereby disposed to attain it. This was the grace merited by Christ on the Cross and offered to all men for whom He died. Christ died that ALL might be saved, and so the grace and the merit of His sacrifice is held back from none. He has called and predestined us to share in the grace and glory of His copious redemption. In this St. Paul would console and encourage us: "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ: as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity: who hath predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the purpose of his will, unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:3-7).

The salvation of the Cross is a mystery. To the non-believer, it is a stumbling block. To the weak, it is a scandal. But the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary was something much more than a historical event. It was a way of salvation opened up by the Redeemer, whereby man could become interiorly renewed. That inner renewal consisted in a transformation of our whole being into Christ—for we are now the body of Christ and His members. Through Him we descend into the grave of suffering, humiliation and death—barren things in themselves—but enlivened by the spirit and power of God's Son. And it is through and in Him that we pass through death to the life of the resurrection, and to the salvation of the whole man.

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